

Translator's Introduction

In the truly vast field of Arabic/Islamic historiography, and as far as this eye can see, there are no historical works that can be compared to Mas`udi's *Muruj al-Dhahab wa Ma`adin al-Jawhar* ("Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems"). It is framed as a history, which from the Islamic era onwards, is arranged according to reigns of caliphs. But it is also, and concurrently, a window open onto his own contemporary world, a world where scholars like Mas`udi were witnessing, often with horror, the rapid disintegration of the Abbasid empire in the late ninth and early tenth centuries AD. An urgency is detected in the words he uses to describe his object in writing: "to preserve for our world a memorial that can be of value, and a science that is systematic and ready to hand." [sec. 7]

In order to capture in a historical frame and preserve as "a science" this portrait of his age, Mas`udi's *Meadows of Gold* will often appear to its readers as a stock-taking, a representation of a culture described in multiple realities. It is backward-looking when it sketches the ancient and contemporary history of the civilizations known to him. It is intensely present-looking and subjective when it inserts everywhere the author's own reflections, observations and conversations garnered from extensive travel over the territories he describes, painting a portrait of all the nations known to his world. It is meta-historical when he overshadows the historical account with an ever-present and divine providence, most vividly represented in the Talibid line of Imams. It is a "science" in the sense that it preserves an accurate account of reality, relying, for example, on almanacs for dating, and on the natural sciences and philosophy to distinguish the plausible from the implausible in historical accounts. And finally it seeks to save in a record as many of the features and principles of the arts and sciences of his age as he could: memorable poetry, eloquent prose, the

value and pitfalls of such natural sciences as alchemy, astronomy and astrology, theological and juristic debates, the ascetic and the ribald in discourse, popular games, fashions in clothes, types of food and other aspects of cultural life too numerous to cite.

For a work that reveals so much of its author's inner self and views, it is ironical that his own life is wrapped in mystery. There is practically nothing about him by his contemporaries. Only two of some forty works of his have survived. He tells us that he was born in Baghdad but from a Kufan family. How he sustained himself and how he financed his extensive travels are both unknown. His date of birth is also unknown and the date of his death is given as 345/956, but the place where he died is unknown, though Egypt is conjectured. Given the fact that the great Ibn Khaldun, while unfairly censuring him for credulity, nevertheless calls him the "Imam of historians," it is extraordinary that so little is known about him in an age when Arabic/Islamic biographical writing was hyperactive. But this may be due to the fact, entirely hypothetical, that he never stayed long enough in any one location to acquire lasting colleagues or students. It is beyond question that Mas`udi was an Imami Shi`ite, yet his Shi`ism, at least in his own words, was not sectarian or partisan or led him to support any particular view [sec 3609]. Was he a Mu`tazilite in theology? Here too one observes a certain sympathy for them as against their obscurantist enemies, but there is little else besides sympathy. Was he anti-Umayyad? Yes, by and large, and again by and large pro-Abbasid, but exceptions abound in both directions. Did he have a bloated sense of the importance of his works? Probably, since he saw history as the acme of all the sciences [sec 989] and the climatic end in which all his earlier works were consummated. Thus he perceived his works as a structure or pyramid crowned by history and saw history as the ultimate achievement of his scholarly life.

In reflecting on his own world, Mas`udi will often emphasize the transient, the ephemeral, the soon to be extinguished. There is a restlessness in his story

reflected not only in his travels, which he repeatedly asserts add great value to his history, but in his style of constantly interrupting the narrative with digressions. He claims he digresses in order not to bore his readers, an aesthetic stratagem, but this also serves him, I believe, to underline the abruptness of life, the sudden reversals of human existence, and the illusory nature of human achievement. Here, a reader needs to pay close attention to the very large volume of verse that Mas`udi quotes, for it is in his choice of verse where human tears and frustrations, intermixed with ribaldry, are most vividly represented.

How then can one classify Mas`udi's *Meadows*? It is a work of history in which is wrapped a geography, an ethnography, a compendium of the sciences, a broad portrait of literature, a survey of political and social life, and a constant striving, never quite fulfilled, to find a pattern into which all this vast erudition and curiosity can be fitted. Ibn Khaldun is not wrong when he says that Mas`udi "hovered around" but never actually managed to formulate the laws of history, such as one finds in Ibn Khaldun's theory of *`Umran*. And yet, had we possessed his lost works, which mainly treated theological topics or topics in natural science, we might well have had a better conception of his theoretical reflections on historical transformation.

Given the vast canvas of his history, it may be salutary for us not to slot him into any rigid religious sect, camp or philosophical school. We nowadays tend too readily to label pre-modern authors like Mas`udi as belonging to one such category or another when in fact many of them, perhaps because they were steeped in *Adab*, had a far more eclectic outlook. As we have seen above, his interests ranged too widely over his world to allow us to brand him as belonging to this or that religious or intellectual tradition. Was he a Twelver Shi`ite? Yes, but obviously not bound by any strict adherence to its teachings. Was he a historian? Yes, but obviously one who thought far more deeply about its value and method than any of his predecessors. Was he an *Adib*? Yes, but obviously

one who understood *Adab* to include a far wider gamut of sciences than did his predecessors, with the possible exception of Jahiz. If this latter had taken the trouble to write a world history, the result might well have resembled Mas`udi's *Muruj al-Dhahab*.

This translation

To forestall any criticism of this translation, several disclosures are required. To begin with, I based my translation on the excellent Arabic edition of the text of the *Muruj* by Charles Pellat, preserving his division of it into numbered paragraphs. However, I decided not to consult either the old French translation by Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille or the amended translation by Charles Pellat or the partial translation by Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone. Let these translations stand side by side and let scholars or interested readers accept or reject from them what they please.

Secondly, I decided not to burden the text with an extensive glossary, since an exhaustive glossary in two volumes, and in Arabic, is appended to the edition of the Arabic text by Pellat. My glossary therefore will be found to provide a minimum of glossing, and frequently less than a minimum, and there is no excuse for this except the lack of energy in old age to track down and translate the innumerable terms to be found in Mas`udi's vast coverage of his world. Specialists in the various fields will no doubt be able to correct my translation where it deals with their specialties, although my hope remains that non-specialists will find this translation adequate to derive from it general conclusions regarding the place of Mas`udi in world historiography, or at least to savor the style and world view of one of the earliest and greatest of world historians in Arabic-Islamic civilization.

Thirdly, this not so much a translation as an approximate rendering of Mas`udi's *Muruj* into English. I found the large volume of verse in particular to be often very challenging and I cannot claim for my translations anything other

than a conjectural rendering, expressed as frequent question marks. My hope is that diligent readers will spot and correct my mistakes.

Tarif Khalidi

Beirut, September 6, 2020

Mas`udi, *Muruj al-Dhahab*, Vol.I

In the Name of God, All-Merciful, Compassionate to each, through whom success.

Praise be to God, worthy of praise, veneration and glory. The blessings of God and his salvation upon Muhammad, Seal of Prophets, and upon his pure family.

Chapter One

A general account of the contents of this book

1. Al-Mas`udi said: Let me begin by stating that we had previously composed a work entitled *Akhbar al-Zaman* where we began by describing the shape of the earth, its cities, wonders, seas, lowlands, mountains and rivers. We then discussed the marvels of its minerals, its diverse sources of water, facts about its jungles, the islands in its seas and its small lakes, and particulars concerning towering monuments and venerated abodes. We then mentioned the world's beginning, the origins of humanity and the diversity of habitats, and what was once a river then turned into sea, what was sea and turned into land, and what was land and turned into sea across the passage of the days and the succession of epochs, the reasons for all these transformations, both astronomical and natural, the divisions among climes through the actions of the planets, and the curvature of the poles and measurements of spheres and horizons. We also cited the differences among mankind regarding ancient history and their conflicting views regarding origins and beginnings among Indians and other types of atheists, together with the views of peoples possessing scripture and what revealed books mentioned or what was related by religious peoples.

2. We followed this up with the ancient histories of kings, of extinct nations, past centuries and vanished communities, with their diverse races, breeds and religions. We further mentioned their ancient wisdom, sayings of their philosophers, news of their kings and Caesars, including histories of prophets, messengers and saints until the point in time when God's grace bestowed the honor of prophecy upon His prophet Muhammad, God bless and save him. Here, we cited his time of birth, his upbringing, his emigration, his major military expeditions and his minor raids until the time of his death. This was followed by a continuous history of the Caliphate and the expansion of the realm from one era to the next, together with the deaths of Talibid rebels, until the time when we began composing the present work which took place during the caliphate of al-Muttaqi li'llah, that is to say the year 332 [943-4].

3. We next composed another historical work called *Al-Awsat* which dealt with history from the beginning of creation until the time at which our previous and major work comes to an end. Accordingly, we thought fit to summarize what we had set out at greater length and abbreviate what we had composed in *Al-Awsat* and to do so in a smaller and more accessible work where we include highlights from the above two works together with discussions of various sciences and histories of past nations and eras not mentioned in these two earlier works.

4. We must, nonetheless, apologize for any shortcomings that may occur and absolve ourselves from any inadvertent deficiencies. This is due to anxious thoughts and worries that troubled us, the result of far-flung journeys and travels across wildernesses, at times by sea, at others on land. We were intent upon learning the characteristics of countries through direct observation and upon acquainting ourselves with the peculiar features of regions through close scrutiny. We thus traversed the regions of Sind, Zanj, Sanf, China and Zabij, and we plunged into both

east and west. At times we were in furthest Khurasan, at others in central Armenia, Adharbaijan, al-Ran and al-Bailaqan,* at yet others in Iraq or Syria, travelling by night across far-flung regions just as the sun moves towards dawn. It was as the poet said:

*He heads towards regions and countries,
At times to furthest east, at others to west,
Like the sun's journey by night;
Tossed ceaselessly by diverse destinations
Towards a distant horizon caravans fail to reach.*

5. The author said: We also conferred with rulers of diverse styles, of diverse moralities, diverse ambitions and in far-flung countries, and we came to understand every single aspect of their beliefs and principles. However, all traces and shining lights of knowledge have nowadays become extinguished. The ignorant are many, the wise are few. You will not encounter except an ignorant pretender to knowledge, deficient in what he practices, content to believe in illusions and blind to certainty and truth. Accordingly, we decided not to compose any work of history or devote ourselves to it until we had finished our other works which were devoted to the various types of beliefs and religions such as:

Exposing the Principles of Religion, Theories regarding the Principles of Religions, The Secret of Life, and Systems of Proof in the Principles of the Islamic Religion. This last work dealt with the principles of *Fatwa* and the laws concerning judgments, such as attaining certainty through *Qiyas* and *Ijtihad* in issuing judgments; the effect of *Ra'y* and *Istihsan*; knowledge of *Nasikh* and *Mansukh*; how *Ijma`* is arrived at and its nature; knowledge of the particular and the general in legal commandments and prohibitions; prohibited and permitted acts; the significance of reports, whether through multiple or through individual transmission; and the acts of the Prophet, together with all other matters

relevant to the above such as the principles of *Fatwa* and debates with adversaries who disputed our views or agreed with some of them.

6. Also to be mentioned is our work entitled *Rational Reflections on the Imamate*, where we cited diverse opinions as for instance the views of those who believed in designation or else in election, and the arguments advanced by each party; also our work entitled *Choicest Views regarding the Imamate*, which together with our other books discussed the sciences of the manifest and the hidden, the visible and invisible, the ruined and the standing [reading *al-waqif*], and revealed the views of those who expect the end of days and who refer to a stream of light shining on earth and spreading through barren and fertile lands; we also discussed what is to follow the terrible conflicts of the end of time which are reported in literal form and whose interpretation is clear. We might also allude to our other works that deal with the art of government, like the governance of cities, the parts of a city, its natural constitution, the manner in which a religion splinters and moves away from its basic principles; the structure of the worlds and heavenly bodies; what can and cannot be sensed of dense or fine matter; and what men of religion have said about these topics.

7. What drove us to compose these books of ours that deal with history, with world events and with the passage of years past, such as the histories of prophets and kings and their life stories as well as nations and their habitats, is our desire to emulate the example pursued and followed by scholars and wise men. In other words, our purpose is to preserve for our world a memorial that can be of value, and a science that is systematic and ready to hand. For we have noted that among authors there are some who excel and others who fall short, some who write at great length and others who write abridged works. We also find that history itself grows ever in quantity with the passage of days and the progress of time, and it

may be that some memorable events might escape the attention of a perspicacious and intelligent author. Thus each author has his own particular portion of knowledge in accordance with the effort he puts into his work. Each region of the world possesses its own marvels known only to its own inhabitants. Accordingly, one who stays put in his own homeland and is content with news that reach him from a particular region is not at all like one who spends half his life journeying across foreign lands, spending his days tossed here and there, and who extracts each nugget of information directly from its mine and each priceless ore from its hiding place.

8. People have composed works of history basing their accounts on predecessors. Some were successful, others failed; each author had exerted his abilities and displayed the full extent of his understanding. For example, there is Wahb ibn Munabbih; Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya al-Ghamidi; Muhammad ibn Ishaq; Al-Waqidi; Ibn al-Kalbi; Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna; Ibn `Ayyash al-Hamdani; al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy al Ta`i; al-Sharqi ibn al-Qutami; Hammad al-Rawiya; al-Asma`i; Sahl ibn Harun; `Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa`; al-Yazidi; al-`Utbi al-Umawi; Abu Zaid Sa`id ibn Aws al-Ansari; al-Nadr ibn Shumail; `Ubaidullah ibn `A`isha; Abu `Ubaid al-Qasim ibn Sallam; `Ali ibn Muhammad al-Mada`ini; Damadh ibn Rufai` ibn Salama; Muhammad ibn Sallam al-Jumahi; Abu `Uthman `Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz; Abu Zaid `Umar ibn Shabba al-Numairi; al-Zuraqi al-Ansari; Abu al-Sa`ib al-Makhzumi; `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Sulaiman al-Nawfali; al-Zubair ibn Bakkar; al-Injili; al-Riashi; Ibn `A`idh; `Umara ibn Wathima al-Nasri; `Isa ibn Lahi`a al-Misri; `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Abdullah ibn `Abd al-Hakam al-Misri; Abu Hassan al-Ziadi; Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi; Abu Ja`far ibn Abi al-Sariyy; Muhammad ibn al-Haytham ibn Shababa al-Khurasani, author of *The Book of Government*; Ishaq ibn

Ibrahim al-Mawsili, author of the *Book of Songs* and other works; al-Khalil ibn al-Haitham al-Harthami, author of *Tricks and Deceits in Warfare* and other works; Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Mubarrad al-Azdi; Muhammad ibn Sulaiman al-Minqari al-Jawhari; Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Ghallabi al-Misri, author of the book called *Generous Men* and other works; Ibn Abi al-Dunya, tutor to the caliph al-Muktafi; Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Khuza`i, better known as al-Khaniqani al-Antaki; `Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Mahfuz al-Balawi al-Ansari, a companion of Abu Yazid `Umara ibn Yazid al-Madini; Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Barqi, the state secretary and author of the *Book of Elucidation*; Ahmad ibn Abi Tahir, author of the *History of Baghdad* and other works; Ibn al-Washsha'; `Ali ibn Mujahid, author of *History of the Umayyads* and other works; Muhammad ibn Salih ibn al-Nattah, author of *The Abbasid State* and other works; Yusuf ibn Ibrahim, author of *History of Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi* and other works; Muhammad ibn al-Harith al-Taghlibi, author of *The Moral Conduct of Rulers*, composed for al-Fath ibn Khaqan, and other works; and Abu Sa`id al-Sukkari, author of *Arab Verse*.

9. To these one must add `Ubaidullah ibn `Abdullah ibn Khurradadbeh who was a truly distinguished and delightful author, imitated by those who followed his style and learnt from him. If you care to check the truth of this statement, look at his major work of history. It is the most painstaking of all these historical works, the most skillfully composed, the most learned, and the most comprehensive where the history of non-Arab nations and kings, as well as others, is concerned. Among his other valuable works is his work entitled *Routes and Kingdoms* and other works, where a reader will find what he seeks and will come to appreciate that work when closely examined. Notable also is the work of Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Husaini al-`Alawi al-Dinawari, which deals with

the biography of the Prophet from birth to death and with the later history of caliphs and kings until the caliphate of al-Mu`tadid, covering all events of their times. Also to be noted is the work on genealogies by Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Baladhuri, and his other work on countries and their conquests, both by force and by treaty, from the Hijra of the Prophet onwards, and what was conquered in his days as well as in the days of later caliphs with all the events pertaining thereto. In it too is a description of countries in the east and west, north and south. We know of no better work on the conquests than this book.

10. There is also the book of history written by Dawud ibn al-Jarrah which includes a comprehensive account of Persian and other national histories. He was the grandfather of the vizier `Ali ibn `Isa ibn Dawud ibn al-Jarrah. In addition, there is the work of history written by Abu `Abdullah Muhammad ibn al-Husain ibn Sawwar, better known as Ibn Ukht `Isa ibn Farrukhan Shah, which is a comprehensive history of events of the pre- and post-Islamic era, reaching to the year 320 [932]. Abu `Isa ibn al-Munajjim wrote a history based on the Bible and other sources, covering the history of prophets and kings. Abu `Abd al-Rahman Khalid ibn Hisham al-Umawi wrote a history of the Umayyads, in which he recounted their achievements, virtues and unique and unparalleled institutions. There is also Abu Bishr al-Dulabi's work on history. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Khalaf, known as Waki` al-Qadi, wrote a noble work of history. Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Hashimi wrote a work on biography and history. A similar work of biography and history was written by Abu Ishaq ibn Sulaiman al-Hashimi. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi, author of the medical treatise *Al-Mansuri*, also wrote a history of the caliphs.

11. As regards `Abdullah ibn Muslim ibn Qutaiba al-Dinawari, he was a prolific author on a wide variety of topics, as for instance his book called

Al-Ma`arif and other works. When we come to the history of Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, we encounter a work that surpasses all other works. In it he gathered all sorts of histories, traditions and sciences. It is a work of great value and consequence. This is not surprising since its author was the most prominent jurist of his age and whose life, hermit-like, was totally devoted to scholarship. In him was consummated the knowledge of the jurists of all countries and of all historians and Hadith scholars. Next comes the history of Abu `Abdullah Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn `Arafa al-Wasiti al-Nahwi, known as Niftawayh. This is a work full of charm and value such as is found in the books of the elite and of the upper classes. He was the most accomplished author of his age and the most delightful of writers. So too is the work entitled *Al-Awraq* by Muhammad ibn Yahya al-Suli, which is devoted to the Abbasid caliphs and their poetry, and also his work on Abbasid viziers and poets. In these works he mentioned certain unusual events not cited by other authors and found nowhere else since he himself had witnessed them directly. He was a gifted and serious-minded scholar, and a successful and proficient author.

12. Next is the history of the viziers written by Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn al-Hasan, known as Ibn al-Mashita, which he brought down to the end of the caliphate of Al-Radi. There is also the work of Abu'l Faraj Qudama ibn Ja`far, the state secretary, who was a skilled and astute author, precise in language and exact in expression. If one wishes to ascertain this, one might look at his book of history called *Zahr al-Rabi`* or examine his work called *Kitab al-Kharaj*, and one will be satisfied as to the truth and accuracy of our description. Next is the work of history called *Al-Bahir* written by Abu'l Qasim Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn Hamdan al-Mawsili, the jurist, where he contests the book called *Al-Rawda* by Al-Mubarrad. Then there is the book written by Ibrahim ibn Mahawayh al-Farisi where

he contests the work called *Al-Kamil* by Al-Mubarrad. Next is the work of Ibrahim ibn Musa al-Wasiti, the state secretary, devoted to the histories of viziers, in which he contests the book of Muhammad ibn Dawud ibn al-Jarrah on the viziers. `Ali ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Fath, known as al-Mutawwaq, wrote a history of several viziers of the caliph al-Muqtadir.

13. The following works should also be cited: *Zahrat al-`Uyun wa Jala' al-Qulub* by al-Misri; the history written by `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Abd al-Razzaq, known as al-Jurjani al-Sa`di; the history written by Ahmad ibn Ya`qub al-Misri on the Abbasids and other works; the history of Abbasid caliphs and others written by `Abdullah ibn al-Husain ibn Sa`d, the state secretary; the history of Mawsil and other topics written by Abu Zakariyya al-Mawsili, and the history written by Muhammad ibn Abi al-Azhar, as well as his other work entitled *Al-Haraj wa'l Ahdath*.*

14. As for Sinan ibn Thabit ibn Qurra al-Harrani, I found him to have arrogated to himself what is not his specialty, and followed a path he should not have followed. I refer to a work he wrote in the form of an epistle addressed to some of his colleagues, the secretaries of state. He began this work by discussing in general terms the virtues of the soul and its divisions namely the rational, the righteously angry and the appetitive. He then briefly alluded to the political regime, along the lines of Plato's work on the political regime, which is in ten chapters, together with fleeting remarks regarding the duties of rulers and viziers. He went on to mention certain historical events which he asserted to be true though not witnessed directly by him. He coupled this with reports about the caliph al-Mu`tadid, how he kept the caliph's company and the times in the past that he spent with him. He then went back in time to mention every single caliph, in a manner which directly controverts normal historical method and the usual practice of historians. Although it is a good work which does not transgress its subjects, it has nevertheless been found deficient

because he went beyond the boundaries of his specialty and arrogated to himself a profession other than his own. Had he written a work of science on which he was a sole expert, like the geometry of Euclid, the secant lines, the Almagest and the Circles; and had he begun by explaining the views of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, treating the heavenly systems, meteorological phenomena, natural temperaments, relations, compositions, conclusions, premises and compound syllogisms, how natural things are distinguished from divine, substances, figures, and measurements of forms and other problems of philosophy, he would have avoided superficiality and would have produced something more worthy of his own area of expertise. But those who know their own capabilities or can spot error are few. `Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa`*wrote: “He who writes a book has made himself a target. If he does well, he gains renown. If he does badly he exposes himself to reproach.”

15. Al-Mas`udi said: Of the books of history, biography and traditions cited above, we mentioned solely those works whose authors are renowned and well known and made no mention of authors on Hadith and prosopography and their times and generations, since this would exceed what we can mention in this our present work. We have already made mention of Hadith scholars, biographers, historians and classes of scholars of every single age, from the Companions of the Prophet on to their Followers, the scholars of each age with their various and contrasting opinions among jurists of various countries, together with scholars of diverse views, religions, sects and polemics, taking this down to the year 332 [943-4]. All this may be found in our two works called *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *Al-Awsat*.

16. This present work I have called *Muruj al-Dhahab wa Ma`adin al-Jawhar* (“Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems”), because of its highly valuable and significant content. It includes the highlights found in our

earlier works that deal with its subject. I have dedicated it to the elite among rulers and scholars because of what it contains by way of summary information that people need or desire to know as regards the past. I planned it so as to refer to our earlier works but also to include summaries that every rational or well-educated person ought to know and cannot possibly ignore. No kind of science and no kind of history or tradition was left without mention in this book, either in detail or in an abbreviated form, or else alluded to it through one passing reference or another.

17. If anyone distorts any idea to be found in this work, or removes any concept from its context, or deliberately disregards any clear expression of its thoughts, or casts doubt on any evidence cited in its biographies, or otherwise alters it or changes it, or extracts from it, or abbreviates it, or attributes it to another author, may the anger and vengeance of God and His calamities speedily fall upon him whereby he can no longer bear them, leaving him in utter confusion and making him an example to the world and an admonition to men who reflect and heed the signs of the divine. May God, Creator of heavens and earth, deprive him of what He had bestowed upon him, and cut short what He generously granted him of power and prosperity, whatever his religion or opinion might be. God is all-powerful.

I have recorded this warning at both the beginning and the end of my book to act as a deterrent to anyone whose fancies have led him astray, or whose wickedness has taken possession of him. Let him guard against the power of his Lord and be watchful as to his own end, for life is brief and the distance is short, and to God is the journey's end.

18. We next turn to the headings of our book's content and what each chapter contains by way of historical reports, if God wills, and the

blessings and salvation of God upon our Prophet Muhammad and his family.

Chapter two

A mention of this book's contents divided by chapters

19. We have set forth above the broad purposes of this work. We shall now cite in brief its chapters in order and as they relate to the work in general, so that it becomes easier for readers to consult, if God wills.

Chapter 3. An account of the world's creation and the creation of humanity from Adam to Ibrahim.

Chapter 4. An account of the story of Ibrahim and the prophets and kings of the Israelites that came after him.

Chapter 5. An account of Arkhubu`am, son of Sulaiman son of Dawud and of later kings of the Israelites and a brief mention of the prophets.

Chapter 6. An account of the interval between Christ and Muhammad.

Chapter 7. A brief account of the history of India, of Indian beliefs, the origin of its kingdoms, their moral conduct and modes of worship.

Chapter 8. An account of the earth, its seas, sources of rivers, mountains, the seven climes and the planets that govern them, and so forth.

Chapter 9. A brief account of the fluctuation of the seas and a brief account of major rivers.

Chapter 10. An account of the Abyssinian Sea and opinions regarding its extent, its branches and its gulfs.

Chapter 11. An account of conflicting views expressed regarding the ebb and flow of the tides and a summary of these views.

Chapter 12. An account of the Mediterranean Sea and of the views expressed regarding its length, breadth, and where it begins and ends.

Chapter 13. An account of the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and the Gulf of Constantinople.

Chapter 14. An account of the Caspian Sea, the Seas of Khazar and Jurjan, and a brief mention of the geographical disposition of all seas.

Chapter 15. An account of the Kings of China and the Turks, the dispersal of the children of Gomer, a history of China and its kings, and a brief account of their conduct and policies, and so forth.

Chapter 16. A brief account of reports about the seas, what they contain and their surroundings, with respect to their wonders, nearby nations, classes of kings and so forth.

Chapter 17. An account of the Caucasus mountains and a history of their nations such as the Alans, the Avars, and the Khazar, together with various kinds of Turks, Bulgars, and a history of al-Bab wa'l Abwab and neighboring kings and nations.

Chapter 18. An account of Suryani kings.

Chapter 19. An account of the kings of Mosul and Nineveh, that is to say the Assyrians.

Chapter 20. An account of the kings of Babylon, both Nabat and others, that is to say the Chaldeans.

Chapter 21. An account of the first Persian kings, their conduct and a brief history of them.

Chapter 22. An account of the independent kings and of the Arsacids who reigned between First and Second Persians.

Chapter 23. An account of the genealogies of the Persians and the views of people concerning them.

Chapter 24. An account of Sasanid kings, that is to say Second Persians, their conduct and a brief history of them.

Chapter 25. An account of Greek kings, their history, and what people have asserted regarding their early genealogy.

Chapter 26. A brief account of historical reports concerning Alexander and his exploits in India.

Chapter 27. An account of Greek kings after Alexander.

Chapter 28. An account of the Romans and what people have asserted regarding their earliest genealogies, the number of their kings, their dates and a brief account of their manners.

Chapter 29. An account of Christian Roman kings, that is, the kings of Constantinople, and a brief history of their era.

Chapter 30. An account of Roman kings after the coming of Islam and down to Romanus who is currently the king in the year 332.

Chapter 31. An account of Egypt, its history, its Nile, its wonders and reports about its kings.

Chapter 32. An account of the history of Alexandria, its construction, its kings, its wonders and other relevant matters.

Chapter 33. An account of Black Africans, their genealogies, their diverse races and kinds, their different habitats and a history of their kings.

Chapter 34. An account of the Slavs, their homelands, a history of their kings and the dispersal of their groups.

Chapter 35. An account of the Franks and Galicians, their kings and a brief history of these nations and their wars against the inhabitants of Andalusia.

Chapter 36. An account of the Lombards, their kings and their habitats.

Chapter 37. An account of `Ad, its kings and a brief history of this nation and what has been reported regarding the length of their life-spans.

Chapter 38. An account of Thamud, its kings, and of Salih its prophet, together with a brief history of this nation.

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Chapter 40. An account of diverse reports relating to the description of the earth, its countries and how human souls long for their homelands.

Chapter 41. An account of the disputes among people as to the reason why Yemen, Iraq, al-Sham and Hijaz were called by these names.

Chapter 42. An account of the Yemen, its genealogies and the views of people regarding this subject.

Chapter 43. An account of the Yemen, its kings such as the Tubba` and others, their conduct and their length of years.

Chapter 44. An account of the kings of al-Hira, both Yemenites and others, and their history.

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Chapter 47. An account of the religions of the Arabs and their beliefs in the pre-Islamic period, their dispersal in the lands, together with reports about the men of the elephant, the Abyssinians and `Abd al-Muttalib, and matters related thereto.

Chapter 48. An account of Arab beliefs regarding the spirit, the *Ham*, the *Safar* and what they related regarding these topics.

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Chapter 50. An account of people's views regarding the *hawatif* and the *jinn*, among both Arabs and others, as well as those who affirmed their existence and those who denied it.

Chapter 51. An account of Arab beliefs regarding tracking, augury, divination from birds, auspicious and inauspicious gazelles and other matters.

Chapter 52. An account of soothsaying and its characteristics and people's reports of it, together with the definition of the rational soul and how it is distinguished from other parts of the soul, in addition to what has been said about what one sees during sleep and matters related thereto.

Chapter 53. A brief account of reports concerning soothsayers, the flood of `Arim in the land of Saba' and Ma'rib, and the dispersal of the Azd in the lands, and where they eventually settled.

Chapter 54. An account of the chronology of Arabs and non-Arabs, their months and where they agree and disagree.

Chapter 55. An account of the months of the Copts and Syrians, and the differences in naming them, together with a brief history and other relevant matters.

Chapter 56. An account of the months of the Suryan and where these agree with the months of the Romans, together with the number of days in a year and knowledge of meteorology.

Chapter 57. An account of the months of the Persians and matters related thereto.

Chapter 58. An account of the Persian days and related matters.

Chapter 59. An account of the years and months of the Arabs and what they called their days and nights.

Chapter 60. An account of Arab views regarding the nights of lunar months and matters related thereto.

Chapter 61. A brief account of views regarding the effects of sun and moon on the world, and matters related thereto.

Chapter 62. An account of the earth, its natural characteristics, its climates and what is distinct in each sector such as east, west, north and south, and other matters to do with the influence of the stars.

Chapter 63. An account of the great temples and hallowed sanctuaries and fire temples or idols, together with an account of the religions of India and a mention of the planets and other wonders of the world.

Chapter 64. An account of the great temples of the Greeks and a description thereof.

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Chapter 69. A summary account of the world's history from the beginning to the birth of our Prophet Muhammad and reports relevant thereto.

Chapter 70. An account of the birth of the Prophet and his lineage together with reports relevant thereto.

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Chapter 72. An account of his emigration and a general narrative of his life and times until his death.

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Chapter 74. An account of his sayings, uttered for the first time and unrecorded by any human being before him.

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Chapter 79. An account of the Battle of the Camel, how it began, the fighting therein, and matters relevant thereto.

Chapter 80. A summary account of what happened between the peoples of Iraq and al-Sham at Siffin.

Chapter 81. An account of the two arbitrators and of the arbitration.

Chapter 82. An account of his [`Ali's] wars against the people of Nahrawan, that is the Kharijites, and matters related thereto.

Chapter 83. An account of the murder of `Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Chapter 84. A comprehensive account of his words, his ascetic conduct and other reports relevant thereto.

Chapter 85. An account of the caliphate of Al-Hasan ibn `Ali, and a brief account of his history and conduct.

Chapter 86. An account of the days of Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan and a brief history.

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Chapter 88. An account of the Companions of the Prophet and the praises that are their due, and of the virtues of `Ali ibn Abi Talib and al-`Abbas, God's mercy upon them.

Chapter 89. An account of the days of Yazid ibn Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan.

Chapter 90. An account of the murder of al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib and of those who were murdered from among his family and followers.

Chapter 91. An account of the names of the progeny of `Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Chapter 92. A brief account of the history of Yazid, his conduct, some of his unusual acts and how he behaved at the Battle of the Harra and elsewhere.

Chapter 93. An account of the days of Mu`awiya ibn Yazid, Marwan ibn al-Hakam, al-Mukhtar ibn Abi `Ubaid and `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair, and a brief narrative of their histories, conduct and some events of their times.

Chapter 94. An account of the days of `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, a brief account of his history and conduct and a mention of al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, his actions and some of his unusual stories.

Chapter 95. A brief account of the history of al-Hajjaj and his speeches, and how he acted on certain occasions.

Chapter 96. An account of the days of al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik, and a brief account of his history and conduct.

Chapter 97. An account of the days of Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik, and a brief account of his history and conduct.

Chapter 98. An account of the caliphate of `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Marwan ibn al-Hakam, and a brief account of his history, conduct and his ascetic way of life.

Chapter 99. An account of the days of Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik, and a brief account of his history and conduct.

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Chapter 101. An account of the days of al-Walid ibn Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik, and a brief account of his history and conduct.

Chapter 102. An account of the days of Yazid ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik and his brother Ibrahim, and a brief account of the events of their times.

Chapter 103. An account of the reason for partisanship between the Yemenis and the Nizaris, and the effects of this on the Umayyads because of the ensuing civil strife.

Chapter 104. An account of the days of Marwan ibn Muhammad ibn Marwan ibn al-Hakam.

Chapter 105. An account of the length of time and the years during which the Umayyad family ruled.

Chapter 106. An account of the noble Abbasid state, a brief account of the history of Marwan and his death, and a brief narrative of his history and conduct.

Chapter 107. An account of the caliphate of al-Saffah and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 108. An account of the caliphate of al-Mansur and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 109. An account of the caliphate of al-Mahdi and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 110. An account of the caliphate of al-Hadi and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 111. An account of the caliphate of al-Rashid and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 112. An account of the Barmakids and their history and the events of their times.

Chapter 113. An account of the caliphate of al-Amin and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 114. An account of the caliphate of al-Ma'mun and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 115. An account of the caliphate of al-Mu'tasim and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 116. An account of the caliphate of al-Wathiq and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 117. An account of the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 118. An account of the caliphate of al-Muntasir and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 119. An account of the caliphate of al-Musta'in and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 120. An account of the caliphate of al-Mu'tazz and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 121. An account of the caliphate of al-Muhtadi and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 122. An account of the caliphate of al-Mu`tamid and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a brief account of his days.

Chapter 123. An account of the caliphate of al-Mu`tadid and a comprehensive narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 124. An account of the caliphate of al-Muktafi and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 125. An account of the caliphate of al-Muqtadir and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 126. An account of the caliphate of al-Qahir and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 127. An account of the caliphate of al-Radi and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 128. An account of the caliphate of al-Muttaqi and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 129. An account of the caliphate of al-Mustakfi and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 130. An account of the caliphate of al-Muti` and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 131. A second comprehensive account of history from the Emigration until the present time which is the month of Jumada I, in the year 336, when we finished writing this book.

Chapter 132. An account of those who led the pilgrimage from the beginning of Islam until the year 335.

33. Al Mas`udi said: These as a whole are the chapter headings of this work. However, it may happen that in each chapter mention might be made of various sciences or historical reports not indicated in the chapter headings. These are arranged as outlined above but with a detailed treatment of the history of the caliphs and their ages in separate chapters devoted to each caliph, their conduct and history. This is followed by carefully chosen reports about them, their typical conduct, a general narrative of events during their reigns, reports about their viziers and the sciences discussed at their assemblies. In doing so, we shall allude to our other writings and works that have dealt with these subjects and disciplines.

This book has a total of 132 chapters, the first of which mentions the general purpose of the work while the second lists its chapters, and the last is a list of those who led the pilgrimage from the beginning of Islam until the year 335 [946-7].

Chapter 3

An account of the beginning of the world, of its creation and the creation of mankind

34. Al-Mas`udi said: There is general agreement among all Muslims that God created things in a matchless manner and having no origin. It is reported from Ibn `Abbas that God first created water so that His throne rested on water. When He desired to create His creation, He made smoke to rise from water which then ascended above the water and became the sky. He then caused the water to dry and made it into a single land. This land He then rent in two days into seven lands, these days being Sunday and Monday. God then created the earth upon the whale, the whale being the one mentioned in the Qur'an {By the Pen and what they trace in

lines}. The whale was in the water, the water on a rock, the rock on the back of an angel, the angel on a boulder and the boulder on the wind. This boulder is mentioned in the Qur'an when reporting the words of Luqman* to his son: { My son, even if it were the weight of a mustard seed upon a rock, or in the heavens, or on earth, God shall bring it to light. God is All-perceptive, All-experienced. } The whale shuddered and the earth trembled, so God fastened the mountains upon it and it became stable as mentioned in the Qur'an {He cast upon the earth towering mountains lest it should shake you violently.} He thus created the mountains and created what sustains life for its inhabitants, its trees and other requirements. This was done in two days, on Tuesday and Wednesday, as in the Qur'an {Say: You are blaspheming against Him who created the earth in two days, and you set up rivals to Him—He who is Lord of the Worlds. Above the earth He erected towering mountains and He blessed it and appraised its provisions in four days in equal measure to those who need them. Then He ascended to heaven while yet smoke and said to it and to the earth: “Come forth, willing or unwilling” and both responded “We come willingly.”}

35. That smoke was from the substance of water when it vaporized, so He made it into a single heaven. He then rent it into seven heavens in two days, on Thursday and Friday. In fact, Friday (*Jum`a*) is so called because God brought together (*jama`a*) the creation of the heavens and earth. Then God said: {And inspired each heaven with its disposition} which means that God created in each heaven its created beings, whether angels, seas or mountains with hailstones [Q.24:43].

36. The heaven above the earth is made of green emerald, the second heaven of white silver, the third of red ruby, the fourth of white pearl, the fifth of red gold, the sixth of yellow sapphire and the seventh of light. This last God covered with angels standing on one leg out of awe for

God's glory because of nearness to Him. Their legs pierce the seventh earth while their feet rest at a distance of a five hundred year-journey beneath the seventh earth and their heads are under the Throne but without touching it, while they repeat "There is no god but God {August Lord of the Throne}". Such has been their ritual ever since their creation and until the coming of the Last Hour. Beneath the Throne is a sea from which descend sustenance for humans and animals. God inspires it so that it sends down rain from one heaven to the next until the rain ends at a place called al-Abram. He then inspires the wind to carry the rain to the clouds which sift it. Beneath the sky of the earth is a sea of water which teems with crawling creatures, just like the seas on earth, and is held firmly through divine power.

37. Once having finished creating the earth, God first populated its surface with *jinn*, before Adam, creating them {from shimmering flame}. Iblis [Satan] was among them. God forbade them from shedding the blood of dumb animals and from open disobedience, but they shed blood and fought one another. When Iblis saw that they did not desist, he asked God to take him up to heaven where he joined the angels and worshipped God with great earnestness. God then sent the *jinn*, the party of Iblis, a troop of angels who drove them off to far distant islands, killing of their number what God willed. God made Iblis overseer of the earthly heaven, so his heart grew arrogant.

38. Then God willed to create Adam and said {to the angels: I shall appoint a deputy on earth}. They responded: Lord, who may this deputy be? He said: He shall have a progeny who will corrupt the earth, grow jealous of one another and kill one another. They said: O Lord {will you place therein one who sows discord and sheds blood while we chant your praises and proclaim your holiness? God said: I know what you do not}. God then sent Gabriel down to earth to bring Him some mud from it and

the earth said to Gabriel: I take refuge in God lest you might diminish me. So Gabriel returned having taken nothing from it. Then God sent Michael and the earth repeated its earlier words so he too returned without taking anything. Finally, God sent the angel of death. When the earth repeated its invocation the angel said: And I seek refuge in God if I return without having fulfilled His order. He then took some black, red and white soil. This is why the sons of Adam are of diverse colors. Adam was so called because he was taken from the soil (*adim*) of the earth. Other explanations for the name are also given.

39. God entrusted the angel of death with death. He then kneaded the soil and left it for forty years until it became clammy mud whose parts stuck together; he further left it for another forty years until it began to stink and change its form, as reported in the Qur'an {from fetid mud}, meaning malodorous. He then gave it a form but without a soul as expressed in the Qur'an {from dried clay}. When one hundred and twenty years had passed----some say forty---- as the Qur'an says {Surely there came upon man a span of time when he was a thing not worth remembering} the angels would pass by that form and be terrified, Iblis being the most terrified of the lot. He would pass by it and kick it with his foot and it would emit a sound as though from clay, like a clattering, as in the Qur'an {from dried clay}. Other views have been expressed regarding the term "dried clay". Iblis would enter through its nose and exit from its posterior and say: "You have been created for some purpose".

40. When God wanted to breathe a spirit into that form He said {to the angels: 'Kneel before Adam'; they knelt, all except Iblis who disdained and grew proud}. He said: 'Lord {I am better than he. You created me of fire but him You created from mud} and fire is a more noble substance than mud. It was I who was Your deputy on earth, I who was dressed in feathers, adorned with light and crowned with honor. It was I who

worshipped You in Your heaven and on Your earth.’ God said to him {Depart from this place, ever to be stoned. My curse shall be upon you until the Day of Judgment}. Iblis asked to be deferred {till the day they are resurrected} so God deferred him {until that well-known moment}. Iblis thus missed the purpose and significance for which he had been ordered to kneel before Adam.

41. Some people claim that Adam was a prayer niche for those ordered to kneel, the Creator himself being intended, and that the divine order to obey Adam was a kind of trial or test to those obligated to follow religious commandments. Others hold a different view. Then God breathed into him some of his spirit. Each time the spirit settled in some part of his body, he would go to sit, so God said: {Man has ever been impatient}. When the spirit attained its full extent in him, he sneezed and God said: “ O Adam, say ‘Praise be to God’ and your Lord will have mercy upon you.”

42. Al-Mas`udi said: What we have cited above of reports concerning the beginning of creation is cited in religious traditions and has been transmitted from earlier to later generations. We reported all this as was transmitted to us in their very words, or as we found it in their books, in addition to the existence of proofs regarding the creation of the world, making its creation certain. We have not seen fit to cite either the opinions of those who agree with this view and hold to it from among religious communities who believe in creation, nor seen fit to respond to those who oppose them and maintain that the world is eternal. This is because we have treated this question in our earlier books. At many points in this present work we mention in brief a number of sciences that use rationality, proof and dialectics which relate to several systems of belief and religions, but only to report them.

43. The following is reported from the Commander of the Believers, `Ali ibn Abi Talib: “When God wished to begin His creation, to create mankind and to originate His wonders, He set up all creatures in images like fine dust. This was before the leveling of the earth and the raising of the sky. God was still in the solitude of His sovereignty and might. He made a light to spread from His light and a beam from His radiance which glowed. The light was then focused in the midst of these obscure forms and settled upon the image of our Prophet Muhammad. God said: ‘You are the chosen one, the elect. With you is consigned My light and the treasures of My guidance. For your sake I have leveled the earth, caused the waters to roll, and the sky to be lifted. For your sake I have instituted reward and punishment, paradise and hell. I have appointed your family as guides, granting them of My hidden knowledge so that no subtle or secret learning can escape them. I have made them to be My proofs among mankind and to attest to My omnipotence and My oneness.’

44. “God then accepted their witness to His divinity and allegiance to His oneness. Once this was done, God caused the election of Muhammad and his family to infuse the intellects of mankind, and showed them that guidance lies with Muhammad, that the light was his, and that the imamate* belonged to his progeny, in order that justice might be instituted from the very beginning and also act as a warning. God then concealed creation in His divine invisibility and knowledge, set up the worlds, began time, caused the waters to roll, foam to rise, and smoke to be agitated. God’s throne then floated upon the waters. He leveled the earth on the surface of the water and made mist to rise from the waters, creating the sky. He then summoned them all to obedience and they submitted to his summons. God then created the angels from lights He originated and spirits He fashioned, and linked His oneness to the

prophethood of Muhammad which became renowned in heaven before he was sent as a prophet on earth.

45. “When God created Adam, He revealed his excellence to the angels and showed them why He had singled him out by way of prior knowledge. When selecting him for prophecy He informed them that He had taught him the names of all things. God thus made Adam into a prayer niche, a *ka`ba*, a gate and a direction of prayer, and made the saints and other illuminated spiritual beings kneel to him. He then alerted Adam to what He had consigned in him, and revealed to him the enormity of what He had entrusted to him, having called him an *imam* among the angels. Thus, Adam’s share of virtue is to have acted as a repository for our [ʿAli and his progeny’s] light. God continued to hide the light beneath the passage of time until He selected Muhammad in the purest of progenies. He called upon people openly and in secret, and invited them covertly and publicly and reminded them of the covenant which had preceded the creation of mankind. Whoever was fortunate to glimpse a beam of that ancient light was guided to His secret and came to recognize His truth. Whoever was driven by Iblis to ignore this deserved condemnation.

46. “Then the light passed on to our distinguished family members and shone forth in our *imams*. We [ʿAli’s family] are the lights of heaven and earth. Through us lies salvation and in us is the repository of knowledge. To us all matters shall end, and with our *Mahdi* all other proofs shall be set aside. He shall be the seal of *imams*, the savior of the community, the final object of the light, and the origin of all matters. We are the best of creation, the noblest of beings, and the proofs of the Lord of the worlds. Whoever cleaves to our allegiance and is firmly attached to our bond will truly enjoy happiness.”

All this was related from Abu `Abdullah Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn `Ali ibn al Husain, from Husain ibn `Ali, from the Commander of the Believers `Ali ibn Abi Talib. We have not bothered to cite the lines of transmission of these reports because we have already mentioned them in detail together with their uninterrupted transmission in our previous works, where we attributed them to the authorities mentioned in these works, the intention being to avoid wordiness and prolixity in this present work.

47. As to what is found in the Torah, we are told there that God began His creation on Monday and ended it on Saturday. This is why the Jews adopted that day as a feast day. The people of the Gospels claim that Christ rose from the tomb on Sunday and adopted that day as a feast day. However, the majority of jurists and historians assert that creation began on Sunday and ended on Friday. This is when the spirit was breathed into Adam, coinciding with April 6. Eve was created from Adam and they were made to inhabit paradise, three hours having passed of that day. They remained in paradise for a further three hours, that is, a quarter of a day, which equals 250 years of earthly time. Adam was made to descend in Sarandib*, Eve in Juddah*, Iblis in Baisan* and the snake in Isbahan. Adam landed in India on the island of Sarandib, on a mountain called al-Rahun*, still covered with the leaves he had torn from the leaves of paradise. The leaves then dried and the winds scattered them throughout the land of India.

48. It is stated, and God knows best, that the reason why India is the land of perfumes is because of those leaves, but other views also exist. This is why India is specially endowed with aloes wood, carnation, spices, musk and other perfumes. On that mountain [al-Rahun] glowed rubies and diamonds, and in the islands of its seas are colored crystals and diving fields of pearl in its depths. It is said that when Adam was made to

descend from paradise, he brought out with him a heap of cereals and thirty branches from the trees of paradise laden with diverse kinds of fruits, ten of which have a shell, these being: walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, pistachios, poppy, chestnut, pomegranates, oranges, bananas and oak nuts; ten had stones: plums, apricots, pears, dates, sorb, buckthorn, medlar, jujube, doum and black plums; ten have no shell and no covering when eaten: apples, quince, grapes, pears, figs, mulberry, citron, Armenian cucumber, cucumber and melon.

49. It is said that when Adam and Eve were driven from paradise, they landed in separate locations and met one another in a place called `Arafat, which was so called because this is where they recognized one another (*ta`arafa*). Adam desired Eve, so he slept with her and she conceived and delivered a male and a female. He called the male Qayin and the female Lubada. He slept with her again and she also delivered a male and a female. The male he called Habil and the female Iqlimiya. There is disagreement as to the name of the first born. Most people possessing revealed scriptures and others state that his name was Qayin, as we have mentioned. Other groups of people state that his name was Qabil, but the majority view is what we cited above. In his poem on the beginning of creation and of mankind, `Ali ibn al-Jahm declaimed:

They begat a son who was called Qayin

And lived to see of his progeny what they saw.

Habil grew up, as did Qayin

And no difference existed between them.

50. The people of revealed scripture state that Adam married the sister of Habil to Qayin and the sister of Qayin to Habil and differentiated between the two wombs in marriage, this being the custom of Adam in taking as much precaution as he could among close relatives because of necessity and the inability of progeny to be different or to move away.

The Magians assert that Adam did not differentiate between wombs and did not seek to separate them. In this regard they have a hidden aim, for they claim that it is a virtue and an advantage if a brother marries a sister or a mother marries her son. We have already discussed this matter in chapter 14 of our book called *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

51. Habil and Qayin then offered a sacrifice. Habil took care to select his best sheep and food, while Qayin deliberately selected his worst possessions. What transpired between them is related in the Qur'an and how Qayin murdered Habil. It is said that he killed him stealthily in the wilderness of Qa`, this being a locality in the region of Damascus in al-Sham. He killed him by crushing him with a stone. It is stated that the wild beasts from that moment grew averse to man since it was man who started to commit evil and murder. Having killed him, he was at a loss as to how to hide his body, and carried him from place to place on earth. God then sent one raven who killed another raven and buried him. Qayin felt remorse and said what is reported in the Qur'an: {What a wretch I am! Am I incapable of being like this raven and so conceal my brother's corpse?} He then buried him. When Adam learnt what had happened he was sad, dejected and horrified.

52. Al-Mas`udi said: A poem widely known among people which they attribute to Adam is one which he recited when in sorrow for the loss of his son, and is as follows:

The lands and all upon them have changed;

The earth's surface is dusty and ugly.

All tastes and colors have changed,

And handsome faces have lost their joy.

Its inhabitants, in exchange for the perfumed gardens of paradise,

Have as substitute trees bearing bitter fruit and tamarisk bushes.

An enemy has become our neighbor, accursed, who does not forget,

*And does not die so we can find relief.
Qayin has killed Habil, unjustly,
Alas for that handsome face!
Why should I not freely pour out my tears
As Habil now lies in his grave?
My long life is a burden to me
And I am not happy to be alive.*

53. I found that several books of history, biography and genealogy report that when Adam recited this poem, Iblis answered him from where he could be heard but not seen:

*Remove yourself from the lands and their inhabitants:
The wide earth has grown too narrow for you.
In paradise, you, Adam, and your wife Eve
Were free from the harm of this world.
My cunning and my scheming continued
Until the rich reward escaped you.
It was only through the mercy of the Almighty
That a breeze from the eternal garden now suffices you.*

54. In another work I found a single line of verse different from what we cited namely, that Adam heard a voice but saw no one, which recited:

*O father of Habil, both are killed
And your clan is like a slaughtered man.*

55. When Adam heard this, his sorrow increased for the past and present, and he knew that the killer will himself be killed. Then God communicated the following to him: “From you I shall make My light to issue forth, a light I want to pass through pure pedigrees and noble bloodlines, a light to be glorified above all others, and make him [Muhammad] to be the seal of prophets. I shall make his family the noblest of *imams* and caliphs. I shall bring time to an end with their era,

spread their call throughout the earth and illuminate it with their adherents. So mention the divine name, purify yourself, glorify God and praise Him, then sleep with your wife when in a pure state and My trust shall be transferred from you two to the child who will be born to you.”

56. Adam slept with Eve and she conceived at once. Her forehead shone and the light glowed in her visage and glittered in her eyes. When her confinement ended, she delivered a child as noble and dignified, and as handsome in face and perfect in form as a male child can be. He was enfolded in light and awe, majesty and nobility. The light passed from Eve to him until it glittered in the folds of his forehead and shone forth in his whole visage. Adam called him Shith, though some say Hibatullah. As he grew up and attained his youth and perfection and became fully mature, Adam communicated his trust to him and acquainted him with what he was to relay to him, informing him that he was the next proof of God after him [i.e. Adam] and deputy on earth, who would transmit God’s truth to his legates. He told him that he was the second bearer of the pure progeny and untainted posterity. So Adam delivered the trust to Shith who grasped it firmly and understood its import.

57. The death of Adam drew near and he died on Friday, April 6, at the same time as his own creation. Adam was 930 years old. Shith was the guardian of Adam’s progeny. It is said that when Adam died he had forty thousand descendants, children and grandchildren. People hold different views as to his place of burial. Some say his tomb is in Mina in the Mosque of Khaif, others that he is buried in a cave on Mount Abu Qubais,* and others mention other places. God knows best about this matter.

58. It is said that Shith acted as judge among the people and used as legal sources the revelations of his father and other legal revelations that he himself had received. Shith slept with his wife and she conceived Anush.

So the light was transferred to her and when she delivered him the light shone upon him. When Anush attained the prescribed age, Shith communicated the trust to him, and told him that this was their special honor, instructing him to acquaint his progeny with the truth and the importance of this honor, and to disclose this to their own progeny, thus making it a testament that is transmitted down the generations of mankind. This testament continued to be transmitted from one age to the next until God delivered the light to `Abd al-Muttalib and his son `Abdullah, father of the Prophet of God.

59. This topic is a point of contention among members of the Muslim community between those who believe in specific delegation and others who believe in election. Those who argue for delegation are the party of the Imamate, the party of `Ali ibn Abi Talib, and of his pure progeny. They hold that God left no historical age bereft of one who rises to preach the true word of God, whether they be prophets or trustees (*awsiya`*) and whose specific names are designated by God and his Prophet. Those who believe in election are the jurists of the major cities, the Mu`tazilites, the sects of the Khawarij, the Murji`a, many Hadith scholars, the commoners and some sects of the Zaydiyya.* These groups claim that God delegated the Muslim community to choose a man from among their number and to set him up as an *imam*. They claim that certain ages may be devoid of a divine proof, who is the infallible *imam* of the Shi`a. In what follows of this present work we shall make mention in brief of the arguments of both sides and their conflicts, and clarify the issues involved.

60. It is said that Anush continued to build up the earth, and that he is the progenitor of mankind from Adam to the exclusion of Adam's other progeny, though other views also exist. Shith had died at age 912. In the time of Anush, Qayin ibn Adam, the murderer of his brother Habil, was himself killed. A strange story is told of his death which we have already

related in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. Anush died on October 3, his lifespan having lasted 960 years. To him had been born Qainan on whose forehead the light had shone. So his father entrusted him with the covenant. He built up the lands until he died and his life span lasted 920 years. It is said that his death occurred in July, after the birth of his son Mihla'il, whose lifespan lasted 800 years. To Mihla'il was born Yarad and the light was passed on, the covenant was transmitted, and God's truth was proclaimed. It is said that many kinds of entertainment began in his days, brought about by the children of Qayin.

61. Wars then broke out between the children of Qayin and Yarad, and their stories have already been mentioned in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*. Discord arose between the children of Shith and others from the children of Qayin. A certain race in India who acknowledge Adam belongs to this branch of Qayin's progeny. Their land is the land of Qimar* in India, to which is attributed Qimari aloes wood. Yarad lived till the age of 962 and died in March.

62. Yarad was succeeded by Akhnukh, who is the prophet Idris. The Sabians* claim that he is Hermes, who is Mercury. God in the Qur'an informs us that he raised him {to an elevated rank}. His life on earth lasted 300 years, though some say more. He was the first to sew and thread and use the needle. Thirty divine revelations descended upon him. Twenty-one had already been revealed to Adam while twenty-nine were revealed to Shith, in which are found hymns and glorifications of God.

63. After him rose his son Mattushalakh son of Akhnukh, who built up the lands. The light shone on his forehead, and children were born to him. People have discussed many of his progeny, claiming that the Bulgars, Rus and Slavs are from that progeny. He lived till the ago of 960 and died in September. His son Lamak succeeded him, in whose days there was tumult and a mingling of races. He died aged 777 years.

64. After him came Nuh son of Lamak. Corruption and injustice had increased on earth so Nuh rose and called to the worship of God. But people persisted in their injustice and blasphemy. God cursed them and inspired Nuh to {build the Ark}. When this was completed, Jibril brought him Adam's coffin which contained his remains. He and those who followed him boarded the ship on Friday, March 19. Nuh and those with him stayed on board ship and afloat for five months while God flooded the whole earth in five months. God then ordered the earth to swallow the waters and the sky to stop raining. The ship came to settle on Mount Judi, which is a mountain in the land of Basurin and Jazirat Ibn `Umar in the region of Mosul. Between Mount Judi and the Tigris is a distance of 8 *farsakhs*. The place where the ship settled on top of that mountain is well known to this day.

65. Some say that certain parts of the earth did not quickly swallow up the waters, while other parts did so. Those parts which obeyed the divine command contained sweet water when dug up while other delinquent parts were punished by God with salt and briny water, salt pans and sand. What remained of waters that the earth could not swallow ran down to the deep cavities of the earth, among which are the seas. These latter are what remained of water whose earth had disobeyed God and in whom many nations were made to drown. Later in this book we shall make mention of reports concerning the seas and their description.

66. Nuh came down from the ship with his three sons: Sam, Ham and Yafith and his three daughters-in-law and, likewise, forty men and forty women. They walked down the mountain slope and there built a city they called Eighty (*Thamanin*) which retains that name to the present day, that is, the year 332 [943-4]. The progeny of those eighty people became extinct and God consigned the propagation of mankind to the progeny of Nuh's three sons. God in the Qur'an tells us this: {making his progeny

the only survivors}. But God knows best if this is the correct interpretation. The son who stayed behind and to whom his father said {My son, embark with us} was Yam.

67. Nuh divided the earth among his sons, assigning to each a particular part. Nuh cursed his son Ham because of a well known quarrel between them, saying: “Cursed be Ham, a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers.” Nuh also said: “Blessed is Sam. May God multiply Yafith, and may Yafith settle in the habitations of Sam.” I found in the Torah that Nuh lived after the flood for 350 years, thus making his total lifespan 950 years. Other figures are also given. So Ham set off followed by his children, and settled down in their habitations on the sea or land in accordance with what we shall mention below.

68. We shall now mention the dispersal of mankind on earth and their habitations from the children of Yafith, Sam and Ham. Sam settled in the midst of the earth, from the holy land [Hijaz] to Hadramawt, Oman and `Alij [desert in central Arabia]. Among his children were Aram son of Sam and Arfakhshad son of Sam. Among Aram’s children are `Ad ibn `Us ibn Aram, a group who settled in the Ahqaf desert [between Oman and Hadramawt]. To them, God sent their fellow clansman, the prophet Hud. Among them too is Thamud ibn Ghathir ibn Aram who inhabited al-Hajr between al-Sham and the Hijaz. To them God sent their fellow clansman, the prophet Salih. Their affair with Salih is widely known and reported. We shall mention below some brief reports about him and about other prophets.

69. There were also Tasam and Jadis, the two sons of Lawidh ibn Aram. They settled in al-Yamamah and Bahrain. As to their brother `Amliq ibn Lawidh, some of his progeny settled in the holy land while others settled in al-Sham. From among the latter descended the `Amaliqa, a number of nations who dispersed throughout the earth. Their brother, Amaim ibn

Lawidh ibn Aram, settled in the land of Persia. In the chapter of this book devoted to conflicting views concerning Persian genealogies, we will mention the views of those who regard Kayumarth as a descendant of Amaim ibn Lawidh. It is claimed that Amaim settled in the land of Wabar which, according to Arab historians, is dominated by the *jinn*.

70. The children of `Abil ibn `Us, brother of `Ad ibn `Us, settled in Medinah, the city of the Prophet, while Mas ibn Aram ibn Sam settled in the land of Babil [Babylon], on the banks of the Euphrates. The son of Mas was Nimrud who built the tower of Babil and the bridge of Babil on the Euphrates. He reigned for 500 years and is the king of the Nabat. In his days God dispersed languages, creating 19 languages among the children of Sam, 17 among the children of Ham and 36 among the children of Yafith. Thereafter, languages and dialects subdivided and dispersed. In later sections of this work we shall mention how mankind dispersed on earth and the verses they recited when they scattered from Babil. It is said that Falagh is the one who divided the earth among the nations, hence his name “Falagh” or “Faliij”, which means the divider.

71. Arfakhshad son of Sam son of Nuh begat Shalakh, and Shalakh begat Falagh who divided the earth. Falagh is the grandfather of Ibrahim. There is also `Abar ibn Shalakh and his son Qahtan ibn `Abar and his son Ya`rub ibn Qahtan. `Abar was the first to be greeted by his sons with the royal greeting: “Happy morning to you, and may you disdain any curse!” Some say others were greeted thus from among the kings of Hira. Qahtan is the ancestor of all Yemenites as will be mentioned in the chapter on conflicting opinions regarding Yemenite genealogy in this work. He is the first person to speak Arabic because he expressed (*a`raba*) its meanings clearly.

72. Yuqtan ibn `Abar ibn Shalakh is the father of Jurhum, and Jurhum are paternal cousins of Ya`rub. Jurhum once lived in the Yemen and spoke

Arabic, then settled in Mecca and remained there, as will be recorded of their history below. Qaturah are their paternal cousins. Then God made Isma`il settle in Mecca and he married into the Jurhum clan, who thus became the maternal uncles of his children.

73. The People of the Book state that Lamak son of Sam son of Nuh is still alive because God inspired the following to Adam: "He to whom I entrusted Adam's dead body shall be made to live forever." This is because Sam buried Adam's coffin in the middle of the earth and put Lamak in charge of the tomb. Sam died on a Friday in September and when God took his soul he was 600 years old. In charge of the earth after Sam was his son Arfakhshad who lived for 465 years and died in April. When God took his soul, his son Shalakh succeeded him and he lived 430 years before God took his soul. At his death, Shalakh was succeeded by his son `Abar who built up the earth. In his days there were tumults and conflicts on earth and he was 340 years old when God took his soul.

74. When God took `Abar's soul, his son Falagh arose and maintained the way of his ancestors. When God took his soul he was 239 years old. We mentioned him above when discussing the confusion of languages in Babil. When God took Falagh, his son Ar`u succeeded. It is said that the tyrant Nimrud was born in his days. When God took him, Ar`u was 200 years old. He died in April. Ar`u was succeeded by Sarugh, his son, and it is said that in his days there began the worship of idols and images because of certain misfortunes which were made to happen on earth. When he died, he was 230 years old.

75. When God took Sarugh's soul, his son Nakhur arose in his place and continued the way of his ancestors. In his days there were unprecedented tumults and earthquakes and a number of crafts and instruments were invented. His days also witnessed wars and the rise of sects in India and elsewhere. He was 146 years old when God took his soul. After him arose

his son Tarah, who is Azar, father of Ibrahim. In his days lived Nimrud son of Kan`an in whose days the worship of fires and lights was first instituted upon earth, and for which rituals of worship were instituted. The earth witnessed great tumults such as wars, the establishment of regions and kingdoms in east and west, and other events. There also began the study of stars and their effects, the constellations were drawn, instruments were invented to study them, and all this was made intelligible to people. The star gazers examined the ascendant for the year in which Ibrahim was born and what that entailed. They informed Nimrud that a child was about to be born who would disdain their fantasies and abolish their religious worship, so Nimrud ordered all newborns to be killed. Ibrahim was hidden in a cave. Azar, that is Tarah, was 260 years old when God took his soul.

Chapter 4

A mention of the story of Ibrahim, friend of God, and of later prophets and kings of the Israelites and others

76. When Ibrahim grew up and left the cave where he had been hiding, he contemplated the world, the signs of its creation, and the divine effects upon it. He first looked at Venus as it shone and said: "This is my God". When he saw that the moon shone more brightly he said: "This is my God". When he saw that the sun shone brightest of all he said: "This is my God". Diverse views have been expressed regarding that saying of Ibrahim. Some argue that he said that phrase by way of deduction and investigation; others argue that this was said by him before the age of maturity and legal obligation; yet others have held different views. The angel Jibril then came to him and taught him his religion, and God chose him to be a prophet and friend. He, as related in the Qur'an, {had been bestowed with reason before that}. Whoso has been bestowed with reason and right guidance is immune from error and defect or the worship

of any save the one eternal God. So Ibrahim reproached his people when he saw them worshipping carved images as gods. When Ibrahim's censures of their gods grew and became widely known, Nimrud prepared a fire into which he threw him but God made that fire {cool and comforting}. That day, all fires throughout the earth were extinguished.

77. To Ibrahim was born Isma`il, Ibrahim being then 86 years old, or 90 in some accounts. His mother was Hajar, a slave girl of Sarah. Sarah had been the first to believe in Ibrahim. She was the daughter of Batu'il son of Nakhur, and thus a paternal cousin of Ibrahim. Other views have also been expressed which we shall cite later.

78. Lut also believed in God, Lut being the son of Haran, son of Tarah son of Nakhur, and so Ibrahim's nephew. God sent Lut to the five towns: Sadum, Ghamura, Admuta, Saghura and Sabura. The people of Lut were the people inhabiting the toppled cities (*mu'tafika*), and the name itself is derived from lying (*ifk*), in the view of etymologists. God mentioned this in the Qur'an in saying: {it was he who toppled the towns}. These lands lie between the borders of al-Sham and the Hijaz, close to al-Urdunn and Palestine but remain in the ambit of al-Sham. They still exist at this present time which is the year 332, and are in ruins and uninhabited. The stones {piled and marked} are still in evidence and can be seen by travelers, black and shiny. Lut remained among them calling to God for twenty and some years but they did not believe. So the divine punishment overtook them in accordance with what God has related of their story and their affairs.

79. When Isma`il was born to Ibrahim from Hajar, Sarah was jealous, so Ibrahim carried Isma`il and Hajar to Mecca and settled them there. God thus reported that incident, quoting the words of Ibrahim {Our Lord, I have settled some of my progeny in a valley where no vegetation grows}. God answered his prayer and comforted their solitude by having Jurhum

and the `Amaliq as their neighbors and turned {the hearts of some towards them}. God also destroyed the people of Lut in the time of Ibrahim because of their open and manifest sins.

80. God then ordered Ibrahim to slaughter his son, and he was quick to obey his Lord and {bent his head down and on its side} but God ransomed him {with a mighty sacrifice}. Then Ibrahim raised up {the foundations of the House with Isma`il}. To Ibrahim was born Ishaq from Sarah when he was already 120 years old. People have disagreed about which son was the one about to be sacrificed, with some maintaining it was Ishaq and others Isma`il. If the divine order to sacrifice took place in Mina, it was Isma`il because Ishaq never entered the Hijaz; if the order took place in al-Sham, it was Ishaq because Isma`il never returned to al-Sham once he had been taken away from it. Sarah then died and Ibrahim later married Qiturah who delivered six male children: Zimran, Yaqsan, Madan, Madyan, Yasbaq and Suwah. Ibrahim died in al-Sham and was 175 years old when God took his soul. To him were revealed ten scriptures.

81. After Ibrahim's death, Ishaq married Rafaqa daughter of Batu'il. To him were born Al`is and Ya`qub, twins from one womb. The first to emerge was Al`is, followed by Ya`qub. At the time of their birth Ishaq was 60 years old. He then grew blind so called for Ya`qub to be head of his brothers and for prophecy to descend in his progeny while kingship was to descend in the progeny of Al`is. Ishaq, when God took his soul, was 185 years old and was buried with his father Ibrahim, the Friend of God, their tombs being well known and at a distance of 18 miles from Jerusalem in a mosque there known as the Mosque of Ibrahim and his pastures.

82. Ishaq had ordered his son Ya`qub to travel to al-Sham and gave him tidings of his prophecy and that of his twelve sons. These were: Rubin,

Shim`un, Lawi, Yahuda, Yashsakh, Zabulun, Yusuf, Binyamin, Dhan, Niftal, Qadh and Ashar. These are the twelve tribes. Prophecy and kingship are in the progeny of four of them: Lawi, Yahuda, Yusuf and Binyamin. Ya`qub grew increasingly afraid of his brother Al`is but God set his mind at rest. Ya`qub had 5500 head of sheep so gave a tenth of these to his brother Al`is to ward off his evil and from fear of his anger, although God had calmed his fear and assured him that he would have no power over him. God then punished Ya`qub for disregarding his promise, and inspired him with the following words: "You refused to be reassured by what I had said to you, so I shall make the progeny of Al`is rule over yours for 550 years." Thus, the period from the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the enslavement of the Israelites until `Umar ibn al-Khattab conquered Jerusalem was 550 years.

83. Yusuf was the dearest of Ya`qub's sons to his father, so his other brothers grew jealous. What transpired between him and his brothers has been narrated by God in his book as revealed to his Prophet, and is widely known among Muhammad's community. God took Ya`qub's soul in Egypt when aged 140 years, so Yusuf carried his body to be buried in the land of Palestine at the tomb of Ibrahim and Ishaq. God took Yusuf's soul when aged 110. His body was placed in a coffin made of marble, fastened with lead and coated with pigments which resisted water and made the coffin airtight. The coffin was then thrown into the Nile near the town of Manf [Memphis], where his mosque stands. It is also said that Yusuf stipulated in his will that he should be buried near his father Ya`qub's tomb in the Mosque of Ibrahim.

84. In his days lived the prophet Ayyub. He is Ayyub ibn Amus ibn Zarah ibn Ra`wil ibn Al`is ibn Ishaq ibn Ibrahim. He lived in al-Sham in the region of Hawran and al-Bathaniyya in the land of al-Urdunn, between Damascus and al-Jabiya. He was a very wealthy man with many

children. God tested him by sending him calamities that ravaged him, his wealth and his children, but he bore them all with patience. God then restored what he had lost, and ended his travails. God narrated some of his story in His book as revealed to His Prophet. His mosque and fountain where he cleansed himself both exist to the present day, which is the year 332, and are widely known in the region of Nawa and al-Jawlan between Tiberias and Damascus, in the land of al-Urdunn. This mosque and fountain are at a distance of three miles or so from the town of Nawa, and the rock where he and his wife Rahma used to take refuge during their calamities can still be found in the mosque until the present day.

85. The people of the Torah and of ancient scriptures state that Musa ibn Manashsha ibn Yusuf ibn Ya`qub was a prophet before Musa ibn `Imran, and that it was he who sought out al-Khadir ibn Malkan ibn Falagh ibn `Abar ibn Shalakh ibn Arfakhshad ibn Sam ibn Nuh. Some People of the Book assert that al-Khadir is Khidrun ibn `Ama'il ibn Alifaz ibn Al'is ibn Ishaq ibn Ibrahim, that Moses was sent to his people, and that they responded to his call. On the other hand, Musa ibn `Imran ibn Qahat ibn Lawi ibn Ya`qub lived in Egypt at the time of the mighty Pharaoh, the fourth of Egypt's Pharaohs. This latter had lived long and his body had grown large. His name was al-Walid ibn Mus`ab ibn Mu`awiya ibn Abi Numair ibn Abi al-Hilwas ibn Laith ibn Haran ibn `Amr ibn `Imlaq.

86. Following the death of Yusuf, the Israelites were enslaved and their calamities multiplied. Soothsayers, astrologers and magicians had informed the Pharaoh that a child was about to be born who would destroy his kingdom and bring about great changes in the land of Egypt. The Pharaoh was alarmed and ordered all babies slaughtered. The story of Musa and of how God inspired his mother to throw him into the water has been told clearly in the Book of God revealed to His Prophet Muhammad. At that time there also lived the prophet Shu`aib who is

Shu`aib ibn Nawil ibn Ra`wa`il ibn Murr ibn `Ifa ibn Madyan ibn Ibrahim. Shu`aib spoke Arabic and was sent to the people of Madyan. When Musa left Egypt, escaping Pharaoh, he passed by the prophet Shu`aib and God in the Qur`an has made mention of their encounter, and how he gave Musa his daughter in marriage.

87. {And God spoke to Musa in plain speech}. God supported him with his brother Harun and sent them both to Pharaoh who rejected their call, so God drowned the Pharaoh. God had ordered Musa to depart with the Israelites from Egypt and into the desert. They were six hundred thousand in number, both adults and non-adults. The tablets that God had sent down to his prophet Musa ibn `Imran on Mount Sinai were made of green emerald with the writing in gold. As he descended from the mountain he saw that some Israelites had taken to worshipping a calf. Musa shook with anger and the tablets fell from his hand and broke. He collected the fragments and placed them in the coffin of Sakina with other objects, and put them in the temple. Harun was a priest and guardian of the temple. God completed His revelation of the Torah upon Musa while he was in the desert. God took Harun`s soul and he was buried in the mountain of Mu`ab near the Sarat mountains beyond Mount Sinai. His tomb is well known and is in an ancient cave where on certain nights, a loud clamor is heard coming out of it that terrifies every living creature. It is said that he is not buried there but simply placed in it. This locality has an unusual history and whoever has visited it will know what we have here described.

88. His death took place seven months before the death of Musa. At his death he was 123 years old, though 120 is also mentioned. It is said that God took Musa`s soul three years after the death of Harun, that he went into al-Sham where he waged war, sending expeditions from the desert against the `Amaliq, the Qurbaniyyun and the Madyanites among others,

as mentioned in the Torah. God made ten scriptures to descend upon Musa, a total of one hundred. He then revealed to him the Torah in Hebrew which contains commandments and prohibitions, the licit and illicit, rules and regulations, and this in five books (*asfar*) and by book they mean a scripture (*sahifa*). Musa had constructed the coffin in which lay the Sakina from gold, weighing 600,750 *mithqals**. Following Harun, the leader was Yusha` ibn Nun, from the tribe of Yusuf.

89. God took Musa's soul at age 120. Neither he nor Harun experienced any grey hairs nor did they change their youthful appearance. When Musa died, Yusha` ibn Nun urged the Israelites to proceed to al-Sham, then dominated by the Jababira, kings of the `Amaliq, and other kings. Yusha` sent out expeditions against them and there were wars between them. He conquered the region of Jericho and Zughar from the land of Ghawr, that is, the land around the Foul-smelling Lake. This lake does not swallow up those who drown nor can any living creature survive in it, whether fish or anything else. The author of the Logic [Aristotle] and other philosophers before and after him have mentioned it. Into it pour the waters of Lake Tiberias, that is, the Jordan river (*al-Urdunn*). The waters of Lake Tiberias originate from Lake Kfarla and al-Qar`awn, in the region of Damascus. As the waters of the Jordan debouch into the Foul-smelling Lake, they cut through to its midst, remaining distinct from the waters of that lake, then sink into its center. The Jordan is a great river but it is not known where it sinks, and this without adding to or diminishing from the lake itself.

90. The Foul-smelling Lake has engendered many lengthy reports and stories that we have cited at length in our two previous works, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In these works, we mentioned the stones thrown up by that lake in the shape of melons. These come in two forms, each of which is called the "Jewish stone". This stone is mentioned by the

philosophers and is used by physicians to treat gall-bladder stones. It comes in two forms, male and female, the male to treat males and the female females. From this lake is also extracted the medicine called Jew's pitch (*humar*). There is no lake on earth---and God knows best---where no living creature, fish or otherwise, can live except this lake and another lake I once sailed on in the land of Adharbaijan between the towns of Armiya and Maragha. That lake is known there as Kabudhan. People in the past have discussed the reason why no living being can survive in the Foul-smelling Lake but made no mention of Lake Kabudhan. By analogy with their reasoning, the cause in the two cases must be one.

91. The king of the Greeks [*al-Rum*], al-Samaida`* ibn Hawbar ibn Malik, marched against Yusha` ibn Nun, and, following several battles, Yusha` killed him and took over all his domains, and added other domains like those of al-Jababira and al-`Amaliq. He also raided the land of al-Sham. Yusha` led the Israelites for twenty-nine years after the death of Musa. He is Yusha` ibn Nun ibn Ifra'im ibn Yusuf ibn Ya`qub ibn Ishaq ibn Ibrahim. It has been asserted that Yusha` began his campaign against the king of the `Amaliq, al-Samaida`, in the land of Ayla near Madyan. Concerning this `Awf ibn Sa`d al-Jurhumi recited the following verse:

*Have you not seen how the flesh of `Amlaqi, son of Hawbar,
Has been torn to shreds at Ayla?
Marching against him were Jewish armies,
Eighty thousand in number, both armorless and wearing armor.
They thus became the equal of the `Amaliq, after his death,
Marching on earth, ascending or descending [reading furra`an].
It was as if the `Amaliq had never existed among Mecca's mountains,
Or as if none had ever seen al-Samaida`.*

92. In a village in the Balqa'* region of al-Sham there lived a man called Bal'am ibn Ba'ur ibn Samum ibn Firistim ibn Mu'ab ibn Lut ibn Haran. He was a man whose prayers were answered. His people forced him to call down curses on Yusha` ibn Nun but he could not carry this out. He advised some kings of the `Amaliq to bring out beautiful women and parade them before the troops of Yusha`. These latter quickly fell upon the women so a plague struck them and ninety thousand of them died--- some say more. Bal'am is the one of whom God in the Qur'an spoke as having received revelations but {he forsook them}. It is said that Yusha` ibn Nun died aged one hundred and ten years.

93. After Yusha` the Israelites were led by Kalib ibn Yufanna ibn Baras ibn Yahuda. Yusha` and Kalib are the two men mentioned in the Qur'an {upon whom God bestowed his favor}. Al-Mas`udi said: I found in another version that the leader of the Israelites after Yusha` was Kushan al-Kufri, who led them for eight years then died. Following him as ruler was `Uthuna'il ibn Qanas from the tribe of Yahuda who reigned for forty years. He killed a mighty man called Kush who lived in the Balqa' in Ma'ab. Thereafter the Israelites apostasized, so God caused Kan`an to rule over them for twenty years, after which he died. The Israelites were then led by `Imlal (`Ili?), the priest (*ahbari*), for forty years. Then Shamuil rose to lead them, who was followed by Talut, at which time the mighty Jalut, king of the Barbar in the land of Palestine, attacked them.

94. Al-Mas`udi said: If we follow the first version cited above, the ruler after Yusha` was Kalib ibn Yufanna after whom came Finhas ibn Al`azar ibn Harun ibn `Imran, who led them for thirty years. Finhas took the scriptures of Musa and put them in a cask of copper, sealed its mouth with lead and took it to the rock in Jerusalem before there was a building there. The rock parted to reveal a cave and a second rock. He put the cask on top of it and the rock closed up again to become as it had been before.

When Finhas died, the Israelites were governed by Kushan the wicked, king of al-Jazira*. He enslaved the Israelites and brought them calamities for eight years.

95. The Israelites were then led for forty years by `Uthuna`il ibn Yufanna, brother of Kalib from the tribe of Yahuda; he was followed by `Ajlun king of Mu`ab for eighteen years but with great duress; he was followed by Ahud from the progeny of Ifra`im for fifty-five years. Thirty-five years had elapsed from his reign when the world itself became four thousand years old, but other dates have also been cited. He was followed by Shamghar ibn Ahud who led them for twenty-five years. The Israelites were then subjugated by Yabin al-Kan`ani, king of al-Sham, for twenty years. He was followed as ruler by a woman called Dabura, said to have been Yabin`s daughter, who associated with her a man from the tribe of Niftal called Baraq, and this lasted for forty years.

96. They were then ruled by chieftains from the tribe of Madyan: `Urib, Zawib, Banuria, Dara` and Salta for a period of seven years and three months; they were followed by Jad`un from the tribe of Manashsha who led them for forty years and killed the kings of Madyan; he was followed by his son Abu Malakh for three years and three months; he was followed by Tula` from the tribe of Ifra`im for twenty-three years; he was followed by Ya`ir from the tribe of Manashsha for twenty-two years; then there followed the kings of `Amman for eighteen years; then these were followed by Bajshun from Bethlehem for seven years; then by Shanshun for twenty years; then Amlah for ten; then `Ajrán for eight; then they were subjugated by the kings of Palestine for forty years; then `Ilan the priest for forty years.

97. In his days the Babylonians conquered the Israelites and carried away the coffin [Ark] which the Israelites had used to implore God`s assistance. The Babylonians carried it to Babylon after driving the

Israelites from their homes along with their children and what remained of the family of Hizqil. These are mentioned in the Qur'an: {those who left their homes in their many thousands, fearing death, but God said to them, "Die"; then he restored them to life}. A plague had fallen upon them and three tribes remained: one group travelled into sandy wastes, another to an island in the sea, a third to the high mountains. A lengthy story is told of them and of how when they returned home they said to Hizqil: "Has any nation ever suffered the calamities that we have?" He replied: "No, nor have I heard of a nation who fled from God the way you have." After seven days, God struck them with a plague and they all perished.

98. Following `Ilan the priest the Israelites were led by Ishmawil ibn Yaruhan ibn Nakhur, who claimed to prophesy and lasted twenty years. God relieved them from the duty of fighting and put their affairs in order. Thereafter, however, they grew restive and said to Ishmawil: {Send us a king, and we will fight in the way of God}. So he ordered that Talut be appointed king. Talut's name is Shawil ibn Qis ibn Abi'al ibn Sarur ibn Bakhurath ibn Afyah ibn Samidah ibn Falakh ibn Binyamin ibn Ya`qub ibn Ishaq ibn Ibrahim. So God made him reign over them and none before Talut had ever succeeded in uniting them. Between the exodus from Egypt under Musa and the appointment of Talut as king of the Israelites was a period of five hundred and seventy-two years and three months.

99. Talut was a tanner who worked in leather. Their prophet Ishmawil had informed them that {God has sent you Talut as king}. They said of him what God has related in the Qur'an: {How can he have kingship over us while we are more worthy of kingship than him, and he has not been given any measure of wealth?} Their prophet told them that {a sign of his kingship is that the coffin will come to you in which is assurance from

your Lord and a remnant of what the family of Musa and the family of Harun had left, carried by the angels}. Thus the coffin remained in Babylon for ten years. At dawn they heard the rustling of angels carrying the coffin back.

100. The might of Jalut grew, as also his armies and commanders. When Jalut heard that the Israelites had submitted to Talut, he marched against them from Palestine with diverse kinds of Barbar. Jalut is ibn Malud ibn Dibal ibn Hattan ibn Faris. He then camped in the abode of the Israelites. Ishmawil ordered Talut to march out with the Israelites against Jalut, but God tested by placing a river between al-Urdunn and Filastin and tormented them with thirst, the story being narrated in the Qur'an. They were commanded as to how to drink from that river, but those whose faith was weak lapped up the water like dogs, so Jalut killed them all. Talut then chose 313 of their best warriors among whom were the brothers of Dawud. Dawud joined his brothers and the two armies faced each other. The battle between them went to and fro. Talut then called out to people and promised anyone who would face Jalut in single combat a third of his kingdom and marriage with his daughter. Dawud came out to meet him and killed him with a sling, using a stone which he carried in his satchel. Jalut fell down dead. God in the Qur'an informs us that {Dawud killed Jalut}. It has been said that the stone in Dawud's satchel was three stones joined together to make one stone. The narratives relevant to this incident have been cited in our previous books. These were the stones that killed Jalut.

101. It is said that it was Jalut who killed those who lapped up the water and disobeyed their commands. In our earlier work, *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we mentioned the story of the coat of mail that their prophet informed them would fit only him who would kill Jalut and how it fitted Dawud alone, as well as the wars between them, as also the river that dried up,

the tyranny of Talut, and the history of the Barbar and the origins of their genealogies. In later sections of this book and in their appropriate places we shall make mention in brief of their history and their dispersal in the lands.

102. God elevated the prestige of Dawud and diminished the prestige of Talut. Talut refused to carry out his earlier promise to Dawud. When he saw how people's hearts inclined to him, Talut gave him his daughter in marriage, surrendered a third of the kingdom's taxes to him plus a third of the government and rule over a third of the population. Thereafter, he grew jealous of him and wanted to assassinate him but God prevented this, and Dawud refused to share the kingdom with him. Dawud's power increased, and Talut, going to sleep on his royal throne, died at night from sorrow. The Israelites then submitted to Dawud. Talut's reign lasted twenty years. It has been stated that the place where Jalut was killed was in Baisan, in the region of Ghawr, in the land of al-Urdunn.

103. God softened iron for Dawud so he made of it coats of mail. God also made mountains submit to him as also the birds who glorified God with him. Dawud waged war against the people of Mu'ab in the land of al-Balqa'. God also revealed al-Zabur [Psalms] to him in Hebrew in 150 chapters and divided this into three parts: the first third speaks about what they shall suffer at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar [Bukht Nassar] and other future events; the second third what they will suffer at the hands of the people of Athur; and the last third sermons, incitements to virtue, glorification of God and warnings of His anger. But it contains no religious commandments, prohibitions, or the licit and illicit. Dawud's affairs were now in order. The rebels among the unbelievers fled to the ends of the earth from fear of Dawud. Dawud built a house of worship in Jerusalem, a structure that still stands to the present time, that is, the year 332, and is known as the prayer niche (*mihrab*) of Dawud. It is the tallest

structure in Jerusalem at this time and from its top can be seen the Foul-smelling Lake and the River Jordan, already mentioned above.

104. The incident involving Dawud and the two adversaries has been correctly narrated in the Qur'an and how Dawud said to one of them before hearing the other {He has treated you unjustly}. People have argued at length regarding Dawud's sin. Some state what we have stated, denying that prophets can commit major sins and intentionally act immorally, that they are infallible, and that his sin was what we have described. This is confirmed in the Qur'an as follows: {O Dawud, We have appointed you a deputy on earth so judge among people with justice}. Others argue that his sin relates to the story of Uriah ibn Hayyan and the manner of Uriah's death as related in history books that deal with ancient history and other works. God pardoned Dawud after he had spent forty days fasting and weeping. Dawud married a hundred women. Sulaiman grew up to be an outstanding person who shared with his father the task of judging. God granted him eloquence and excellence in judgment as mentioned in the Qur'an {to each we granted judgment and learning}. When Dawud was about to die, he appointed his son Sulaiman to succeed him and died. Dawud reigned over Palestine and al-Urdunn for forty years. His army was sixty thousand in number, with swords and shields, hairless and beardless, men of courage and bravery.

105. In the days of Dawud, there lived in the land of Ayla and Madyan Luqman the Wise. He is Luqman ibn `Ifa ibn Madyan ibn Sarur. He was a Nubian, client* of al-Qayn ibn Jasr, and was born ten years into the reign of king Dawud. He was a virtuous servant of God, and God bestowed wisdom upon him. He remained alive on earth displaying his wisdom and asceticism until the days when Yunus ibn Matta was sent to the people of Ninawa in the region of Mosul.

106. When Dawud died, Sulaiman his son succeeded, possessing both prophecy and wisdom. His justice safeguarded his subjects, his affairs were in order and the armies submitted to him. Sulaiman began the building of the holy house which is al-Aqsa Mosque, whose precincts God had blessed. When this was finished, he built for himself a mansion which today is called the Church of Resurrection, the greatest church for Christians in Jerusalem. The Christians have other great churches in Jerusalem such as the church of Sahyun, mentioned by Dawud, and the church of Jusmaniyya [Gesthemane], which they claim contains the tomb of Dawud. God granted Sulaiman of the power of kingship what He had granted none before him, causing mankind, the *jinn*, the birds and the winds to submit to him, as recorded in the Qur'an. Sulaiman ruled over the Israelites for forty years and died aged fifty-two years.

Chapter 5

A mention of Arkhubu`am ibn Sulaiman ibn Dawud and the kings of the Israelites who followed him, and a brief history of the prophets

107. Following the death of Sulaiman, his son Arkhubu`am became king of the Israelites, and the tribes all agreed to his rule. Later, they all abandoned him except the tribes of Yahuda and Binyamin. His reign lasted seventeen years until his death. Yurubu`am ruled over the ten tribes, and wars and other events then took place. He made a golden calf studded with jewels and took to worshipping it, so God destroyed him. His rule lasted twenty years. Succeeding him was Abya son of Arkhubu`am son of Sulaiman who reigned for three years. He was followed by Akhab for forty years then Yuram. This last declared the worship of idols and images and ruled for eight years. After him came Akhazyia for one year.

108. The Israelites were then ruled by a woman called `Ataliya who put to the sword the progeny of Dawud of whom there only remained one

child. The Israelites condemned her action then killed her. She reigned for seven years, and other figures are also given. They then set up that youth as king over them. He was seven years old when his reign began and he remained king for forty years, though some say less. Following him as king was Amsya who reigned for twenty-nine years, then `Uzia for fifty-two years. In his days lived Ish`iya the prophet, and many incidents are reported between them. `Uzia waged several wars which we have mentioned in our *Akhbar al-Zaman*. He was succeeded by his son Yutam for ten years; some say sixteen. He was followed by Ahaz who proclaimed the worship of idols, and was tyrannical and immoral. Against him marched a king of Babil called Fal`asar, a great and mighty king, who waged war against the Israelite king until he captured him and destroyed the towns and habitations of the tribes.

109. In his days too there was a religious split among the Jews. Leaving their ranks were the Asamira [Samaritans] who denied the prophecy of Dawud and of later prophets and refused to acknowledge any prophet after Musa. They choose their leaders from among the progeny of Harun ibn `Imran. Until the present time, the year 332, the Asamira may be found in the lands of Palestine and al-Urdunn in scattered villages such as the village of `Ara between Ramlah and Tiberias and other villages. Most of them congregate in the town of Nabulus where they have a mountain called Tur Barik. On this mountain the Asamira hold their prayers at designated times. They have silver trumpets in which they blow to mark times of prayer. It is they who, as reported in the Qur'an, say {No touching}. They claim that Nabulus is Jerusalem, which is the city of Ya`qub and his pastures. They are two distinct groups, as distinct from each other as they are from other Jews. One group is called Kushan, the other Dustan. One of these two groups holds that the world is eternal and other ideas which we omit to mention for fear of making this work too

long, since it is a work of history and not of philosophical or religious opinions.

110. Ahaz reigned for seventeen years before being captured by the Babylonian. When he became a prisoner, a son of his, Hazqiya, became king, and decreed the worship of the All-Merciful God and the destruction of idols. During his reign, Sannajarib, the king of Babil, marched to Jerusalem where many battles ensued with the Israelites. These latter killed many of his troops while he took captive many tribes. Hazqiya reigned for twenty-nine years until his death.

111. Following Hazqiya there reigned a son of his called Manashsha. His evil spread widely throughout his kingdom. It was he who killed Ish`iya the prophet. So God sent against him Qustantin king of the Romans with his armies who defeated his army and captured the king. Manashsha remained a prisoner of the Romans for twenty years. He forsook his earlier conduct and returned to his kingdom. He then reigned for twenty-five years, though some say thirty.

112. A son of his called Amun then followed him as king. He was a tyrant, blasphemed against the All-Merciful and restored the worship of idols. When his tyranny grew in severity the Pharaoh, called the Lame, led an army out of Egypt, and slaughtered the Israelites. The Pharaoh then captured and led him away to Egypt where he died. His reign lasted five years, but other dates are also given. He was succeeded by a brother of his called Yu`aqim who was the father of the prophet Daniyal.

113. During that king's reign, Albukhtnassar was appointed governor of Iraq and the west by the king of Persia, who then resided in Balkh, capital of the empire. Albukhtnassar carried out a large-scale massacre and enslavement of the Israelites and transported them to the land of Iraq. He took the Torah and what the Jerusalem Temple contained by way of prophetic books and histories of kings, and threw them all into a well.

The coffin of Sakina he buried in some hole in the ground. It is said that the number of Israelites enslaved was eighteen thousand. In that age lived the prophet Irmiya. Albukhtnassar then marched to Egypt and killed Pharaoh the Lame, then ruling in Egypt, then marched westwards where he killed several kings and conquered some cities.

114. The king of Persia had married a slave woman of the Israelites who gave birth to a son. It was he who restored the Israelites to their homes after some years. When the Israelites returned, they chose Zurubabil ibn Salatiyal as king. He rebuilt Jerusalem which had been ruined, and the Israelites recovered the Torah from the well so their affairs were well ordered. This king reigned for forty-six years, rebuilding the land, and instituting prayers and other religious obligations such as had been lost during their enslavement.

115. The Samiriyya allege that the Torah in the hands of the Jews is not the Torah brought by Musa ibn `Imran but has been tampered with and changed, and that it was that king who was responsible for that distortion because he collected it from the Israelites who knew it by heart. As for the genuine Torah, this exists only among the Samiriyya and nowhere else. That king reigned for forty-six years. I found in another version that the person who married the Israelite slave girl was Albukhtnassar himself, and that it was he who restored the Israelites to their homes and showed them kindness.

116. Isma`il son of Ibrahim al-Khalil regulated the affairs of the Holy House (*Ka`ba*) after Ibrahim. God made him a prophet and sent him to the `Amaliq and the tribes of Yemen, and he forbade them the worship idols. Some believed but most blasphemed. To Isma`il were born twelve male children: Nabit, Qidar, Adbil, Mibsam, Misma`, Duma, Massa, Hadar, Thima, Yatur, Nafis and Qidma. Ibrahim had delegated Isma`il and Isma`il delegated Ishaq, though some say he delegated his son Qidar.

When God took his soul, Isma`il was 137 years old. He was buried in the Mosque of the Sanctuary in the place where the Black Stone was placed. After him, his son Nabit regulated the affairs of the House in the same manner as was done by Isma`il. It is also stated that he was his father's delegate.

117. Between Sulaiman ibn Dawud and Christ there were a number of prophets, saints and righteous men among whom were Irmiya, Daniyal and `Uzayr ---there is some dispute as to his prophethood---Ayyub, Ish`iya, Hizqil, Ilyas, Alisa`, Yunus, Dhu`l Kifl, al-Khadir----Ibn Ishaq states that he was Irmiya, while others state he was a pious servant of God---and Zakariyya. Zakariyya is the son of Adaq from the progeny of Dawud and the tribe of Yahuda. He had married Ishba` daughter of `Imran, sister of Mariam daughter of `Imran and mother of Christ. `Imran is the son of Maran son of Yu`aqim, also from the progeny of Dawud. The mother of Ishba` and Mariam was Hanna who gave birth to Yahya son of Zakariyya. Yahya was the maternal cousin of Christ.

118. Zakariyya was a carpenter. The Jews spread a rumor that he had committed adultery with Mariam, so they killed him. He had sensed danger and hid inside a tree. Iblis, God's enemy, revealed to them his hiding place so they sawed the tree with him inside it, cutting them both. When Ishba` daughter of `Imran and sister of Mariam, mother of Christ, gave birth to Yahya ibn Zakariyya, she escaped with him to Egypt, fleeing from a king. When Yahya grew into manhood, God sent him to the Israelites. He proclaimed the commandments and prohibitions of God so they killed him. There was much tumult among the Israelites, so God sent them a king from the east called Khardush who slaughtered thousands in revenge for the blood of Yahya, raging all the while until the slaughter stopped after a long period of turmoil.

119. When Mariam, daughter of `Imran, reached the age of seventeen, God sent her Jibril who breathed into her a spirit so she conceived the Christ `Isa and delivered him in a village called Bethlehem, at some miles distance from Jerusalem. He was born on Wednesday, the twenty-fourth of December (*Kanun al-Awwal*). His history is narrated in the book of God and made clear by the mouth of the Prophet Muhammad. The Christians claim that Ishu` of Nazareth, that is Christ, remained attached to the religion of his people, reading the Torah and other writings in the town of Tiberias in al-Urdunn, in a temple called al-Midras for thirty years, though twenty-nine years has also been mentioned. It is stated that one day, as he was reading in the book of Ish`iya, his eye fell upon a book of light in which was written: "You are my son and beloved whom I have chosen for myself." He closed the book, handed it to the servant of the temple and left saying: "Now has the word of God been made perfect in the Son of Man". It is stated that Christ was in a village called Nazareth (*al-Nasira*) in al-Lajun in the land of al-Urdunn, hence the name of the religion "Nazarene" (*al-Nasraniyya*).

120. In this village I once visited a church held in great esteem by the Christians (*Nasara*). In it are coffins made of stone containing the bones of the dead, from which oozes an oil thick as molasses which the Christians consider sanctified. It is also said that Christ passed by Lake Tiberias where there were some fishermen from the tribe of Zabada and twelve fullers. He invited them to respond to God saying "Follow me and you will be fishers of men". Three fishermen, sons of Zabada, and twelve fullers became his followers.

121. Matta, Yuhanna, Marqush and Luqa, the four evangelists who transmitted the Gospel, have mentioned in it the story of Christ, his birth, his baptism by Yahya ibn Zakariyya, who is Yahya the Baptist (*Ma`madani*) in Lake Tiberias---the river Jordan is also mentioned, which

is a river that flows from Lake Tiberias and into the Foul-smelling Lake---the wonders and miracles he performed and his suffering at the hands of the Jews until God lifted him up to him, aged thirty-three years. The Gospel contains many particulars about Christ, Mariam and Yusuf the carpenter which we have omitted to cite here since neither the Almighty nor his Prophet Muhammad made mention of any of these particulars.

Chapter 6

A mention of the people who lived in the interval between Christ and Muhammad

122. Al-Mas`udi said: In the interval between Christ and Muhammad lived a group of people who believed in the one God and in the resurrection. There has been some dispute regarding them: some say they were prophets, others say otherwise. Among those mentioned as prophets are Hanzala ibn Safwan from the progeny of Isma`il, who was sent to the people of al-Rass, themselves also from Isma`il's progeny. They were two tribes, Qadman and Yamin, or Ra`wa'il according to some. They lived in the Yemen. Hanzala rose among them calling to God so they killed him.

123. God inspired a prophet of the Israelites from the tribe of Yahuda to command Albukhtnassar to march against them; he did so and utterly destroyed them. This is reported in the Qur'an: {But no sooner did they sense our might than they ran away from it} down to where it states: {until we turned them into parched stubble}. It is said that these people belonged to Himyar and a poet from that people mentioned this in his elegy for them:

*My eye wept for the people of al-Rass, Ra`wil and Qadman,
And for Aslam from Abi Dar`, avenger of the tribe, Qahtan.*

124. Wahb ibn Munabbih* mentioned that the Two-Horned, who is al-Iskandar [Alexander], lived after Christ in the Interval, and that he saw in

a dream that he drew near to the sun and took hold of its two horns, its eastern and western. He related the dream to his people who called him the Two-Horned. There is much dispute among people regarding the Two-Horned and we have reported this in our two works, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. We shall mention his history in brief when we come to the kings of the Greeks and Romans.

125. Similarly, people have disputed concerning the People of the Cave and to which era they belonged. Some claim they lived during the Interval while others deny this. We will mention their history in brief when we come to the kings of the Romans in this work although we have already mentioned their history in our *al-Awsat* and in its predecessor, *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

126. Among those who lived during the Interval, after Christ, was Jirjis. He was a contemporary of some of the Apostles. God sent him to a king of Mosul to call him to God and the king killed him. God resurrected him and sent him again, so he killed him again, and again God resurrected him. At the third try, the king ordered him to be sawn in half, burnt and his ashes to be scattered in the Tigris. So God destroyed that king and all who followed him among his subjects. All this is in accordance with the histories found among the People of the Book who have true faith, and can also be found in the books of creation and history by Wahb ibn Munabbih and others.

127. Among those who lived during the Interval was Habib the carpenter. He lived in the city of Antioch in the land of al-Sham. In that city was a tyrannical king who worshipped idols and images. Two disciples of Christ went to him to call him to the worship of God, so he imprisoned and beat them. The Qur'an states that God aided these two {with a third}. There is a dispute regarding the latter's identity. Many claim that this man was Butrus, this being his name in Greek, while his Arabic name is

Sim`an and his Syriac name is Sham`un the Rock (*al-Safa*). Many others, who include all sects of the Christians, claim that the third who aided them was Bulus and that the first two who were imprisoned were Tuma and Butrus. Many stories are narrated about them and that king, and of the miracles and wondrous signs they performed such as curing the blind and the lepers and resurrecting the dead, as also the trick practiced on the king by Bulus, and how he gained entry to him, placated him, and got his two companions released from prison.

128. Habib the carpenter saw them and believed when he witnessed the signs of God. The Qur'an narrates their history as follows: {We had sent the two of them but they called them liars so we backed them with a third} until where it says {a man came running}. Butrus and Bulus were killed in the city of Rome and crucified upside down. Much is narrated of these two and of their dealings with the King and with Sima [Simon] the magician. Later, and following the victory of the religion of the Christians, their bodies were placed in crystal basins, and their sanctuary lies in a church in that city. We mentioned this in our book *al-Awsat* when we narrated the wonders of Rome, the histories of Christ's disciples and their dispersal in the lands. We shall deal in brief with their histories later on in this work.

129. As for the People of the Trench (*Ashab al-Ukhdud*), they lived in the Interval in the Yemeni city of Najran, during the reign of Dhu Nuwas who killed Dhu Shanatir. Dhu Nuwas was Jewish in religion. He heard that some people in Najran followed the religion of Christ so led an army against them, dug trenches, filled them with cinders and set them alight, then called on them to convert to Judaism. Whoever consented was left alone and those who refused were tossed into the flames. A woman and her seven-month old infant were brought forward. She refused to recant her religion so was led to the flames. She was terrified and God made the

infant speak and say to its mother: “Mother, remain faithful to your religion for after this fire there shall be no more fires.” The two were then thrown into the fire. In that period, they were believing monotheists and not Christians.

130. A man among those people, named Dhu Tha`laban, then travelled to the Roman Caesar to seek his help, and Caesar wrote on his behalf to the Najashi of Abyssinia because he lived close to them. What later transpired, namely the Abyssinians crossing the sea over to Yemen, their conquest of that land, then the appeal made to kings by Saif ibn Dhi Yazan and the help extended to him by Anushirwan has all been set out in *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. We will allude in brief to these events in their proper place in this work when we mention the histories of the chieftains and kings of Yemen. God in the Qur’an mentioned the story of the People of the Trench as follows: {Perish the people of the trench} up until {Almighty, All-praiseworthy}.

131. Also belonging to the Interval was Khalid ibn Sinan al-`Absi. His full name is Khalid ibn Sinan ibn Ghaith ibn `Abs. He was mentioned by the Prophet Muhammad who said of him: “That was a prophet whose people failed him.” This was because a fire appeared among the Arabs so they were fascinated by it. It was a fire that moved from place to place and the Arabs were about to embrace Magianism. Khalid took a truncheon and entering the fire said: “Evident, evident is every guidance that leads to the highest god! I shall enter the fire as it rages and shall leave it with my clothes wet!” So he put the fire out. On his death bed he said to his brothers: “When I am buried, a flock of wild asses will arrive from the land of Himyar, led by a tailless ass. He will strike my grave with his hoof. When you see this, you are to dig me up from the ground and I will come out and tell you all about what happens after death and about purgatory (*barzakh*) and the tomb.”

132. When he died and was buried, his people remembered what he had told them, and wanted to dig him up but some were averse to this saying: “We fear the Arabs might abuse us for digging up a dead man”. His daughter later came to see the Prophet and heard him reciting {Say: He is God, unique, God, eternal} and said: “I used to hear my father reciting this”. Later in this work we shall mention his history in brief and where appropriate.

133. Al-Mas`udi said: Among those who lived during the Interval was Ri`ab al-Shanni, from the tribe of `Abd al-Qays and the clan of Shann. He was a Christian before the coming of Muhammad. They heard a voice proclaiming from heaven before the coming of the Prophet: “The best of mankind are three: Ri`ab al-Shanni, Bahira the monk and another who has yet to come”, this last being the Prophet. Not a single descendant of Ri`ab would die and be buried without people noticing a shower of rain falling upon their graves.

134. Among them too was As`ad Abu Karib al-Himyari, who was a believer and believed in the Prophet seven hundred years before his mission. He recited the following verse:

I witness that Ahmad [Muhammad] is a prophet from God,

Pure in line of descent.

Were my time to stretch to his,

I would be his vizier, his cousin.

I would enforce obedience to him on all who live on earth,

Arab and non-Arab.

He was the first to deck the Ka`ba with pelt and drapes. This is why a man of Himyar recited:

We decked the House that God sanctified

With embroidered weaves and drapes.

135. Among them was Quss ibn Sa`ida al-Iyadi, a descendant of Iyad ibn Nizar ibn Ma`add. He was the arbiter of the Arabs and believed in resurrection. It was he who said: "He who lives must die, and he who dies has vanished, and whatever is to come will come." He is proverbial among Arabs for his wisdom and learning. Al-A`sha recited:

Wiser than Quss and more daring than him

Who, at Dhi'l Ghail, in Khaffan, has fallen into oblivion.

136. A delegation from the tribe of Iyad visited the Prophet who asked them about him. They said, "He has died." The Prophet said: "May God have mercy on his soul. I vividly remember him mounted on a red camel in the market of `Ukaz saying: 'O people, gather around, listen and mark my words. He who lives must die, and he who dies has vanished and whatever is to come will come. To proceed, there is news in the heavens and there are lessons on earth. Seas in turmoil, stars sinking, a canopy is raised and cradles are put in place. I swear by God an oath: that to God belongs a religion more pleasing to him than what you currently believe in. What is it with people? They depart and do not return. Is it that they are happy and stay where they are, or have they been abandoned and so are asleep? Here then is a path rapidly traversed, and moral deeds that are divergent.'" The Prophet continued: "He then recited some verses that I do not remember."

137. Abu Bakr al-Siddiq then rose and added: "Prophet of God, I remember them." The Prophet said: "Let us hear them." Abu Bakr recited:

In those who departed in previous centuries we have cause to reflect,

When I saw paths towards death but none leading out of it.

I saw my people departing towards it, both the low and the high.

The past does not return, and of those who are left behind, none remains.

Thus I am certain that I shall doubtless go where others have gone before.

The Prophet said: “God have mercy on his soul! I pray that God will resurrect him as if he, by himself, was a single nation.”

Al-Mas`udi added: Qass has many verses, words of wisdom and reports attributed to him that indicate his deep knowledge of medicine, augury, omens, and all kinds of learning. We cited these in our earlier works, in *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*.

138. Among those who lived during the Interval was Zaid ibn `Amr ibn Nufail, father of Sa`id ibn Zaid, one of the ten who were promised paradise [by Muhammad]. He is first cousin, paternal, of `Umar ibn al-Khattab. Zaid had decided to reject and condemn the worship of idols. His uncle al-Khattab set on him some impudent Meccans and allowed them to gain power over him, causing him harm. He retired to a cave in Hira' and would enter Mecca in secret. He travelled to al-Sham, seeking a true religion, but the Christians poisoned him and he died in al-Sham. A long story is narrated about him, the king, and the translator, and about some Ghassanid kings in Damascus, all of which we mentioned at length in our earlier works.

139. Among them too is Umayya ibn Abi al-Salt al-Thaqafi, who was a poet and a man of reason. He traded with al-Sham where he would meet Jews and Christians in their temples and read sacred books. He had known that a prophet will arise among the Arabs and used to recite verses based on the opinions of religious communities in which he described heaven and earth, the sun and moon, angels and prophets, and make mention of the resurrection and re-emergence of mankind, and of paradise and hell, and glorified God alone. Among his verses are the following:

Praise be to God who has no partners:

Whoever does not say this is unjust to himself.

Describing the people of paradise in some verses, he recited:

There is no idle talk and no recrimination in it,

Whatever they speak remains with them.

140. When he heard that the Prophet had appeared he was annoyed and regretful, and travelled to Medinah to embrace Islam but turned back out of envy and went to Ta'if instead. One day, as he sat drinking wine with some youngsters, a crow fell to the ground, screeched three times then flew away. Umayya asked : "Do you know what the crow said?" They answered, "No." He said: "He said Umayya will die when he drinks his third glass." They said: "You will surely prove him false!" Umayya said: "Sip your drink!" They did. When the cup had passed three times to Umayya, he became unconscious then fell silent and woke up reciting:

"I answer the call of the two of you!

I answer the call of the two of you!

Here am I, in the presence of the two of you.

I am one upon whom grace descended but was not thankful enough." He then recited:

O God, if you forgive, you forgive much,

Which of your servants is without sin?

He then repeated: I am one upon whom grace descended but was not thankful enough, and recited:

The Day of Reckoning is a dreadful day,

In which a young person's hair will turn grey and long.

If only, before what came upon me,

I had been herding goats on mountain tops!

Every life span, though lasting an age,

Must one day pass away."

He then sighed deeply and expired.

142. Al-Mas`udi said: Some scholars with knowledge of history and the past, such as Ibn Da`b, al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy, Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya and Muhammad ibn al-Sa`ib mention that the reason why Quraish began their letters with the phrase “In your name, O God” is that Umayya ibn Abi al-Salt travelled to al-Sham with some companions from Thaqif and Quraish in a camel caravan. On their return journey, they camped at a place and gathered to have their evening meal. Suddenly a small snake approached them, so some of them flung stones at it and it retreated. They then packed their food, saddled their mounts and left that place. As they drew away, an old woman rose to sight on a sand dune, leaning on a stick, and said to them: “What prevented you from feeding Rahima, that orphaned young woman who came to you last night?” They said, “Who are you?” She answered: “Umm al-`Awamm, for many years a widow. By the Lord of mankind, you shall be dispersed throughout the lands”. She then struck the earth with her stick, causing the sand to rise, and said: “Make their return journey long and their mounts to run away!” The camels sprang forward in panic as if a demon had mounted each of them. We could do nothing with them and they scattered in the wilderness. By the end of the day we barely managed to gather them. As we got them to kneel down in order to saddle them the old woman reappeared, stirred up the earth with her stick and repeated her earlier words: “What prevented you from feeding Rahima, that orphaned young woman who came to you last night? Make their return journey long and their mounts to run away!” The camels sprang forward in panic. We could do nothing with them and by that day’s end barely managed to gather them once more. As we got them to kneel down in order to saddle them the old woman reappeared, doing once more what she had done on the two previous occasions. The camels panicked and we ended up on a moonlit night without hope of

recovering our mounts. So we turned to Umayya and said: “What about all that you told us about yourself?”

143. Umayya headed towards the sand dune from where the old woman used to appear descending from one side then ascending and descending from another sand dune. A church with lamps appeared before him and there sat a man with grey hairs and beard. Umayya said: “When I stood over him he raised his head to me and said ‘Are you the one who is shadowed by a spirit?’ ‘Yes,’ I replied. ‘From which direction does your spirit approach you?’ he asked. ‘From my left ear’, I replied. ‘What clothes does he order you to wear?’ ‘Black,’ I replied. ‘This is *Jinn* speech. You were about to be graced but did nothing. The person chosen is approached from his right ear and his favorite clothes are white in color. What brings you here and what do you want?’ I related to him the incident of the old woman. He said: ‘She spoke the truth but she is not truthful. She is a Jewish woman whose husband died some years ago. She will keep on doing this to you until she kills you all, if she can.’ I said: ‘So what is the ruse that one can employ?’ He answered: ‘Gather around and if she comes near and does what she has been doing, call out seven times from above and seven from below: ‘In your name, O God!’ and she will not harm you.’

144. So Umayya returned to his companions and told them what had happened. When she appeared once again and did what she’d done before, they called out, seven times from above and seven from below: “In your name, O God!” and no harm came to them. When the old woman saw that the camels did not move she said: “I recognize your companion. His top half shall be whitened and his bottom half blackened.” So they marched out by night and when morning came they found that Umayya’s cheeks, neck and chest had turned leprous while his bottom half was black. Arrived in Mecca, they related that incident, so

the first formula of writing that the Meccans used was “In your name, O God.” When Islam came, this was abandoned and the formula “In the name of God, Merciful to all, Compassionate to each” was substituted in its place. Of Umayya other stories are told which are related in our earlier work *Akhbar al-Zaman* and in our other books.

145. Among them is Waraqa ibn Nawfal*ibn Asad ibn `Abd al-`Uzza ibn Qusayy, who was the first cousin, paternal, of Khadija bint Khuwailid, wife of the Prophet. He had read sacred books, was a seeker after knowledge, and decided to abandon idol worship. It was he who brought glad tidings to Khadija regarding the Prophet and that he was the prophet of his nation, that he would suffer harm and be called a liar. He met the Prophet and said to him: “Son of my brother, remain steadfast to your calling. I swear by Him who holds Waraqa’s soul in His hand that you are the prophet of this nation. You shall suffer harm, be called a liar, be driven out and fought against. If I live to reach the time of your public ministry I shall aid the cause of God in a manner known to Him.” A dispute has arisen regarding Waraqa. Some claim that he died a Christian, did not live long enough to witness Muhammad’s ministry, and did not fulfill his desire to aid the Prophet, while others say that he died as a Muslim and that he praised the Prophet in a line of verse:

He forgives and pardons, and does not repay evil with evil,

He curbs his anger when cursed or enraged.

146. Among them is `Addas, client of `Utba ibn Rabi`a. He was a man from Nineveh who met the Prophet in Ta’if when he was calling its inhabitants to God. He had a well known encounter with the Prophet in the garden and was killed at the Battle of Badr* while still a Christian. He was one of those who brought glad tidings of the coming of the Prophet.

147. Among them is Abu Qais Sirma ibn Abi Anas, from the Ansar* and the clan of Banu al-Najjar. He had become a monk and wore haircloth,

abandoning idol worship, and had entered a house which he adopted as a house of prayer and to which no menstruating woman or persons unwashed after intercourse were admitted. He said: "I worship the God of Ibrahim." When the Prophet arrived in Medinah, he embraced Islam and became a devout believer. It was for his sake that the Qur'anic verse regarding the last meal before daybreak during Ramadan was revealed: {And eat and drink until the white streak of dawn can be distinguished from the black streak}. He it was who composed the following verse about the Prophet:

He remained with Quraish for some ten years, calling to God:

If only he had met a friend to comfort him!

148. Among them too was Abu `Amir al-Awsi, whose name was `Abd `Amr ibn Saifi ibn al-Nu`man, from the clan of Banu `Amr ibn `Awf, and the tribe of Aws. He is the father of Hanzala, called "He who was washed by angels". He was a chieftain and had become a monk and wore haircloth in the pre-Islamic era. When the Prophet came to Medinah he had a long encounter with him, then left for al-Sham with fifty of his retainers and died there as a Christian.

149. Among them is `Ubaidullah ibn Jahsh al-Asadi from the tribe of Asad ibn Khuzaima. He was the husband of Umm Habiba bint Abu Sufian ibn Harb before the Prophet married her. He had read sacred books and inclined towards Christianity. When Muhammad was summoned to prophecy, he with other Muslims emigrated to the land of Abyssinia along with his wife Umm Habiba. There, he apostasized and became a Christian and died in Abyssinia. To the Muslims he would say: "We have open eyes (*faqqahna*) while yours are still murky (*sa'sa'tum*)."
He meant: We have come to see the truth while you still are groping in the dark. This is an adage he coined for them because when a new-born

dog first opens its eyes the verb *faqqaha* is used while if it desires to open its eyes but still cannot the verb *sa'sa'a* is used.

When `Ubaidullah died, the Prophet married Umm Habiba. It was the Negus [*Najashi*] of Abyssinia who married her to the Prophet and paid her dowry, which was 400 dinars.

150. Among them is Bahira the monk who was a believing Christian. His name in the books of the Christians is Sarjis [Sergius]. He was from the tribe of `Abd al-Qais. When the Prophet, aged twelve, travelled with his uncle Abu Talib to al-Sham to trade, accompanied by Abu Bakr and Bilal, they passed by Bahira in his hermit's cell. Bahira recognized the Prophet from his personal traits and signs as he found them in his books. He saw a cloud giving him shade wherever he sat. So Bahira invited them to join him, honored them and prepared some food for them. He then descended from his cell and came to examine the mole of prophecy between the Prophet's shoulder-blades, placing his hand on it. He believed in the Prophet and told Abu Bakr and Bilal about his calling and what was to happen to him. He then asked Abu Talib to take him back from where they had come and warned them against the People of the Book, telling all this to his uncle Abu Talib, who then turned back with him. Returning from that journey there began his story with Khadija and how God revealed to her his signs of prophethood, and what was related to her regarding the events of that journey.

151. Al Mas`udi said: This then is a resume of the events from the creation to where we have ended here. We have not included any extraneous matter except what religious laws, sacred books and prophets have set forth or explained. We now turn to mention the earliest kingdoms of India with a brief account of their beliefs, and follow this up with mention of other kingdoms, for we have already treated in brief the

kings of the Israelites as we found it set forth in the books of religious communities, if God so wills, and with His help.

Chapter 7

A brief mention of the history and beliefs of India and the origin of their kingdoms

152. Al-Mas`udi said: A group of scholars known for their perspicacity and scholarly research, and who combine exactness with ability to contemplate the affairs of this world and its origin, state that India was in ancient times the nation in which piety and wisdom was first found. When the generations of mankind began to diverge and sects began to form, India tried to unite the kingdom, gain power over the whole territory and assume leadership. Their chieftains said: "We were at the very beginning of creation, and creation will end with us. We are the world's final aim, and to us belongs its role of leadership. From our land the First Father went forth to the rest of the world. We have overcome or destroyed all who stood in our way or opposed us or tried to deceive us until they submit to us." So they settled on this policy, set up a king over them, who is the great Barhamn, their great king and foremost leader. In his days, wisdom arose and scholars thrived. They extracted iron from mines, and swords and daggers and other instruments of fighting were forged. He built temples and embellished them with sparkling precious stones and painted in them the celestial spheres, the twelve constellations and the heavenly bodies. He illustrated the shape of the worlds and the effects of the heavenly bodies on this world and how they create all living beings, rational and otherwise. He also clarified the status of the Great Manager, that is to say the sun. In his book, he demonstrated the proofs for all these matters and brought them close to the understanding of the commoners, while instilling in the hearts of the elite the understanding of matters even more profound. He drew attention to the First Originator

who lends all existents their being and whose bounty overflows upon them.

153. So India submitted to him, the land prospered and he showed them how earthly wellbeing can be achieved. He assembled wise men who in his days produced the work called *Sind Hind*, which means “Eternity of Eternities”. From this work descended other books such as *al-Arjabhad* and *al-Majisti*. From the former descended *Al-Arkand* and from the latter the book of Ptolemy. From these works were later derived the astronomical almanacs. The wise men further contrived the nine digits which define Indian mathematics. He was the first to speak of the apogee of the sun and mentioned that the sun remained in each constellation for 3000 years, crossing the orbit of celestial spheres in 36,000 years. At this point in time, which is the year 332, the apogee according to the Barhamns is in the constellation of Gemini. If it moves towards the southern constellations, civilization will move with it, and lands of plenty will be desolate while desolate lands will prosper, the north will become south and the south north. In the Golden Temple, he set up the first *Budd* computation and the ancient dating system which India used to date the *Budds* and their appearance in the land of India to the exclusion of all other kingdoms. Regarding the *Budds*, they have much to relate but we decided not to mention this because our present work is a work of history and not of research and theory, and we have already alluded to this subject in our *al-Awsat*.

154. Some in India maintain that the world begins anew every seventy thousand years, called *hazarwan*, and that once the world passes through this period of time, the world begins again, mankind comes forth, dumb animals roam, the waters penetrate into the earth, animals move about, vegetation sprouts and breezes pierce the air. However, most Indians argue for recurrences based upon cycles where powers begin by being

evanescent and resembling individual forms, potentially powerful and erect in essence. For these cycles they determined a time limit, calling this the Great Cycle and Great Event, and named it the age of the world. They calculated the time between the beginning and the end at 36,000 years multiplied by 12,000 years. This they term the *hazarwan*, which determines and controls all powers in things.

155. They further state that these cycles contract and expand all existents included in them, that life-spans are long at the beginning of each recurrence because the cycle is set free and powers gain mastery over their spheres, whereas life-spans shrink at the end of each recurrence because the cycle narrows and becomes subject to the many sorrows that reduce life-spans. This is because the powers of bodies and their serenity at the beginning of a recurrence appear and range wide since serenity outstrips dejection and what is pure outstrips what is turgid. Life-spans grow long depending upon serenity of temperament and the integration of powers that produce the elements, and lead to a medley of corrupt, ever-changing and perishable existents. They further argue that the end of the Great Recurrence and the final aim of the Great *Budd* reveal all forms as mutilated, souls as weak and temperaments as mixed and varied. Powers start to decrease, what holds them together dissipates, and all matter returns to the cycles wrong side up and congested, so those living in these eras do not have the chance to complete their life-spans.

156. For all the above, the Indians offer causes and proofs derived from first principles. For what we set out in brief above as regards their dividing time into cycles and *hazarwans*, they offer symbols and spiritual secrets as to how souls are connected with the worlds above and how they begin from higher to lower, together with other matters determined for them by the Barhamn at the beginning of time.

157. The Barhamn reigned for 366 years until his death. His progeny are known as the Barahima until today. The Indians treat them with the greatest respect and they are the highest and noblest class. They eat no meat of any animal. Around the necks of their men and women are yellow bands which they wear like sword clamps, to distinguish themselves from other classes of Indians.

158. In ancient times, and in the days of Barhamn, seven of their wise and respected sages met in the Golden Temple and said to one another:

“Come let us debate and see what account we can give of this world and what is its secret. Where have we come from and where do we end up? Does the fact that we are brought out of non-existence and into existence hide some wisdom or its opposite? Does our creator who originated us and formed our bodies derive some benefit from creating us? Or does he ward off some harm from himself by removing us from this earthly domain? Does he suffer from want and privation as we do, or is he self-sufficient in every respect? Why does he annihilate and do away with us once we come into existence and are born?” The first sage, the most prominent among them, said: “Has anyone ever really and truly understood both present and absent matters, thus gaining his objective and feeling confident about what he knows?” The second sage said: “If the wisdom of the creator were to reach its ultimate end in a human mind, this would mean a decrease in the creator’s wisdom, the objective would not be reached and that decrease would prevent full understanding.” The third sage said: “It is our duty to begin by first understanding our spirits which are the nearest things to us, for we are better suited to understand them and they are better suited to be understood by us, before we devote ourselves to understanding what is far-removed from us.” The fourth sage said: “Wretched indeed is one who stands in need to understand himself.” The fifth sage said: “This is why it is necessary to associate with scholars

endowed with wisdom.” The sixth sage said: “This is why he who desires happiness must not neglect this matter, especially since remaining in this earthly abode for ever is impossible and leaving it is inevitable.” The seventh sage said: “I do not understand what all of you are saying but I have been brought into this world against my will, I have lived in it in a state of doubt, and I leave it against my will.”

159. The Indians, ancient and modern, differed regarding the opinions of these seven sages. They had all followed their example and adopted their beliefs but then split into sects with opposing views. Seventy of these sects have been counted. Al-Mas`udi added: Abu`l Qasim al-Balkhi dealt in his work called *`Uyun al-Masa`il wa`l Jawabat*, as did al-Hasan ibn Musa al-Nawbakhti in his *al-Ara` wa`l Diyanat*, with India`s sects and their beliefs, and the reason why they burn themselves in fires and cut up their bodies using all kinds of torture, but neither writer alludes to what we have mentioned here nor anything resembling what we have described.

160. The Barhamn has also been a subject of controversy. Some claim he is Adam and a prophet of God sent to India, others that he is a king, as we ourselves stated, and this is the better known view. When Barhamn died, India sorrowed greatly and was quick to appoint a king from among his oldest children who was his heir apparent and delegated to succeed. This was Bahbud. He followed his father`s policy, attended well to their affairs, increased temple building, raised the standing of wise men, elevated their rank, encouraged them to teach wisdom and sent them off to seek it. His reign lasted a hundred years.

161. In his days backgammon was invented as a game, and he made it into an example of gaining wealth in this world, for this is not gained solely by shrewdness or cunning, and livelihood is not attained solely by skill. It is stated that it was Ardashir ibn Babik who first played

backgammon and set down its rules. He had observed how the world constantly alters the affairs of its people and is in itself ever changing. He made its points twelve in number, like the number of the months, and its checkers thirty like the days of a month. The two dice he made as an example of fate and how it constantly overturns the affairs of mankind. As a person plays this game he attains his desire when fortune is happy with him while the smart and intelligent person might not attain what another person attains whose fortune is happier. The object is to demonstrate that luck and livelihood in this world can only be attained through serious effort.

162. Succeeding Bahbud as king was Zaman who reigned for 150 years. Historical reports about Zaman's conduct and his wars against the kings of Persia and China have been briefly mentioned in our previous works. After him came Fur whom Alexander met in battle and killed in single combat. Fur's reign lasted 140 years until his death.

163. Succeeding him was Dabshalim who authored the work called *Kalila wa Dimna*, rendered into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa`. Sahl ibn Harun authored for the caliph al-Ma'mun a work called *Tha`la wa `Afra* where he matches and contests *Kalila wa Dimna* in its chapters and proverbs, and excels it in eloquence. Dabshalim reigned for 110 years though other years are also given.

164. Succeeding him was Balhit, in whose days chess was invented. When he played it, he put an end to backgammon and showed how victory may be won by a man of foresight and how defeat afflicts the ignorant. He calculated its moves and included this in a book called *The Ways of Janka*, well known among Indians. He played chess with his wise men and shaped its pieces in the form of speaking and dumb animals, giving them ranks and grades. He made the king (*shah*) to be like a chief controller as also the pieces that follow him in rank, making

them into emulations of heavenly bodies, both the seven and the twelve, making each piece subject to a heavenly body and the manager of a kingdom. If any enemy comes up with a trick during a war, the players would consider where that enemy could sooner or later be defeated.

165. As regards the game of chess, the Indians have a symbolism which they secrete in the folds of its calculations and advancing thereby to the highest celestial spheres, thus ending in the First Cause. This is because the number of chess squares, when multiplied, amount to 18,000,000,000,000,000,000 and 464,000,000,000,000,000 and 744,000,000,000,000 and 73,000,000,000 and 700,000,000 and 9,000,000 and 555,615. These thousands come in ranks: first six then five—which is a thousand repeated five times---then four then three then two then one. For Indians these have hidden meanings which they mention in connection with eons and eras and with what other heavenly effects entail as regards this world and their affinities with the souls of rational beings.

166. The Greeks, Romans and other nations also speak of chess and have their own strategies of playing the game. This has been set forth in their books all the way from earlier writers to recent figures like al-Suli and al-`Adli, who are the grand masters of the game in our present time.

167. Balhit reigned for eighty years before he died, though some histories claim he reigned for 130 years. He was succeeded by Korash, who formulated new religious views for India according to what he thought suitable for his times and what people could bear of religious obligations. He thus abandoned the ways of ancestors. In his kingdom, and during his reign, lived Sindibad, author of the books called *The Seven Ministers* and *The Teacher, the Squire and the King's wife*. This is referred to as the *Book of Sindibad*. At the library of this king was produced the major

work on knowledge of diseases, medications and remedies, and herbs were collected and illustrated. His reign lasted 120 years before he died.

168. At his death, India split in its opinions. Sects and groups were formed and split, and different rulers arose in each region. The region of Sind had its own king, as also the regions of Qannuj and Qashmir. The capital city of Mankir was ruled by a king called al-Ballahari, who was the first of a line called by this name. This name later became a title of succeeding kings of that city up until the present which is the year 332.

169. The land of India is wide in extent, stretching across land, sea and mountains. Their kingdom is adjacent to the realm of al-Zabaj*, the capital of the kingdom of al-Mahraj, king of the islands. This kingdom is midpoint between India and China, and is included in India. Beyond the mountains, India adjoins the land of Khurasan while the Sind adjoins Tibet. Between these kingdoms exist enmities and wars, and their languages are different as also their religious views. Most believe in transmigration of souls, as already stated.

170. In their rationality, politics, wisdom, bodily health and clarity of color the Indians differ from all other black races such as the Zanj, the Damadin* and so forth. Galen mentions ten qualities found only in blacks and in no other group: frizzy hair, thin eyebrows, spacious nostrils, thick lips, jagged teeth, body odor, black irises, cracked hands and legs, a long penis, and much merriment. Galen adds: "Merriment dominates the black person because of his corrupt brain so his reason is weakened."

Writers other than Galen have discussed the reasons for the dominance of merriment and joyfulness in black people which we have cited in our earlier works.

171. Ya`qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi* argued in some of his Epistles that deal with the effects of heavenly beings and bodies on this world as follows: "All that God has created has been fashioned as causes one for the other.

A cause generates in its effect an impression that is itself a cause but the effect does not influence its effective cause. The soul is the cause of the celestial spheres, not its effect, so has no influence over these spheres except that it is in the nature of the soul to follow the temperament of the body if it finds nothing else. This is the case with the Zanj individual whose habitat is hot. Thus, the celestial beings exercise their effects on him, drawing humidity up to the upper parts of his body. Accordingly, his eyes bulge, his lips dangle, his nose flattens, and his head is elevated because of the copious amounts of humidity attracted to the upper parts of his body. Hence the temperament in his brain is immoderate and the soul cannot show its effect on him to perfection. His discrimination is consequently corrupted and rational actions are denied him.”

172. Ancient and modern authorities have discussed the causes of the creation of black people and their habitat in connection with the celestial spheres, and that the seven planets, i.e. the sun and moon and the other five, have taken over their actions and uniquely fashioned them and affected their bodies. Our present work does not deal with such matters and hence we will not cite what has been said about this issue, since we have adduced all their views and proofs in our earlier work, *Akhbar al-Zaman*. In that work we cited the views of astrologers, ancient and modern, who attributed the actions of the blacks to Saturn. Some later poets among Muslim astrologers and astronomers described this matter thus:

*Chief among them is celestial Saturn,
A great chief, a powerful king.
Its temperament is melancholic and cold
Black is the color of its soul in its swarthinness.
Its effects are felt on Zanj and black slaves,
Also on lead and iron.*

173. Tawus* the Yemenite, companion of `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas*, would not eat any meat slaughtered by a Zanj and said that the Zanj is a mutilated servant of God. I have been told that the caliph Abu'l `Abbas al-Radi bi'llah [d. 940], son of the caliph al-Muqtadir, would not take anything offered by the hand of a black person and would say that he is mutilated. I am not sure whether he followed Tawus in this view or some other opinion. `Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz composed a work on the boasts of the blacks and their debates with whites.*

174. Indians do not set up a king over them unless he reaches the age of forty. Their kings do not appear in public except at certain well known occasions when they attend to the affairs of their subjects. This is because of their belief that if the public sees their kings at all times, awe of them would diminish and their royal privileges would be disparaged. Rulers in India can only be elevated to their high ranks by choice, so that matters can be settled in their right political order.

175. Al Mas`udi said: I once witnessed in the land of Sarandib*, an island in the sea, that if a king dies, his body is placed on a low carriage with small wheels prepared for the occasion, with his hair dragging on the ground. A woman with a broom strews earth on his head and calls out: "O people, this is your king who ruled over you yesterday and whose authority and commands were obeyed. He has now ended up as you can see when he departed this world, the angel of death and the ever-living and deathless god having taken his soul. Henceforth, do not be tempted by this world." There followed more words to this effect to do with admonition and with having an ascetic attitude to the world. The body is then paraded throughout the city streets in this condition, then cut into four pieces, with sandalwood and camphor and other spices, burnt in a fire and his ashes are scattered to the winds. Thus did most Indians treat

their kings and chieftains and this they do for a reason that they cite and a custom they will follow in future days.

176. Kingship is restricted to members of a single family and cannot pass to anyone else, as is also the case with the families of ministers, judges and other people of rank, a matter that can never change.

177. In India, wine is prohibited and those who drink it are subject to rebuke. This is done, not for religious reasons, but in order to protect their minds from what might cause them to be clouded, rendering them incapable of performing their intended mental functions. If they find out that a king of theirs has drunk wine, he deserves in their view to be stripped of his power, since he cannot manage affairs of state when inebriated. They do sometimes listen to music and entertainments, and they have musical instruments which produce particular effects on people such as laughter or weeping. Sometimes they give their female slaves to drink, and these sing in their presence, so the men derive pleasure from these singing girls.

178. India has many customs and social practices, and we have given an account of much of their history and traditions in our two earlier works, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In this work we have included only a digest of such information. Among the strange and entertaining stories of Indian kings who ruled them in ancient days is that there was once a king of Qimar*, an Indian land from which kingdom and region is imported Qimari aloes wood which is called after that region. This land is not an island but is coastal and mountainous. Few Indian kingdoms are more populous or have a cleaner mouth odor, because they use dental sticks, like Muslims. They further prohibit adultery among Indians and avoid many filthy habits as well as wine, though in this they are similar to most Indians. Most of them are infantrymen because of the many mountains and valleys and the few plains and plateaus. The land of Qimar is

adjacent to the kingdom of Mahraj whose king rules islands like Zabaj, Kalah*, Sarandib and others.

179. They relate that in ancient times a young and impetuous king came to the throne of the land of Qimar. One day he sat on his throne in his palace overlooking a great river of fresh water, like the Tigris or Euphrates. Between the palace and the sea was a distance of one day's journey. Near him sat his vizier. Mention was made of the kingdom of Mihraj, its greatness, prosperity and dominion over many islands and the king said to his vizier: "I have a desire I would like to fulfill." The vizier, a wise counselor who knew his impetuous character said: "What is that desire?" The king replied: "I would like to see the head of the Mihraj, king of Zabij, on a basin in front of me." The vizier recognized that jealousy had inspired that thought in him and said: "O king, I had not imagined that the king would contemplate such an idea. Neither in ancient days nor in modern has there ever been any vendetta between us and these people, nor have we ever been harmed by them. They live in islands distant from us and their lands do not adjoin ours, nor do they covet our realm." Between the two kingdoms of Qimar and Mihraj is a distance of some ten to twenty sailing days. The vizier added: "It is not fit that this speech of the king should be heard by anyone, nor should the king repeat what he has said."

180. The king was angry and did not listen to his counselor. Instead, he proclaimed his intention to his commanders and other notables in his court. The news spread until they reached the ears of the Mihraj, who was a man of intelligence and cunning and had reached middle age. So he summoned his vizier and told him what he had heard, adding that they should not simply ignore what that fool had stated in public to be his intention simply because he is young and impetuous, for this would be an insult to royalty. The king then ordered his vizier to keep their

conversation a secret and to prepare for him a thousand sturdy ships with all their tackle, and assign to each ship enough weapons and fighters to make each ship self-sufficient. He then announced that he planned to tour his islands as a recreation and wrote to all the island kings who were his vassals announcing his intention to visit them on a tour. The news spread, and each island king prepared to receive the monarch as was fit.

181. When all these preparations were completed, the king went on board and headed with his armada to the kingdom of Qimar. The king of Qimar was totally unaware of what was happening until the invaders reached the valley that led to the capital of the kingdom. His army and its commanders were taken by surprise and captured, his capital was seized and the entire population was at the mercy of the invading king. Safe-conduct was proclaimed and the Mihraj went and sat on the throne of the king of Qimar. This latter had been taken prisoner and was now brought before the Mihraj along with his vizier. The Mihraj addressed him as follows: “What led you to desire something that you could not achieve, nor was there any benefit to you if you had achieved it, nor had you any means to facilitate its achievement?” The king of Qimar fell silent, so the Mihraj continued: “Had you desired, in addition to seeing my head in a basin before you, to devastate my realm and destroy it utterly, I would have done all this to you and your realm. But since you desired only one specific thing, I shall do this to you and return to my country without stretching my hand to grab anything, valuable or otherwise, in your realm. Let this be a lesson to those who succeed you; let every person know his prescribed limits and let each person avail himself of his good fortune once he finds it.” He then ordered his head cut off.

182. Turning to the dead king’s vizier he said: “You have done well as a vizier for I learnt that you gave sound advice to your master, if only he had followed it. Accordingly, find out who is fit to succeed this fool and

set him up in his place.” The Mihraj then returned at once to his kingdom without he or any of his followers laying a hand on anything in the kingdom of Qimar. Arrived in his realm, he sat on his royal throne which overlooks a brook called “The Brick of Gold” with the basin before him holding the head of the king of Qimar. He then summoned the notables of his kingdom and told them the story and why he did what he did. His subjects praised and approved his actions.

183. He then ordered the severed head to be washed and perfumed, placed it in a covering and sent it back to the then king of Qimar with the following message: “What made us do this to your colleague was his outrage against us and our desire to make an example of him and his likes. We have achieved what we wanted and thought fit to return his head to you, for there is no reason for us to keep it, nor do we have any reason to boast of what we did to him.” When news of this reached the kings of India and China, the Mihraj grew in stature in their eyes.

Thereafter, the later kings of Qimar would each morning turn their faces towards the land of Zabij, kneel in worship and call the Mihraj the greatest of kings, in reverence to him.

184. Al-Mas`udi said: The reason they called that brook the “Brick of Gold” is that the palace of the Mihraj overlooked a small brook which fed into the greatest of bays in Zabij. That bay was mostly filled with seawater at high tide and emptied of sweet water at low tide. Each morning the head of the royal household would enter into the king’s presence carrying a brick cast in gold weighing several *manns**----the exact weight is unknown to us---which he then would toss into the brook in the king’s presence. At high tide, that brick together with others would be submerged, but low tide would expose these bricks which would glow in the sun. The king meanwhile would observe the scene from where he sat and overlooked it. This would be repeated every day as long as a king

reigned, and none of this gold could be touched. When a king died, his successor would remove all the bricks, count them, then have them melted and distributed among the royal family, men, women and children, and among commanders and retainers according to their ranks and salaries. If anything is left, it is distributed among the wretched and poor. The number of bricks would be recorded and weighed and people would say: “King so and so reigned for so and so years and left behind such and such a number of bricks in the royal brook, all of which were distributed among the people of his realm after his death.” A point of pride among them was a king who reigned long and thus increased the number of golden bricks in his legacy.

185. At the present time, the greatest of Indian kings is Ballahara, ruler of the city of Mankir.* Most kings of India turn to him in prayer and bow down before his messengers when they visit them. Next to the kingdom of Ballahara are many Indian kingdoms. Some rule mountainous areas with no access to the sea like Raba, ruler of Qashmir, the king of Taqa and others. Some rule regions which include both land and sea. As for Ballahara, there is a distance of eighty Sindi *farsakhs*---the *farsakh* being eight miles---between his capital city and the sea. He has armies and elephants innumerable, and most of his armies are infantry because his capital is located among mountains.

186. Similar to him among Indian kings who have no access to the sea is Baruza, ruler of the city of Qannuj*. This name is a title of all kings of that realm. He has armies deployed north, south, east and west since he has an enemy king facing him in each of these directions. We shall mention in brief a history of the kings of Sind and India as well as other kings of the earth when we come in this book to deal with seas and what surrounds them by way of wonders, nations, classes of kings and so forth,

even though we have already treated these subjects in our earlier works. In God is success and there is no power or strength save in God.

Chapter 8

A description of the earth, seas, sources of rivers, mountains, seven climes and which planets govern them, the arrangement of the heavenly bodies and other matters

187. Al-Mas`udi said: Scholars have divided the earth in four directions, east, west, north and south. They further divided it into two parts, inhabited and uninhabited, prosperous and wastelandt. They also mention that the earth is spherical and its location is in the middle of the heavens with air surrounding it on all sides, and that with respect to the constellations it is as tiny as a dot. They calculated its inhabited part as extending from the Khalidat* islands in the western ocean---these are six prosperous islands---to the outer limits of China's civilization and found this to be twelve hours. They concluded that if the sun sets in furthest China its rising would be in those islands in the western ocean and if the sun sets in these islands its rising would be in furthest China. This is half the circumference of the earth and represents the extent of civilization which these scholars assert is confined to that portion of the earth. Calculated in miles, it amounts to 13,500 miles, that is, the miles they adopted to calculate the earth's circumference.

188. They then examined width and found that civilization from the equator all the way northwards ends at the island of Thuli which is in Britain, where the day is at its longest, that is, twenty hours. They mention that the equator is located where it cuts from east to west at an island between India and Abyssinia, inclining southwards. Between north and south, the equator widens in the middle between the Khalidat islands and furthest China, and this is known as the dome of the earth according to what we have mentioned. The width from the equator to Thuli is

almost sixty parts, this being one sixth of the earth's circumference. If this sixth, which is the extent of width, is multiplied by the half which is the amount of length, the extent of civilization northwards amounts to half of one sixth of the earth's circumference.

189. As for the seven climes, the first is the land of Babil, to which belong Khurasan, Faris*, al-Ahwaz, Mosul and the Jibal. Their constellations are Aries and Sagittarius, and among the seven planets, Jupiter. The second clime is Sind, India and the lands of the blacks. Their constellation is Capricorn and among the seven planets, Saturn. The third clime is Mecca, Medinah, the Yemen, al-Ta'if, al-Hijaz and regions in between. Their constellation is Scorpio and among the seven planets, Venus or Sa`ida. The fourth clime is Egypt, Ifriqiyya, the Berber region, Andalusia and regions in between. Their constellation is Gemini and among the seven planets, Mercury. The fifth clime is al-Sham, Byzantium and al-Jazira. Their constellation is Aquarius and among the seven planets, the Moon. The sixth clime is the Turks, Khazar, Dailam and Slavs. Their constellation is Cancer and among the seven planets, Mars. The seventh clime is Daibul and China. Their constellation is the Balance and among the seven planets, the Sun.

190. Husain the astronomer, author of the work entitled *Astronomical Almanac*, reports from Khalid ibn `Abd al-Malik al-Marwaruwidhi and others, that they had taken measurements of the sun at the command of the caliph al-Ma'mun in the wilderness of Sinjar, in the region of Diyar Rabi`a. They found that a single degree of the face of the earth came to 56 miles. They multiplied this by 360 and found that the circumference of the earth including land and sea amounted to 20,160 miles. This was then multiplied by 7 and the total came to 141,120 miles. When divided by 22, the earth's diameter was found to be approximately 6414 miles and one half mile and one fifth mile. Half its diameter is thus 3207 miles, sixteen

minutes and thirty seconds, which amount to a quarter of a mile and one fourth of one tenth of a mile. A mile is four thousand *dhira`* known as *dhira` al-aswad*,* established by the caliph al-Ma'mun to measure cloth, building areas and stone cutting. The *dhira`* is twenty-four fingers.

191. Al-Mas`udi said: The philosopher [Ptolemy] in his book entitled the *Geography or Description of the Earth*, mentions its cities, mountains, seas, islands, rivers and springs and its inhabited cities and thriving regions. He states that the cities in his own times are 4530 in number, and names every single one in every single clime. In that work he also mentions the colors of the mountains: red, yellow, green and so forth, and gives their number as a little over 200, together with their elevations and what they contain of mines and precious stones.

192. That philosopher also states that the number of seas surrounding the earth is five, and mentions the islands therein, both inhabited and uninhabited, as also the famous islands but neglecting the not so famous. For in the Abyssinian Sea are found a series of adjoining islands some one thousand in number, called al-Dibajat,* all of which are inhabited, with two to three miles or more separating them, not counting other islands of that sea. In his *Geography* he states that the sea of Egypt and Byzantium begins at the Sea of Idols---bronze idols---and that the major springs number 230, not counting minor springs. He gives the number of great rivers running through the seven climes perpetually as 290 rivers.

193. He described the climes as we have described them above. Each clime is 900 *farsakhs* in length by 900 in width. Some seas are filled with animals, others not, such as the surrounding *Uqyanus* or ocean. In this work we shall briefly mention and describe the seas. All these seas are pictured in the *Geography* and painted in different colors and shapes. Some have the shape of a hood, others of a trumpet, others of intestines,

and some are round while others are triangular. But their names in that work are given in Greek and are thus difficult to understand.

194. It is also stated in that work that the diameter of the earth is 2100 *farsakhs*, but this should be corrected to 6600 *farsakhs*, where each *farsakh* is 16,000 *dhira`*. The sphere of the moon, which surrounds the lowest circle of the stars, measures 125,660 *farsakhs*, while the diameter of the heavenly spheres from the top of the constellation of Aries to the top of the constellation of the Balance is 40,000 *farsakhs*, as these are measured here.

195. The heavenly spheres are nine in number. The first, shortest and nearest to earth is the sphere of the moon, the second of Mercury, the third of Venus, the fourth of the sun, the fifth of Mars, the sixth of Jupiter, the seventh of Saturn, the eighth of the fixed stars, and the ninth of the constellations. In shape these are circular, with some inside others. The sphere of the constellations is called the universal (*kulli*) sphere which determines night and day since it is the sphere which rotates the sun, moon and other planets from east to west each day and night in one circle on two fixed axes. The first axis lies to the north, which is the axis of Ursa Major, and the second lies to the south, which is the axis of Canopus.

196. The constellations are nothing other than heavenly bodies, they being locations given these names in order to determine the locations of the planets with respect to the universal sphere. It follows that the constellations become narrower as they approach the two axes and grow wider in the middle of the circle. The line that cuts the sphere in two and proceeds from east to west is called the circle which equalizes the day because, when the sun passes over it, night and day are equal in length in all countries. The portion of the spheres that proceeds from north to south is called latitude while that from west to east is called longitude.

197. The heavenly spheres are circular and surround the earth, revolving on the earth's center. The earth is in the midst like the center of a circle. The spheres are nine in number. The nearest to earth is the sphere of the moon, above which is the sphere of Mercury, then of Venus, then of the sun---which is the center of the seven spheres--then of Mars, then of Jupiter, then of Saturn. In each of these seven spheres there is a single planet. Above Saturn is the eighth sphere where the twelve constellations and the other planets are found. The ninth sphere is the highest and greatest in mass and is the Great Sphere which surrounds the lower spheres that we have just named as also the four elements and the whole of creation. There is no planet in it and it completes from east to west one perfect circuit each day. Through its rotation all spheres below it, as mentioned above, rotate. However, the seven spheres mentioned above rotate from west to east and ancient authorities have advanced arguments to explain this fact which are too long to mention here.

198. The planets which are fixed in their movements and which we see, as also the other planets, are in the eighth sphere. This eighth sphere revolves on two axes which are different from the two axes of the Great Sphere mentioned earlier. They claim that the proof that the movement of the constellations is different from that of the spheres is that the twelve constellations follow one another in their progress and do not leave their locations or change their movements when rising and setting. On the other hand, each of the seven planets has a movement different from the other and they diverge in their progress. It thus may happen that a planet would speed up its movement and progress and may turn northwards or southwards.

199. According to these authorities, the definition of the heavenly spheres is the point at which natures are perfected, in height or depth. Their definition with respect to their nature is that they are circular in shape, the

circle being the widest of all shapes and the one that comprehends all other shapes. They assert that measurements of the movement of these planets in their spheres are divergent. Thus the moon remains in each constellation for two days and a half and crosses the heavenly bodies every month. The sun remains for one month in each constellation, Mercury remains fifteen days, Venus twenty-five days, Mars forty-five days, Jupiter one year and Saturn thirty months.

200. Ptolemy, author of *Almagest*, claims that the total circumference of the earth, both mountains and seas, is 24,000 miles, while its diameter, i.e. its width and depth, is 7636 miles. They calculated this by measuring the elevation of the North Pole in two cities on the equator like the city of Tadmur in the desert between Iraq and al-Sham, and the city of al-Raqqa. They found the elevation at al-Raqqa to be 35 degrees and one third and at Tadmur to be 34 degrees. They then measured the distance between Tadmur and al-Raqqa and found it to be 67 miles. So what is visible from the heavenly spheres on earth is 67 miles, while the heavenly spheres are 360 degrees, and this for reasons they cite too long to go into here. This is in their estimation a correct division because they found that the heavenly spheres were divided among the twelve constellations and that the sun crosses each constellation in one month and all twelve constellations in 360 days.

201. He also states that the heavenly spheres are circular and rotate on two axes or poles, and these resemble the pivot of a carpenter or wood turner who planes wooden globes or bowls or other wooden utensils. He further states that the inhabitants of the center of the earth on the equator experience days and nights equal in length at all times and can see both poles, i.e. the northern and southern. Those who inhabit northern regions can see the north pole and Ursa Major but cannot see the southern pole or the planets near it. Similarly, the star known as Canopus cannot be seen

in Khurasan but can be seen on certain days in Iraq. When a camel sees this star it dies, as we stated before, and people have offered reasons for the death of this species of animal in particular. Inhabitants of southern lands, however, can see Canopus all the year round.

202. Astronomers are in disagreement as regards the two poles that the heavenly bodies make use of in their rotation: are they fixed or mobile? Most believe that they are fixed. In our earlier works we mentioned the arguments of each group as regards the fixity of these two poles and whether or not they are of the same kind as other heavenly bodies.

203. There is also a dispute as regards the shape of the seas. Most ancient philosophers of India and Greece, except for their opponents among religious communities, assert that the seas surround the earth, giving many proofs for this. One such proof is that if one sails far into the sea, the earth gradually disappears from view until it disappears completely and even towering mountains are no longer visible. Similarly, if one approaches a coast these mountains appear little by little, and when near the coast the land and trees become visible.

204. Consider the example of Mount Dunbawand [Damavand] between Rayy and Tabaristan. Because of its height and prominence on the skyline it can be seen from a distance of one hundred *farsakhs*. From its summit rises a mist, and snow accumulates on its heights at all times. From its base flows a large, yellow, sulfuric river, golden in color. It takes three days and nights of climbing to reach its summit. Whoever reaches that summit finds it to be one thousand by one thousand *dhira`* in area. From below, it appears to the eye like a flattened dome. On that open space on its heights there is red sand in which a foot can sink. No beast or bird can attain that summit because of the very high winds, the turbulence and the great cold. On its slopes are some thirty holes from which issues an immense and sulfuric smoke accompanied by extremely

loud sounds like the loudest of thunder, these being the sounds of raging fires. Whoever puts his life at risk and climbs its heights might carry away with him from these holes a yellow sulfur, like gold, which goes into the manufacture of certain crafts and of alchemy and other pursuits. Whoever ascends its heights and looks around him, towering mountains nearby will appear to him like mere hills and dunes, so great is its height. 205. Between that mountain and the Sea of Tabaristan [Caspian Sea] is a distance of some twenty *farsakhs*. When ships sail away in that sea, Mount Damavand will disappear and become invisible. However, a person sailing on that sea and approaching the mountains of Tabaristan will, at a distance of about one hundred *farsakhs*, catch a glimpse of the summit. As he draws nearer to the coast the mountain will gradually be revealed. This is further proof in support of those who claim that the waters of the seas are curved in shape.

206. So too is the case with one who sails in the Sea of al-Rum [The Mediterranean], which is the sea of al-Sham and Egypt. He will see al-Jabal al-Aqra' [Mount Keldag], a high mountain whose height cannot be estimated. It overlooks the regions of Antioch, Latakiya, Tripoli, Cyprus and other Byzantine territories. This mountain will disappear from view for those in a ship, as they dip when sailing in that sea from the place where the mountain had been visible. Later in this work we will mention some information about Mount Damavand and what Persians relate regarding it, e.g. that Al-Dahhak of the Many Mouths* is chained in irons on its heights. That dome at its summit is one of the earth's greatest volcanoes and one of its wonders.

207. People have discussed the dimensions of the earth. Most maintain that the distance between the center of the earth and the point at which air and fire come to an end is 168,000 miles. They say that the earth is approximately thirty nine times larger than the moon; that the earth is

twenty three times larger than Mercury; that the earth is twenty four times larger than Venus; that the sun is one hundred and sixty-six times and one fourth and one eighth larger than the earth, and one thousand six hundred and forty four times larger than the moon; the earth itself is half of one tenth of one eighth of the sun; the sun's diameter is 42,000 miles; Mars is larger than earth by sixty-three times, with a diameter of 8700 and one half miles; Jupiter is larger than earth by eighty-one times and one half and one quarter, with a diameter of 33,016 miles; Saturn is larger than earth by ninety-seven times and a half, with a diameter of 32,786 miles. As regards the fixed stars in the furthest east, fifteen in number, each is larger than the earth by ninety-four times and a half.

208. As regards distances from earth, the nearest is the moon at 118,000 miles. Its furthest distance from earth is 124,000 miles. The furthest that Mercury is from earth is 900,730 miles; from Venus, 4,019,600 miles; from the sun 4,820,000 and one half mile; from Mars, 33,600,000 and some; from Jupiter, 54,166,000, less a little; from Saturn 77,000,000, less a little. The farthest of fixed stars are about that far from the earth's center.

209. Based on the divisions, parts and measurements cited above, it became possible for people to deduce the science of the hours and eclipses and to construct instruments and astrolabes and write all their books. This however is a subject which, if we deal with it even partially, will require a lengthy discussion. Accordingly, we only dealt with these sciences in brief in order to fill a gap in our earlier works where these sciences were discussed. We shall later on deal in general terms with these subjects already mentioned in this work.

210. The Sabeans of Harran, who are considered the plebs of the Greeks and the vulgar exponents (*hashwiyya*) of ancient philosophers, arranged the clergy of their temples in ranks in accordance with these nine planets.

Thus the head of their clergy is called *Ras Kumra*. They were followed by the Christians who arranged their clergy in ranks, as was done earlier by the Sabeans. The Christians called these ranks *Al-Ta`at* (hierarchies of obedience). The first is *al-Salt* [psaltes, i.e. cantor], the second is *Aghust* [anagnostes, i.e. lector], the third is *Yudhaqin* [deacon], the fourth is *al-Shammas* [assistant priest], the fifth is *Qassis* [priest], the sixth is *Bardut* [vicar], the seventh is *Hurasfitus* [Chorepiskopos] who is a bishop's deputy, the eighth is the *Usquf* [bishop], and the ninth is the *Mutran* [Metropolitan] which means "head of a city". Above them all in rank is the *Batrak* [Patriarch] which means "father of fathers". The ranks cited above and other lower and common ranks are what exist among the elite of the Christians.

211. The commoners among them, however, cite, regarding these ranks, facts that differ from what we mentioned. They say that a king rose among them and instituted certain matters which we need not cite here. These ranks belong to the Melkites who are the pillars and poles of Christianity. This is because the easterners, the communities known as Nestorians and Jacobites, were an offshoot from the Melkites and diverged from them. The Christians, as already stated, adopted these ranks in general from the Sabeans such as the priest and cantor and other ranks, as did the Manicheans but not al-Musaddiqiyyun [Mazdakites] and al Shamma`* and others, although Mani came after Christ as also Ibn Daisan (Bar Daysan) and Marqiyun (Marcion). The Manicheans were called after Mani, the Marcionites after Marcion and the Daysanites after Bar Daysan. Thereafter the Mazdakites and others split off from among those who followed the doctrine of the two gods.

212. In our two works, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, we cited in general the peculiarities of these sects and the fabricated legends and fables they embellished, not to speak of our discussion of their beliefs in

our work entitled *Al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat*, as also in our other work entitled *Al-Ibana `an Usul al-Diyana*, where we demonstrated the falsity of their views and refuted these sects. In these chapters we merely mention what the general context of our discussion has led us to, and thus cite these matters in brief by way of a report and description of a sect, not rational examination and argument, in order that this work does not omit what is necessary for us to mention, if God wills. There is no strength save in God.

Chapter 9

A mention of reports concerning the shifting of the seas, and brief reports regarding the great rivers

213. The author of the *Logic* [Aristotle] stated that seas shift their location with the passage of the years and eras, so that they end up in different places, and that all seas are therefore mobile. However, despite this movement, and given the volume of the waters involved, the width of their surfaces and their depths, they appear motionless. Then again, wetlands have not always been wet nor dry lands dry, but these also change and become transformed when rivers pour into them or else stop doing so. This is why the location of seas and lands shift; land is not forever land nor is sea forever sea. Thus what was once sea is now land and what was land is now sea. This is caused by the flow of rivers, for the courses of the rivers experience youth and old age, life and death, trickle and flood. The same is true of animals and plants except that youth and old age in these do not happen segment after segment, for their segments grow and are enlarged as a whole so that they become old and die at one point in time, whereas the earth grows old or grows larger segment after segment, according to the rotation of the sun.

214. Opinions differ regarding rivers and springs and where they originate. Some argue that they flow from one single place which is the

Great Sea, and that this is a sweet water sea and not to be identified with the ocean. Others assert that they are present on earth like the veins in the body. Still others affirm that it is natural for water to exist on some surface. However, since certain parts of the earth are elevated while others are low lying, water flows down to the depths of the earth. When water is trapped in these depths and cavities, it seeks to breathe, being pressured by earth from below, so it gushes out in the form of springs and rivers. Water may also be generated in the depths of the earth from the air found therein, since water is not an element (*istaqiss*) but is generated from the putridity and mist of the earth. Many opinions have been advanced regarding this matter but we refrain from reporting them, seeking to condense and abbreviate such discussions, though we have dealt at length with them in our other works.

215. As regards the source, course, location and length of the great rivers on earth, like the Nile, Euphrates, Tigris, the river of Balkh, which is Jaihun [Amu Darya/Oxus], the Mihran in Sind [Indus], the Ganges, a great river in India, the Sabat [Sobat], a great river, the river [Don] of Tanais which flows into the Black sea, together with other major rivers---much has been written as regards the extent of their course on the earth's surface. In the work called *Geography* I saw the Nile drawn as originating from the Mountain of the Moon. Its source and origin comes from twelve springs which flow into two lakes in that locality that resemble marshes. The waters collect there then flow forth, passing through deserts and mountains of that region then cut through the land of the Sudan near the land of the Zanj, at which point a tributary is formed which pours into the sea of the Zanj, this being the sea around the island [Pemba] of the city of Qanbalu*. This is a thriving island inhabited by Muslims but they speak a Zanj language. The Muslims overpowered that island and subjugated its Zanj inhabitants just as the Muslims conquered

the island of Crete in the Mediterranean sea. This took place towards the end of the Umayyad and the beginning of the Abbasid period. From that island to Oman is a distance of 500 *farsakhs* by sea, as reported by sailors, but this is a mere guess and not based on accurate measurement and observation.

216. Some ship captains from Siraf and Oman who sail on that sea report that during the period when the Nile rises or a little before, they observe a body of water which crosses that sea, cutting through a portion of it because it runs so fast, originating from the Zanj mountains. This body of water is about a mile in width and is sweet but becomes turgid when the Nile rises in Egypt and the Sa`id. In it is found the animal called *al-Susmar*, which is the Nile crocodile and is also called *al-Waral*.

217. Jahiz states that the Mihran in Sind is a tributary of the Nile. He reached that conclusion by noting that crocodiles exist in that river too. I wonder how he obtained that proof. This is mentioned in his book called *al-Amsar wa `Aja`ib al-Buldan*, a truly delightful work even though Jahiz himself never crossed any seas or travelled much, or closely investigated kingdoms and cities. Did he not realize that the Indus issues from several well known springs in the highlands of Sind, in the land of Qannuj in the kingdom of Barwaza, the land of Kashmir, Qandahar and al-Taqi until it reaches the land of Multan, where it is called the Golden Mihran, and Multan itself is called the Aperture of the House of Gold?

218. The ruler of the kingdom in the land of Multan is a man from Quraish, a descendant of Sama ibn Lu`ayy ibn Ghalib. Caravans to Khurasan congregate and proceed from his territory. The ruler of the kingdom of al-Mansura is also a man from Quraish, a descendant of Habbar ibn al-Aswad, and kingship resides in that line. Kingship in Multan is as old as early Islamic times and is hereditary. The Indus ends in the territory of al-Mansura and flows into the Indian Sea near the land

of Daibul. There are many crocodiles in the gulfs of that sea like the Gulf of Sindapura in the kingdom of Baghira in India and the gulfs of al-Zabij in the kingdom of Mahraj, as also in the gulfs which adjoin the island of Sarandib. Most crocodiles live in sweet water and the Indian gulfs mentioned here are mostly sweet water because rainwater flows into them.

219. Let us now turn back to the Nile of Egypt. Philosophers state that it runs on the surface of the earth for a distance of 900 *farsakhs*; some say 1000. It traverses both the sown and the desert, inhabited and uninhabited regions, until it reaches the territory of Aswan in the Sa`id of Egypt. To this locality ships go up from Fustat in Egypt. At some miles distant from Aswan are mountains and boulders in the midst of which the Nile flows, so ships cannot pass through them. This locality is the boundary between the ships of Abyssinia and those of the Muslims, and is known as *Al-Janadil* [rocks] and *al-Sukhur* [boulders].

220. The Nile then reaches Fustat, having traversed the Sa`id, Mount Tailamun and the Rock of al-Lahun in the territory of Fayyum. This locality is an island that the Prophet Yusuf took as his home. The Nile crosses that place. Later in this work we shall speak of Egypt's history and its cities and how the Prophet Yusuf built them up. The Nile then flows on and is divided into gulfs in the territory of Tinnis, Dimyat and Rashid then flows into the Mediterranean in Alexandria, creating several lakes in these regions. The Nile had stopped flowing into the territory of Alexandria before its increase this year which is the year 332. News reached me while at Antioch, the Shami border port, that the Nile had increased that year by 18 *dhira`s*. However, I do not know whether that increase in the level of its water did or did not flow into the gulf of Alexandria.

221. Alexander son of Philip the Macedonian had built Alexandria on that gulf of the Nile. Into it poured most of the Nile's waters, irrigating the territory of Alexandria and Maryut. This latter was a land of great prosperity with gardens extending all the way to the land of Barqa in the Maghrib. Ships used to sail on the Nile until they reached the markets of Alexandria. In that city the bed of the Nile was tiled with stones and marble. The water then receded because of certain blockages that obstructed its gulf, preventing the water from reaching the city. Other reasons have also been given which prevented the waters from being purified and returned them to where they had been constricted. But this work of ours cannot go into detail about these matters since we have decided to restrict its scope. The people of Alexandria then resorted to wells for their drinking water and the Nile came to be at one day's distance from them. We shall later on cite in brief some historical reports about Alexandria and how it was built.

222. We mentioned above the fact that sweet water pours into the Sea of the Zanj. We now state that it issues from a gulf that is formed from the highlands of the Zanj and is the border between the land of the Zanj and the furthest territories of the Abyssinian races. Were it not for that gulf and the deserts of sand and quicksand separating them, the Abyssinians would not last long in their country, for the Zanj are very numerous and warlike.

223. As for the Balkh river, called the Oxus, it issues from springs and flows until it reaches the land of Khwarizm, having already traversed the regions of Tirmidh, Isfara'in and other regions of Khurasan. When it reaches Khwarizm, it branches into certain territories there while the rest continues until it flows into a lake [Aral Sea] near the well-known town of Jurjaniyya, in lower Khwarizm. In that land, there is no lake larger than this. It is said that nowhere in the inhabited world is there a lake

larger than this, for in length and width it extends for a distance of one month. Ships run in it, and into it flows the river [Syr Darya] of Farghana and al-Shash, which passes through the region of Farab, by the city of Wasij. Ships run in the river up to that lake, at which point there is a city of the Turks called “The New City”, where there is a Muslim community. 224. Most Turks in that locality are Ghuzz, both sedentary and nomadic. This race of Turks is of three varieties: lower, upper and middle. They are the most warlike of Turks, the shortest in stature and the smallest of eye. Among the Turks there are some shorter than them, and these are mentioned by the author of the *Logic* in his *Book of Animals* in the fourteenth and eighteenth chapters where he discusses the birds known as *gharaniq* [cranes]. We shall make mention of the history of the Turks in later sections of this book, both in one place and here and there.

225. The city of Balkh has a frontier post called Badakhshan, some twenty days’ distance, and is the furthest point in its territory. Facing them are various races of unbelievers called Wakhkhan and Tubbat, and to their right is another race called Abghan [Afghan] From that region flows a great river called Abghan [Panjkora?]. Some specialists claim that this river is the source of the Oxus, which is the river of Balkh. It runs on the earth’s surface for some 150 *farsakhs*---some say 400---from the source of the river of the Turks, which is Abghan. Some authors mistakenly report that the Oxus flows into Mihran of Sind.

226. We have not mentioned the Black Irisht [Irtys] nor White Irisht rivers upon which the kingdom of Kimak Uyghur is based. They are a race of Turks beyond the river of Balkh, the Oxus. On these two rivers are found the Turkish Ghuzz tribes. Information exists regarding these two rivers but we were unable to determine the extent of their courses on earth in order to mention it.

227. There is also the Ganges, the river of India. It issues from mountains in farthest India, near China, from the direction of the country of the Turkish Tughuzghuz. Its course until it flows into the Abyssinian sea near the Indian coastline is 400 *farsakhs*.

228. As for the Euphrates, it begins from the land of Qali-Qala [Erzurum], one of the Armenian frontier posts, from mountains there called Afardahs, at a day's distance from Qali Qala. It flows through the land of the Byzantines for about 100 *farsakhs* before it reaches the town of Malatya. A Muslim brother who had been a prisoner in Christian lands told me that as the Euphrates reaches the midst of Byzantine territory, many waters flow into it, among which is a river [Murat] which issues from the environs of Lake Marzabun [Lake Van]. There is no lake larger than this in Byzantine territory, being one month's distance in length and width---some say more. Ships run in that lake. The Euphrates reaches the Manbij Bridge having traversed the castle of Sumaisat, which is the Mud Castle, then passes on to Balis and through Siffin, the scene of the battle between the people of Iraq and al-Sham, and then down to al-Raqla, al-Rahba, Hit and al-Anbar.

229. From these latter localities canals are dug like the `Isa Canal and others which end in the City of Peace [Baghdad] and pours into the Tigris. The Euphrates proceeds to the territory of Sura, Qasr ibn Hubaira, Kufa, al-Jami`ain, al-Nars and al-Tufuf and finally ends in the swamp between Wasit and Basra. Accordingly, it flows on the face of the earth for a distance of around 500 *farsakhs*---some say more. In the past, most of its waters ended in the territory of al-Hira, and its channel may still be seen to the present day and is called the Old River. Upon it took place the battle, known as al-Qadisiyya, between the Muslims and Rustam. It then used to flow into the Abyssinian sea, for the sea at that time reached up to

the locality known as al-Najaf today. There, ships from India and China would dock when journeying to the kings of al-Hira.

230. Some older historians who are knowledgeable about the battle-days of the pre-Islamic Arabs such as Hisham ibn Muhammad al-Kalbi, Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya and al-Sharqi ibn al-Qutami report the following story. When, in the caliphate of Abu Bakr, Khalid ibn al-Walid al-Makhzumi* marched on al-Hira, following the conquest of Yamama and the killing of the Liar of the Hanifa tribe [Musaylima], he saw that the people of al-Hira had taken refuge in the White Fort, the Qadisiyya Fort and the Banu Tha`laba Fort. These were the names of forts that existed in al-Hira but are at this point in time, the year 332, desolate ruins lying some 3 miles distant from al-Kufa. When Khalid saw that the people of al-Hira had taken to the forts against him, he ordered his troops to camp near Najaf then rode out on his horse with Dirar ibn al-Azwar al-Asadi, a famous Arab knight. They halted below the Banu Tha`laba Fort and the `Ibadiyyun [Nestorian Christians] began to fling fire projectiles at them. His horse bolted and Dirar said to him: “God steady you! They have no trick more grievous than what you see.”

231. Khalid then returned to his camp and sent a message to the people of al-Hira: “Send us a man of reason and long experience from among you so I can parley with him.” They sent him `Abd al-Masih ibn `Amr ibn Qais ibn Hayyan ibn Buqaila al-Ghassani. It was he who built the White Fort. His ancestor Buqaila was so called because he went out one day dressed in green silken garments so his people said: “This is nothing but a *buqaila* [a small vegetable]!” so he was called Buqaila. It was this same `Abd al-Masih who had gone to see Satih, the Ghassanid seer, to ask him about the dream of the *Mobidhan* [Zoroastrian priest], the quaking of the Portico and the future of Sasanid kings. `Abd al-Masih, then 350 years old, approached Khalid. As Khalid saw him coming he asked: “From

where did your footsteps proceed, old man?” “From my father’s loins,” he answered. “Where did you come from?” “From my mother’s belly,” he answered. “Damn it, upon what [i.e.errand] are you set ?” “Upon the earth,” he answered. “What [i.e.mission] are you in, may you perish?” “In my clothes,” he answered. “Are you rational, may you lose your reason?” “Yes, by God, and I can write,” he answered. “Son of how many [i.e. years] are you?” “Son of one man,” he answered. Khalid said, “O God, degrade this city’s people! They merely increase our bewilderment. I ask him about a certain matter and he answers with another.” “No indeed. I swear I only answered you as you had asked me. Ask me what you like,” he answered. Khalid said: “Are you Arab or Nabat [natives]?” “Arabs who *Nabatized* and Nabat who *Arabized*.” “Is it to be war or peace between us?” “No, peace,” he answered. “What about these forts, then?” “We built them to imprison the vicious until the wise can come and restrain them,” he answered. “How many [years] have passed you by?” “Three hundred and fifty,” he answered. “What [events] have you witnessed?” “I witnessed ships at sea sailing up to us in this land of Najaf bearing the merchandise of Sind and India, and the waves of the sea crashing beneath your feet where you are now standing. But observe how far the sea is from where we are today. I used to see the women of al-Hira bearing large baskets on their heads and carrying for provisions a single loaf of bread. They would walk through one thriving village after another, continuous habitations, fruit-bearing trees, running streams, and flowing brooks that reached all the way to al-Sham. Today you can see that it is all a desolate wilderness. This is God’s habit when He deals with His lands and creatures.”

232. Khalid and his companions fell silent when they heard this from him and knew who he was. He was famous among the Arabs for his long life span and for the soundness of his mind. He said all this while twirling in

the palm of his hand a poison that kills at once. Khalid asked: "What do you have there?" "A poison that kills at once," he answered. "What do you intend to do with it?" "I came to you so that if I hear from you what pleases me and agrees with my countrymen I would accept it and offer thanks to God. If it is the other thing, I will not be the first person to bring humiliation and destruction upon my townsmen, so I will swallow this poison and be rid of this world. I have only a few more years to live."

Khalid said: "Give it to me." He took the poison, placed it in the palm of his hand and said: "In the name of God, by God, Lord of earth and heaven, in the name of God in whose name nothing can bring harm."

Khalid then swallowed it, was numbed for a while, with his chin resting on his breast, then recovered and came to, as if released from shackles.

233. The *`Ibadi* then returned to his people. He was a *`Ibadi* in faith, that is, a Nestorian Christian. He addressed them as follows: "O people, I come to you from a demon who swallowed a poison that kills at once but was not harmed by it. Make peace with him and get him to leave you in peace. These people are favored by God, the future belongs to them and the Sasanid dynasty is doomed. Their religion will have an impact that spreads throughout the world. Then it will experience certain setbacks."

So they made peace with Khalid in return for one hundred thousand *dirhams* and *tailasan* [shawl-like] garments. Khalid then departed and *`Abd al-Masih* recited the following verse:

*Will I ever see, after the two Mundhirs [kings of al-Hira] have gone,
Camels resting near Khawarnaq and Sadir [famous palaces]?*

*With knights from every clan protecting them,
Fearing a lion with a loud roar?*

And, after the knights of al-Nu`man,

Will I behold gardens between Murra and al-Hufair?

After the death of Abu Qubais [al-Nu`man] we have become

*Like sheep in a day of pouring rain.
 The tribes of Ma`add [desert Arabs] have carved us up,
 Out in the open, like butchers with lumps of meat.
 We [reading nu`addi] pay taxes like the taxes of Chosroes,
 Or the taxes paid by Quraiza and al-Nadir [Jewish clans of Medinah].
 Such is Time. It twists and turns,
 One day of sorrow, another of joy.*

234. We mentioned this story here in order to support our view regarding the shift in the position of the seas and penetration of waters and rivers across time. When the waters were cut off from their source at that site the sea turned into land so that today the distance between al-Hira and the sea is a journey of several days. Whoever has seen al-Najaf and observed it closely will verify what we have described above.

235. Similar too is the case with the shift of what is called the One-eyed Tigris (*Dijla al-`awra`*) which today is at a considerable distance from the Tigris. It is now known as the Valley of Jukha, which runs from the borders of the city of Badhbin in the region of Wasit in Iraq to the territory of Dur al-Rasibi and on to the neighborhood of the land of Sus in the territory of Khuzistan. The same thing happened on the eastern side of Baghdad at the site known as Raqqa al-Shamasiyya and also what the current carried away of farms on the western side which used to exist between Qutrabull and Baghdad, like the village known as Qubb, the locality known as Bushra, the one known as al-`Ain and other villages of Qutrabull. Their inhabitants filed complaints against the inhabitants of the eastern side who took possession of Raqqa al-Shamasiyya in the days of the caliph al-Muqtadir and in the presence of the vizier Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn `Isa, and what answers were given at that time. All this is well known in Baghdad.

236. If the waters carry away one seventh of a mile of land in about thirty years, this becomes a mile in around two hundred years. If the river moves away by 4000 *dhira`* from its main course, some land sites will be destroyed while others will thrive. If the waters find a downward slope into which they pour, the river will broaden and flow faster, tearing up localities on land from their furthest extent. Wherever it finds wide lowlands, it will fill them up through the speed of its flow, thus creating lakes, swamps and marshes, and in the process destroying some lands while causing others to thrive. Anyone with any understanding will know what we are talking about.

237. Some discriminating historians of the world and its kings state that in the year when the Prophet of God sent ambassadors to Chosroes, which was year 7 of the Hijra, both the Euphrates and the Tigris experienced a huge rise never seen before. Huge gaps appeared and cracks opened up in many canals with the waters carrying away many barrages and dikes. The waters flooded the lowlands. Abarwiz [title of Chosroes] tried hard to contain the waters and rebuild its flood-gates, dikes and flanks, but the flood was unstoppable and flowed into where the marshes are today. The waters flooded habitations and the sown, overwhelming villages and agricultural areas there, and the king could find no way to contain the waters. Shortly thereafter, the Persians were busy with the wars against the Arabs and the waters would gush forth without any attention paid to the matter, so the marshes grew ever wider.

238. When Mu`awiya assumed supreme power he delegated his client, `Abdullah ibn Darraj to collect the land-tax of Iraq. From lands in the marshes he was able to collect what amounted to 15 million *dirhams*. He did this by cutting down the reeds that grew in the marshes and holding back the waters through dikes and barrages. In later times Hassan the Nabati, client of the tribe of Dabba, was able to salvage for al-Hajjaj in

the days of the ruler al-Walid more lands from the marshes. Today, the marshes extend as far as the waters had covered of land, an area of 50 *farsakhs* by fifty or so. In the midst of these marshes there are many villages such as Qa`r al-Jamida and others. This is a town surrounded by water. When the water is clear, one can see in its depths traces of buildings, some of stone, others of brick, and some that have collapsed but with visible traces. The same can be seen in Lake Tinnis and Dimyat, as is recounted in more than one place in our present work and in our other works.

239. Let us now turn back to the Tigris, its source and its outlet. The Tigris issues from the region of Amid in the territory of Diyar Bakr, from springs in the land of Khilat in Armenia. Flowing into it are several rivers: Saryat and Satidma, which issue from the territory of Arzan and Mayyafariqain, together with other rivers like Dusha and Khabur which issue from Armenia and flow into the Tigris between the towns of Basurin and Qabr Sabur in the regions of Qarda and Bazabda in the territory and province of Mosul. These lands are known as the lands of Banu Hamdan. Concerning them a poet has recited:

*In Barda and Bazabda is a summer resort and a place to settle,
Sweet and cool like Salsabil [spring in paradise].*

But Baghdad? What is Baghdad?

Its soil is like hot embers, its heat is intense.

The Khabur mentioned above is not the same as the one that issues from the springs of the town of Ra's `Ain, and flows into the Euphrates below the town of Qarqisia.

240. The Tigris then passes by the city of Mosul where the Greater Zab river, issuing from Armenia, flows into it when it is past Mosul and above the town of al-Haditha. Another river, also called Zab and issuing from Armenia and Adharbaijan, flows into the Tigris above the town of al-

Sinn. The Tigris proceeds to Takrit, Samarra and Baghdad, where the canals called al-Khandaq, al-Sarrat and Nahr `Isa flow into it. These canals, as already mentioned, lead from the Euphrates and pour into the Tigris. The Tigris then leaves Baghdad where several rivers pour into it like the ones known as Diyala, Bin and Ruwan in the vicinity of the territory of Jarjaraya, and also al-Sib and Nil al-Nu`maniyya. As the Tigris exits the city of Wasit, it divides into many rivers all the way to the marshlands of Basra with rivers like Sabus, al-Yahudi and al-Ma'muni, then on to the mouth of the river which ends with al-Qatr. In it, most ships of Basra run when coming from Baghdad and Wasit. The total length of the Tigris in its flow upon the earth's surface is around 300 *farasakhs*, though some say 400.

241. We have left out the mention of many other rivers, mentioning only the major and most famous among them, though we have treated this subject at length in our two earlier works, the *Akhbar* and *al-Awsat*. In the present work we include only some reports of rivers we have cited by name and others that we have not.

242. Basra has a number of major canals like Nahr Shirin, Nahr al-Dair and Nahr Ibn `Umar. So too is the case with the canals in the region of Al-Ahwaz, in the lands separating it from the region of Basra. We have left out this subject for we have already treated its history at great length. Also treated at great length are reports concerning the manner in which Bahr Faris [Persian Gulf] terminates in the regions of Basra and al-Ubulla and reports concerning a locality called al-Jarrara. This latter is an inlet of the sea into land near the region of al-Ubulla. Because of this, most canals of Basra have turned saline. Because of al-Jarrara, wooden platforms have been set up near the inlet of the sea in the vicinity of Ubulla and `Abbadan. On the platforms are stationed people who light fires at night, mounted on three legs like chairs in the midst of the sea, to

warn ships coming from Oman and Siraf not to fall into the Jarrara or other places like it, where ships would founder and be lost. All this has been related at length in our earlier works. These localities are remarkable in the way they flow into the sea and the way the sea is connected to them.

Chapter 10

An account of the Abyssinian Sea and opinions regarding its extent, its branches and its gulfs.

243. It has been estimated that the Indian Sea, that is, the Abyssinian Sea, extends from west to east, from furthest Abyssinia to furthest India and China, for a distance of eight thousand miles in length and 2700 in breadth but in other places 1900 miles. Its breadth varies, being less in some places and more in others. Other figures for its length and breadth have also been given but we have disregarded them since they lack evidence of accuracy according to experts. No greater sea exists on the inhabited earth.

244. This sea has a gulf which adjoins the land of Abyssinia and passes on to the region of Barbara in the land of the Zanj and Abyssinia, called the Barbari Gulf. It is 500 miles in length and 100 in width. This Barbara is not to be confused with the land of the Berbers which is in the Maghreb in the territory of Ifriqiya, for this is a different locality but bears the same name. Ship captains from Oman cross that sea to the island of Qanbalu* in the sea of the Zanj. In that island Muslims live alongside the unbelieving Zanj.

245. The above-mentioned Omani captains allege that this Barbari Gulf, known to them as the sea of Barbara and the land of Hafuna, is longer than we have cited. They say that its waves are mountainous and blind, by which they mean that these waves rise to the height of mountains then sink like the lowest of valleys. They further assert that its waves do not

break and create foam as in all other seas, and that its waves are crazy. The Omanis who sail in this sea are Arabs of the Azd tribe. Once far at sea and with the waves rising and falling, they chant *rajaz** verses as they toil:

Barbara and Hafuni

And your crazy waves;

Hafuni and Barbara,

And its waves are as you see.

246. The final destination of these sailors in the Zanj Sea is, as was mentioned, the island of Qanbalu, then the lands of Sufala and Waq Waq in furthest Zanj land and the lowest points of their sea. This sea is crossed by the people of Siraf. I myself sailed on that sea from the town of Suhar in Oman, Suhar being the chief city of the land of Oman. I did so in the company of some Sirafi captains like Muhammad ibn al-Zaidabud and Jawhar ibn Ahmad, known as Ibn Sirah. This latter would later be lost at sea with his crew. The last time I sailed that sea was in the year 304 [916-17], from the island of Qanbalu to Oman in a boat captained by Ahmad and `Abd al-Samad, brothers of `Abd al-Rahim ibn Ja`far al-Sirafi from Mikan, a quarter of Siraf. They too would later sink with their boats and passengers---I mean Ahmad and `Abd al-Samad, sons of Ja`far. When last I sailed that sea, Oman was ruled by Ahmad ibn Hilal, nephew of al-Qaital. I have sailed on many a sea such as the Chinese, the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the sea of Yemen, experiencing untold terrors, but never did I experience a more terrifying sea than the sea of the Zanj, described above.

247. In that sea is the fish known as *uwal* [whale]. Each fish is about 400 to 500 *dhira`*, known as *dhira` `umariyya*, which is the measure of length used by those who sail that sea. Most fish of this species, however, measure 100 *dhira`*. When the sea is calm, the edges of its fins may be

seen, resembling huge sails. It might also raise its head and blow out water which shoots up into the air faster than an arrow. Ships are scared of it by day or night so they beat on pieces of wood and rattles to drive it away. With its tail and fins it drives fish into its open mouth and the fish pour into its entrails. When this fish grows too aggressive, God sends it a fish a *dhira`* in length called *lashk* which attaches itself to the base of its pectoral fins and from which there is no escape. The *uwal* then dives to the bottom of the sea and strikes itself until it dies, then floats up to the surface appearing like a great mountain. It also happens that the *lashk* might attach itself to a ship so the *uwal*, with all its vast size, will not come near and in fact runs away when it sees that little fish, for it is a fatal menace to it.

248. So too is the case with the crocodile, to which a small animal is a fatal menace. This animal lives on the banks and islands of the Nile. The crocodile has no rear end and what it eats turns into worms in its belly. When these worms annoy it, the crocodile crawls out onto land, lies on its back and opens its mouth. God then disposes certain water-birds, like the *titawa*, *hisani* and *shamurk** and others, habituated to do so, to eat the worms that come out of its entrails. That little animal is meanwhile hiding in the sand observing the scene, then creeps into its throat and down to its entrails. The crocodile then thrashes itself on the ground and plunges into the depths of the Nile. But the little animal devours its entrails, then cuts through its belly and comes out. It may also happen that the crocodile kills itself before the little animal has gone out so it comes out from its belly after the crocodile's death. This little animal is about a *dhira`* in length and looks like a weasel with several limbs and claws.

249. In the Zanj sea, there are several species of fish of different shapes. Were it not that people reject what they do not know or are not familiar with, we would have related the wonders of those seas and what they

contain by way of whales and animal life and other wonders of these waters.

250. Let us now turn back to speak of the branches and gulfs of that sea and where it enters land or land enters it. Another gulf extends from that sea reaching the town of Qulzum*. Between this city and al-Fustat is a three-days journey. Lying on that gulf too is the town of Aila, the Hijaz, the town of Juddah and the Yemen. The gulf extends for 1400 miles, with a width of two hundred miles, which is the nearest distance between its two shores. In its middle its width reaches 700 miles, this being its widest extent. Facing the Hijaz and the land of Aila on its western shore is the land of `Allaqi, the region of `Aidhab in the Sa`id of Egypt, and the land of Bujja, then the land of the Abyssinians and the Sudan, then all the way to the furthest point in the lands of the Zanj. This last is the land of Sufala, in the territory of the Zanj.

251. Another gulf which branches from that sea is the Persian Sea (*Bahr Faris*). This sea ends in al-Ubulla, al-Khashabat and `Abbadan, in the territory of Basra. In length, this gulf is 1400 miles with a width at its center of 500 miles, shrinking to about 150 miles. This gulf resembles a triangle with the region of al-Ubulla forming one of its angles. On its eastern coast lies the coastline of Faris with the following territories: Dawraq al-Furs; the towns of Mah Ruban and Siniz, whence the cloth known as *Sinizi* where this is made; the town of Jannaba, whence the cloth known as *Jannabi*; the town of Najiram in the territory of Siraf; the land of Ibn `Umara; the coast of Kirman, which is the land of Hurmuz, with Hurmuz facing the town of Suhar in Oman. Next to the coast of Kirman and connected to it on the coastline of that sea is the land of Makran. This latter is the land of the sect of Khawarij*, also known as *al-Sharat**. These are all palm tree lands.

252. Next comes Tiz Makran, then the coast of Sind into which flows the river of Mihran [Indus], this being the river of Sind, as already mentioned. There too is the town of Daibul to which is joined the coast of India until it reaches the land of Barwas, whence *Barwasi* spears. This coastline then extends to the land of China, forming one continuous coastline, both flourishing and desolate.

253. Facing the lands just mentioned, starting with the coastline of Faris, Makran and Sind is the territory of Bahrain*, the islands of Qatar, the coast of Banu Jadhima, the land of Oman, the land of Mahra and on to the territory of Ra's al-Jumjuma in the land of al-Shir and al-Ahqaf*. There are many islands here such as the Island of Kharak which is in the land of Jannaba, since Kharak is counted as belonging to Jannaba. Between that island and the mainland is a distance of some *farsakhs*, and in it are pearl-fisheries and the pearls known as *kharaki*. There is also the Island of Uwal* inhabited by Banu Ma`n, Banu Mismar and many other Arabs. Between it and the towns of Bahrain is a day's distance or even less. On that coast too lie the towns of al-Zara and Qatif, on the coast of Hajar. Following Uwal are many other islands such as the Island of Lafit, also called the island of Banu Kawan. It had been conquered by `Amr ibn al-`As and his mosque is still there. It is densely inhabited and has contiguous villages and dwellings.

254. Nearby is the Island of Hanjam, where ships stock up on water, then the mountains known as "Kusair, `Umair and a third with no benefit (*khair*) in it." Then comes the locality known as the Durdur [whirlpool] known as Durdur Masandam, which sailors call Abu Humair. These localities in the sea are black mountains rising high where there is neither plant nor animal life, surrounded by deep sea waters and crashing waves that terrify the beholder. These are found between Oman and Siraf*, and

ships are obliged to pass them by and enter into their midst, with unpredictable results.

255. This sea is the Gulf of Persia, known also as the Persian Sea (*Bahr Faris*). On it are the lands described above, viz. Bahrain, Faris, Basra, Oman and Kirman up to Ra's al-Jumjuma. Between the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea (*Khalij al-Qulzum*) lies Aila, the Hijaz and Yemen. Between these two gulfs is a distance of 1500 miles by land. It is a land that enters a sea while the sea surrounds it on most of its sides, as already described.

256. This then is the sea of China, India, Persia, Oman, Basra, Bahrain, the Yemen, Abyssinia, the Hijaz, Qulzum, the Zanj and Sind, together with its inhabited islands and the numerous nations surrounding it, whose description and number is known only to their Creator. Each part of that sea carries a name distinct from the others, though the water itself is one, continuous and undivided. In that sea are fisheries of precious stones and pearls among which are carnelian and *madinj* [sard], which is a form of *bijadi* [chalcedony] and diverse kinds of rubies, diamonds and *sunbadhaj* [corundum]. In it too are gold and silver mines near the lands of Kalah [Kedah?] and Sribuza [Srivijaya?] and around it are iron mines near Kirman and copper mines in Oman. In it too are diverse kinds of perfumes, spices, amber, different medicaments and drugs, teak wood, the wood known as *darzanji* [ebony?], reeds and rattan. We shall later on specify the localities where such precious stones, perfumes, and plants may be found since they are all in or around that sea.

257. All that we have described above pertains to, and is called the Abyssinian Sea. The winds in each part of it are different, that is, in each part which is called a separate sea such as the Persian Sea, the Yemen Sea, the Red Sea, the Abyssinian Sea, the Zanj Sea, the Sind Sea, the Indian Sea, the Kalah Sea, the Zabij Sea and the China Sea. Some winds rise from the depths of the sea, churning the waters and heightening its

waves, like a cauldron boiling because of what comes to it from below of the heat of fire. Other winds derive their menace from the depths and from surface breezes. Yet others have their winds from surface breezes but not from the depths. What we have called winds coming from the depths are the result of vents which appear in the depths of the seas then ascend to the surface. God knows how this happens.

258. Those who sail this sea know the times when these winds blow, having acquired this knowledge through long practice and experience, passing this knowledge on, both in theory and practice. They operate according to certain signs and indications regarding times of its storms, its calm times and its turbulent. This all concerns the Abyssinian Sea. The same is true of the Byzantines and Muslims who sail the Mediterranean or who sail the Caspian Sea from the Khazar land to Jurjan, Tabaristan and the Dailam. Later on, we shall describe in both general terms and in detail the science of seafaring and the wonders and accounts of the seas, if God wills. There is no strength save in God.

Chapter 11

An account of conflicting views expressed regarding the ebb and flow of the tides and a summary of these views

259. The flow is when water runs in, in accordance with its nature and the laws governing the manner of its flowing, while the ebb is when water recedes contrary to the laws of its flow and inversely to how it normally runs. This ebb and flow is found in the Abyssinian Sea which also encompasses the India, China, Basra and Persia Seas, as already mentioned above. Seas in general are of three kinds in this respect: some in which ebb and flow appear quite clearly, some in which ebb and flow are barely detected or else are slight and hidden, and some in which there is no ebb and flow.

260. Seas where there is no ebb and flow lack this occurrence for three reasons. The first kind of sea is because waters remain still for a long time so they grow dense, their salinity increases and its winds congeal. This is because water might end up in certain localities for some reason and becomes like a lake where the water volume decreases in summer and increases in winter, an increase which can be detected by the rivers and springs that flow into it. The second kind of sea is one which is situated very far from the rotation of the moon and its approaches to earth, thus precluding ebb and flow. The third kind is where the sea-bed is porous whereby waters seep into other seas, causing the winds in that sea-bed to be released by degrees and the other winds to overcome it. This occurs mostly in the wide expanses of a sea and in its islands.

261. Conflicting views have been expressed regarding the causes of tides. Some argue that these are caused by the moon, which is of the same substance as water, and it is the moon which heats the water, causing it to expand. They compare this to fire when it heats water in a cauldron causing it to boil. Water might be at the half point or two-thirds in a cauldron but when water boils, it expands in a cauldron, rises up, is agitated then boils over so its quantity appears to the senses to have been doubled but decreases in weight, for it is a condition of heat that it expands bodies while coldness contracts them. Thus, the sea-beds grow hot, generating sweetness which changes its character and grows warm, as happens in cesspools and wells. Once heated, that water expands, increases in volume, then each level agitates the next until it floats to the surface and is far from the sea-bed, needing more space than its chasm. When the moon is full, it heats the atmosphere greatly, causing the waters to increase. This is called the monthly tide.

262. Such a sea would lie below the meridian, commencing from east to west, with the erratic stars [planets] revolving around it, along with what

faces it of fixed stars, provided the erratic stars are so inclined as to pass beyond it. If these erratic stars pass beyond it, the fixed stars draw near and have an effect, by day and night, on that sea from where it begins to where it ends. Yet the place that faces the depths rarely experiences any increase. Rather, it appears in rivers where tides are visible at its ends and where all other waters flow into it.*

263. Another group of scholars argue as follows. If the tides are comparable to the fire that heats water in a cauldron, and it expands it so that water seeks a wider space and spills over, with the result that the cauldron is empty of water; and if water, once out of the cauldron, seeks by its nature the deeper spots on earth, then is forced to turn back---if this is comparable to boiling water in a cauldron or bottle once it spills over and fire is continuously heating it, it follows that the sun would emit even more heat. If the sun was the cause of its flow, the tides would flow when the sun rises and ebb when it sets.

264. These scholars claim that the cause of the ebb and flow of tides are vapors that are generated in the depths of the earth. These vapors continue to be generated until they grow dense and abundant, and through their density propel the waters of that sea. The vapors continue to do so until their components below decrease, at which point the waters retreat to the depths of the sea. Because of this, the ebb and flow of the tides occur by day and night, in winter and summer, and whether the moon appears or not, or whether the sun is rising or setting. They argue that this can be confirmed by eyesight, since no sooner is the ebb complete than the flow begins and vice versa. This is so because these vapors do not change for, once released, they generate others in their place and because when the sea-waters recede to the bottom these vapors are generated where land touches water. Each time the waters recede, vapor is generated and each time it spills over, the vapors are exhaled.

265. Religious communities on the other hand believe that whatever cannot be known of the course of nature nor has an analogy is in fact a divine act which proves the unity and wisdom of God. Thus, the ebb and flow of tides has no natural cause whatever and no analogy.

266. Other scholars assert that the turmoil of the waters of the seas is like the turmoil of the humors of the body. Thus, one can observe the nature of a choleric or sanguinary person, for instance, become agitated then grow calm. In this case too there are components that supply such agitation by degrees. When powerful, they become agitated, then are slowly calmed until they return to their normal state.

267. Yet others reject all that we have set forth above. They allege that the air above a sea is constantly being transformed. When it is transformed, seawaters increase and spill over, which then becomes the flow of tides. At that point the waters are transformed and breathe out, turning into air, so the sea returns to what it was, namely the ebb. This is a transformation that is continuous, successive and uninterrupted, for water is continuously changed into air and vice versa. It is possible that this occurs more often when the moon is full, for when it is full more air is transformed than when it is not full. Hence the moon is a cause for excess in the tide but not for the tide itself, for the moon might be waning when the tide occurs. The tides in the Persian Sea occur most often at dawn.

268. Many ship captains among the Omanis and Sirafis who cross that sea and travel to its inhabited areas, sailing among the nations in its islands and around its basin, assert that tides in that sea occur only twice a year. The tide at one time flows in a northeasterly direction during the six months of summer. When it does so, the waters overflow in eastern lands, such as China and regions nearby, and recede from regions west of that sea. At another time it flows in a southwesterly direction during the six

months of winter. In summer, the waters overflow in the western regions of that sea and recede from China. The sea might move through the movement of the winds. If the sun is to the north the air moves southwards for reasons these captains have mentioned. The seawaters through the movement of the air then flow southwards. Hence, seas lying to the south are high when the north wind blows whereas waters decrease in northern seas. Likewise, when the sun is to the south and the air flows from south to north, the seawaters flow alongside it from a southerly to a northerly direction. The waters in the southern regions decrease and the movement of the seawaters in these two directions, i.e. north and south, is called the ebb and flow of the tide. This is because the flow of the south is the ebb of the north and vice versa. If the moon overlaps with some planets in either direction, the effect is intensified and heat grows more extreme and more severe, thus intensifying the flow of air and consequently the tilting of seawaters towards the side facing the one where the sun is found. Al-Mas`udi said: This is the view of al-Kindi* and of Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsi* as transmitted by us on their authority, namely, that seas move with the movement of the winds.

269. I was once in the city of Kanbaya [Cambay], in India, the city known for the production of laced Kanbaya shoes, and also in nearby cities like Sandan and Sufara. I entered that city in the year 303 [915-16]. The king at that time was called Baniya, a Brahmin, who was a deputy of al-Balhara, ruler of Mankir. This Baniya was fond of debating with Muslims and others who visited his city. The city itself lay on an inlet of the sea, a gulf [Gulf of Khambhat] wider than the Nile, Tigris or Euphrates, on which were situated towns, villages and habitations, gardens and Narjil palm trees, with peacocks and parrots and other Indian birds flitting between the gardens and the water. Between the city of Kanbaya and the sea from which this gulf issues is a distance of two days

or a bit less. The waters recede from that gulf until the sand at the bottom of the gulf becomes visible, with just a little water in its midst. I once saw a dog stranded on that sand from which the water had receded and looking like a desert, when suddenly the tide flowed in from the sea, from the mouth of the gulf, sprinting forward like horses in a race. The dog sensed the waters coming and, fearing them, began to run as fast as he could towards any land not reachable by the waters. But the waters were so fast and strong that they overtook the speeding dog and drowned him.

270. Similar to this is the tide which comes in between Basra and al-Ahwaz, in a locality known as al-Basiyan and the region of Qunduz. There, that tide is called the “wolf”. It emits a very loud boiling noise which terrifies sailors. It is a locality known to whoever follows that route to reach the region of Dawraq and the land of Faris.

Chapter 12

An account of the Mediterranean Sea and of the views expressed regarding its length, breadth, and where it begins and ends

271. As regards the Mediterranean (*Bahr al-Rum*) which adjoins Tarsus, Adana, al-Massisa, Antioch, Latakiya, Tripoli, Sidon, Tyre and other cities of the coast of al-Sham, as also Egypt, Alexandria and the coasts of al-Maghrib, some authors of astronomical almanacs like Muhammad ibn Jabir al-Battani* and others mention in their works that it is 5000 miles in length but fluctuates in width between 600 and 800 miles and less, depending on the narrowness and closeness of sea to land and vice versa.

272. This sea originates from a gulf that comes out of the sea known as the Ocean (*Uqyanus*). The narrowest point of this gulf is the one between the coast of Tangier and Ceuta in the Maghrib and the coast of al-Andalus. This place is known as Sibta*, with a width of ten miles between the two coasts. This is the place used for the crossing from al-Andalus to the Maghrib and vice versa, and is known as *al-Zuqaq*

[corridor]. When we come to the history of Egypt we shall mention the bridge that once existed between these two coasts and how it was overwhelmed by the waters of the sea, as also the road connecting the island of Cyprus and the land of al-`Arish which caravans once traversed.

273. At the common boundary between these two seas, I mean the Ocean and the Mediterranean, stood the brass lighthouse and the stone monuments erected by the mighty king Hirqil [Hercules] with their inscriptions, and with statues pointing with their hands that “there is no passage beyond me and no entry into that sea from the Mediterranean”. For the Ocean is a sea where no ship can run, where there is no habitation and where no animals live. It is a sea whose extent cannot be measured and whose end is unreachable and unknown. It is called the “Sea of Darknesses”, the “Green Sea” and the “Surrounding Sea” (*Muhit*). It is said that the lighthouse mentioned above is not on that Zuqaq but instead is on one of the islands of the Ocean and its coasts.

274. Some have argued that this Ocean is the source of water for all seas. Many wondrous tales are told of it which we have already cited in our *Akhbar al-Zaman*, when we related accounts of people who put their lives in danger by sailing in it, and of these who survived and those who perished, and what they saw in that sea. Among them was a fellow from al-Andalus called Khashkhash who was a leader of youth gangs in the city of Cordoba. He collected a number of young stalwarts and sailed with them in ships specially constructed for that Ocean. Having disappeared for some time, he returned with much booty. His story is well known among the people of al-Andalus.

275. Between the lighthouse standing there and the location where the two seas meet is a long distance along the mouth of that gulf and the flow of water. This is because the waters flowing from the Ocean and into the Mediterranean can be sensed, and their flow can be ascertained.

276. From the Mediterranean and the seas of al-Sham and Egypt there branches off a gulf some 500 miles long which adjoins the city of Rome and is called *Adrias* in Greek. There are many islands in the Mediterranean, among which is Cyprus which lies between the coast of al-Sham and the Byzantines; also the island of Rhodes, opposite Alexandria, and the islands of Crete and Sicily. We shall later on give an account of Sicily when we mention the volcano from which fire is emitted and where there are huge burial mounds and corpses.

277. Ya`qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi and his pupil Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsi mention certain figures regarding this sea's length and breadth which differ from ours. We shall return to this subject later and describe these seas, observing a certain orderliness in composing and arranging this work, if God wills.

Chapter 13

An account of the Black Sea [*Buntus*], the Sea of Azov [*Mayutis*] and the Gulf of Constantinople

278. The Black sea stretches from the territory of Ladhiqa* to Constantinople, with a length of 1100 miles and a width in its midst of 300 miles. Into it flows the great river called Tanais [Don], already described. This river originates from the north and along its banks live many descendants of Yafith son of Noah. It originates from a great northern lake, from springs and mountains, and it flows on the surface of the earth for about 300 *farsakhs* with continuous and built up regions belonging to the progeny of Yafith. It crosses the Sea of Azov, as asserted by careful scholars who know about this subject, until it pours into the Black Sea. This latter is a great sea with many kinds of precious stones, herbs and medicaments, and is mentioned by some ancient philosophers. Some people consider the sea of Azov to be a lake and give its length as 300 miles and its width as 100.

279. From the Black Sea issues the Gulf of Constantinople which then pours into the Mediterranean, with a length of 300 miles and a width of about 50 miles. Upon it is the city of Constantinople and built up areas stretch all the way from its beginning to its end. Constantinople lies on the western side of the gulf and is connected with the lands of Rome, al-Andalus and other western territories.

280. It must follow from the assertions of astronomers who compile almanacs and others that the seas of the Bulghar, Rus, Bajni, Bajnak and Bajghird, who are three kinds of Turks, are in fact the Black Sea.

Mention will be made of these nations in later sections, God willing, as and when appropriate, together with their uninterrupted habitations, and which of these nations sail that sea and which do not. But God knows best about all this and there is no strength save in Almighty God.

Chapter 14.

An account of the Caspian Sea, the Seas of Khazar and Jurjan, and a brief mention of the geographical disposition of all seas

281. As regards the “Sea of Foreigners” (*Bahr al-A`ajim*) on the coasts of which are located their houses and habitations, it is inhabited on all its sides. It is also known as the sea of al-Bab wa’l Abwab (*Derbent*), of the Khazar, of the Jil, of Dailam, of Jurjan and of Tabaristan. On its coasts live a variety of Turks. One of its boundaries ends in the territory of Khwarizm, in the land of Khurasan. It is 800 miles long and 600 miles wide and is rounded in shape and somewhat long. In later sections of this book we shall deal in brief with the nations that surround these inhabited seas. This sea, that is the “Sea of Foreigners” has many “dragons” (*tannanin*), singular *tinnin*.

282. “Dragons” are also numerous in the Sea of al-Sham, and these are mostly found in those parts that adjoin the regions of Tripoli, Latakiya and Mount Keldag (*al-Jabal al-Aqra`*) in the province of Antioch,

beneath which mountain is found the largest volume of water of that sea and where it is called the “last part” (*`ajuz*) of the sea. The sea extends to the coasts of Antioch, Ruisis, Iskenderun, Ayas, the Castle of Muthaqqab, the areas beneath the Lukkam [Amanus] Mountains, the coasts of al-Massisa [Mopsuestia] where is found the mouth of the river Jaihan [Ceyhan], the coast of Adana where is found the mouth of the river Saihan [Seyhan], and the coast of Tarsus where is found the mouth of the river Baradan [Berdan], which is the river of Tarsus.

283. The sea then borders the land that is uninhabited and ruined between the Byzantines and the Muslims near the town of Qalamiya, then on to Cyprus, Crete and Qarasiya, then the land of Saluqiya and its great river which flows into that sea, then the forts of the Byzantines all the way to the Gulf of Constantinople. We have omitted to mention many rivers in the land of the Byzantines which flow into this sea such as the Barid and `Asal rivers and others. Habitations are continuous along the coasts of the Mediterranean, all the way from the straits mentioned earlier, which is the Gulf of Tangier, to the coasts of the Maghrib, the lands of Ifriqiya, al-Sus, Tripoli of the West, Qayrawan, the coast of Barqa, al-Rafada, the territory of Alexandria, al-Rashid, Tinnis, Dimyat [Damietta], the coast of al-Sham and the coast of the Shami frontier posts. Then again, the coasts of Byzantium stretch to the territory of Rome and connect with the coast of al-Andalus until it ends with the straits opposite Tangier. This is one continuous, uninterrupted and inhabited Muslim and Byzantine land, broken only by rivers running to the sea and by the Gulf of Constantinople, about a mile in width, and also by other gulfs of the Mediterranean which enter land and from which there is no exit.

284. All the territories above mentioned and lying along the coasts of the Mediterranean adjoin each other without interruption or anything that impedes or divides them, save the rivers we mentioned and the Gulf of

Constantinople. In shape, the Mediterranean with its habitations, that is to say where it ends with the Straits that open onto the Ocean where is found the brass lighthouse then the nearest locations in Tangier and the coast of al-Andalus---its shape resembles a cabbage held in the palm of that gulf. The cabbage resembles the sea but is not as rounded because of its length.

285. “Dragons” are unknown in the Abyssinian Sea or in any of the gulfs on its shores, as described above. They are most frequent in parts of the sea that lie next to the Ocean. Opinions differ regarding these “dragons”. Some say they are a black wind which forms on the sea bed then rises to the atmosphere above, reaching up to the clouds. It resembles a hurricane on land which twists and stirs up the dust, chaff and vegetation, then grows long and soars into the air. People imagine them to be black snakes that rise from the sea because of the black clouds, faint light and recurrent winds.

286. Others say that they are beasts that are formed on the seabed. When they become harmful to other sea animals, God sends angels in the clouds who pull out these beasts from the sea. This action assumes the form of black snakes and is accompanied by flashes of glowing light. As these forms move, their tails destroy everything in their path, whether it be a huge structure, trees or a mountain. Blowing hard, they may tear through a forest and the clouds will carry some trees and dump them in the land of Ya’juj [Gog] and Ma’juj [Magog]. The clouds will then send down hail upon the “dragons” and kill them, and Gog and Magog then feed upon them. This is an interpretation attributed to Ibn `Abbas.

287. Other views about the “dragon” that differ from the above have also been expressed. Some historians and storytellers have maintained certain views that we have not bothered to cite, for instance that dragons are black snakes that exist in deserts or mountains. Torrents and floods carry

them and dump them in the sea where they feed on sea animals, their bodies are enlarged and their lifespans grow long. When a dragon attains the age of 500 years, it overcomes other sea animals. These accounts agree with the above-cited report from Ibn `Abbas, claiming that some dragons are white and others are black, like the color of the snake itself.

288. The Persians do not deny the existence of the dragon in the sea, alleging that it has seven heads. They call it *Ajdaha* and include its stories in their proverbs. God knows whether these reports are true or not. Reports to do with such subjects are denied by many people on impulse and rejected by rational persons. We omitted mention of them such as the story of `Imran ibn Jabir. He is said to have gone up the Nile reaching its end, and that he crossed the sea riding on the back of a beast while clutching its hair. This is a sea beast with its legs an inch from the ground. It keeps pace with the sun's disc from the moment it rises until it sets. Its mouth is open in order to swallow the sun into itself. It is further related that this man, clutching the beast's hair, crossed the sea as the beast circled seeking the sun, till he arrived at the other side and saw the Nile flowing down from golden palaces of paradise where an angel gave him a bunch of grapes. It is further related that `Imran came back to see the man he first encountered on his journey, and who had described to him how to reach the source of the Nile, but found him dead. Then there is his story with Satan and the bunch of grapes and other legends made current by Hadith transmitters who cram their accounts with fables.

289. Among other accounts is one that maintains that a golden dome exists in the midst of the Green Sea [Ocean] which stands on four pillars made of green, red, blue and yellow precious stones. From each pillar is discharged a vast amount of water, flowing in four separate directions of that Green Sea and neither mixing nor sinking in the waters of the Ocean itself. These waters then end up in different places on the coasts of that

Ocean: first the Nile, second the Syr Darya, third the Amu Darya and fourth the Euphrates.

290. Yet other accounts hold that the angel in charge of the seas places his hindquarters at the furthest point of the China Sea whereupon the sea rises, causing the tide to flow. When the angel removes his hindquarters from the sea, the waters return to their midst, seeking the sea bed, causing the tide to ebb. Those who relate this tale compare it to a bowl half filled with water. If a person places his hand or foot in that bowl, the water fills the bowl. If he removes them, the water returns to its normal and general level. Some say that the angel places the thumb of his right hand in the waters causing the flow of the tide, then removes it, causing the ebb.

291. What we have mentioned here is neither impossible nor necessary and falls under the category of the possible and plausible since the manner in which these reports were transmitted was from one single individual to another. These reports were not transmitted through multiple transmitters nor are they widely known, thus necessarily generating certain knowledge and legal obligations, and being free of blemish in their manner of transmission. If such reports are coupled with evidence which establishes their truth, one must accept them and submit to what God obliges us to accept from among religious reports, and act accordingly. This is clear in the following Qur'anic verse: {Whatever the Prophet commands you to do, accept it; whatever he disallows, desist.} If what we related above turns out to be false, we have simply reported what certain people have said. We mention this in order that readers of this book would know that we have exerted ourselves in this book and in our other works, and that we have not failed to understand what people have related in all the accounts cited above. In God is success.

292. This then is a resumé regarding the seas. Most people regard them as being four in number in the inhabited parts of the earth, while some say

they are five, others six and yet others seven, separate and unconnected. The first is the Abyssinian Sea, then the Mediterranean, then the Black Sea, then the Sea of Azov, then the Caspian, then the Ocean, most of whose boundaries are unknown. This latter is also called the Green, Dark and Surrounding Ocean.

293. The Black Sea is connected to the Sea of Azov. From it issues the Gulf of Constantinople which flows into the Mediterranean and with which it is connected, as described earlier. The Mediterranean commences from the Green Ocean. Accordingly, what we have described must constitute one single sea whose waters are connected. But none of these waters or any part of them---God knows best---is in any way connected with the Abyssinian sea.

294. The Black Sea and the Sea of Azov should be regarded as one sea even though in certain places land constricts them, forming a sort of narrow straits between the two bodies of water. Nor, if we call one of them the sea of Azov, because of its width and plentiful volume of waters, and the other the Black Sea, because of its narrowness and shallow waters, does this fact prevent us from calling both the “Azov” or both the “Black” Sea. If in later passages in this book we refer to the “Azov” or to the “Black” sea, we are simply referring to where that sea widens or where it becomes narrow.

295. Al-Mas`udi said: Some people mistakenly believe that the Caspian is connected to the Azov Sea. I have not met any merchant who entered the land of the Khazar or sailed on the Azov and Black Seas on their way to the land of the Rus or Bulghar who claimed that the Caspian is connected to any other sea or any of its waters or gulfs, except through the river of the Khazars [Volga]. We will mention this when we come to discuss the Mountain of Qabq [Caucasus], the city of al-Bab wa'l Abwab [Derbent]

and the kingdom of the Khazars, and how the Rus sailed into the Caspian, an event which took place after the year 300 [912-13].

296. Most authors, ancient and modern, who attempted in their books to describe the various seas, state that the Gulf of Constantinople which issues from the Sea of Azov, is connected to the Caspian. I do not know how this can be or how they arrived at that conclusion: was it from sense-data or from rational deduction and analogy? Or did they imagine that the Rus and other neighboring nations living by that sea are in fact the Khazars? I myself have sailed in that sea from Abaskun* which is on the coast of Jurjan, to the land of Tabaristan and elsewhere. There was not a single merchant or ship captain I encountered, possessed of education and understanding, whom I did not question about this issue. Everyone told me that there was no entry into the Caspian save through where the ships of the Rus had entered it. The same was told to me by some individuals from Adharbaijan, al-Ran, al-Bailaqan and the territory of Bardha`a, the Dailam, the Jil, Jurjan and Tabaristan, since they had never experienced an enemy that attacked them through that sea, nor was this ever known in the past. What we have stated here is well known in the regions stated and among nations and countries. They do not deny this since it is common knowledge among them. This [Rus invasion] took place in the days of Ibn Abi al-Saj [ruler of Adharbaijan].

297. In some books attributed to al-Kindi and his student al-Sarakhsi, companion of the Caliph al-Mu`tadid, I found a reference to a vast lake at the edge of the inhabited world to the north, some of which lies beneath the northern pole, near which is a city beyond which there is no habitation and called Tulia [Thule]. In some epistles of the Banu al-Munajjim* I found a reference to that lake.

298. In his epistle on seas, rivers and mountains, Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsi states, on the authority of al-Kindi, that the Mediterranean is

6000 miles long when measured from the coasts of Tyre, Tripoli, Antioch, Latakiya, al-Muthaqqab, al-Massisa, Tarsus and Qalamiyya all the way to the lighthouse of Hercules. He further states that at its widest it is 400 miles. This is the view of al-Kindi and Sarakhsi. We mentioned above the views of both al-Kindi and the almanac astronomers and the differences between these two groups as we found them in their books or heard them from their followers. However, we have not cited the evidence which supports each view because we have made it a condition in this work to abbreviate and condense its contents.

299. As regards the opposing views of early Greek thinkers concerning the origins of the seas and the evidence cited for such views, we have mentioned these in detail in our *Akhbar al-Zaman*, in chapter 2 of that work, which is in 30 chapters. In that work, we cited the views of each group among them, attributing each view to the persons who held it, although we have in this work touched in brief upon these views.

300. Some of them hold the view that the seas are remnants of a primordial wetness most of whose essence was dried by midday heat while the rest changed their nature through being heated. Others maintain that as the accumulated primordial wetness was burnt up through the rotation of the sun, pure water was extracted and the rest turned saline and bitter. Others believe that the seas are a perspiration flushed out of the earth because of the heat of the sun and its continued rotation. Yet others argue that the seas are remnants of the wetness filtered from the earth because of its dense substance, as happens with sweet water when mixed with ashes. Once the ashes are filtered out, the water is found to be saline after it had been sweet.

301. Others maintain that water, both sweet and saline, was once mixed together and that the sun causes sweet water to rise because of its lighter weight. Others say the sun does so in order to be nourished by it, while

others argue that it turns again into water through a transformation of its substance when it reaches in its ascent a place where the cold surrounds and thickens it. Others argue that water, which is an element, if found in the air or is affected by the cold is always sweet whereas if found on earth is always bitter because of the burning heat which affects it. Some say that all the water which flows into the sea from all surfaces and depths on earth and that once it ends up in that great hole [the sea]---that water itself is absorbent while earth pours into the sea all its salinity. Those portions of fire that exist in water and that ascend from the depths of earth because of the portions of fire mingled with it, cause the purer parts of water to rise and turn into vapor. Once the purer parts of water are raised high, they turn into something like rain, this being an unchanging routine. However, that pure water then turns saline since the earth provides it with salinity while fire removes its sweetness and lightness. It therefore necessarily turns saline once again. This is why seawater is always stable in volume and weight since the heat removes its lighter portions, turning it into drizzle and water. This rainfall then turns into floods that seek lower ground and depths and runs into the deepest parts of the earth until they reach the lakes. Accordingly, no water is ever lost and no portion of it is ever wasted, as evidenced by a water-wheel which scoops water out of a river then pours it into a stream which then flows back into that river.

302. Some have compared this process to the body parts of animals. When an animal feeds, heat affects its food, removing from food those sweet portions and turning them over to nourish body members while leaving behind the heavy elements, that is, the saline and the bitter, whence comes urine and sweat. These are remnants with no sweetness in them but issue from sweet moistness turned through heat into bitterness and salinity. If the heat were to increase beyond its normal level these remnants would be even more bitter than what is normally found in urine

and sweat, since we find that anything burnt is bitter to the taste. This is the view of some ancient authorities.

303. However, what one finds by direct observation and experimentation is this. All moist substances which possess a flavor, if made to rise by heating in a bottle or alembic, maintain their scent and flavors as they rise, such as vinegar, date wine, rosewater, saffron and carnation, but this is not the case with saline substances, especially if made to rise twice and heated repeatedly. The author of the *Logic* [Aristotle] has much to say about this subject. Thus, he says that saline water is heavier than sweet, adducing as proof that saline water is murky and thick while sweet water is transparent and soft. Furthermore, if a lump of wax is taken and fashioned into a container and its aperture is sealed, and if it is then placed in saline seawater, the water that seeps into that container will be found sweet to the taste and light in weight whereas the salt that surrounds it is found to be the exact opposite, i.e. more bitter and saline than normal.

304. Every running water is a river, every source of water is a spring and every large body of water is a sea. Al-Mas`udi said: Much has been written about water and its causes and nature. In the second chapter of our work *Akhbar al-Zaman*, which is in thirty chapters, we cited the proofs adduced by people as regards the area and size of the various seas, the benefits derived from their salinity, how they are connected or separated, why they neither increase nor decrease, and why the ebb and flow of the tides is more apparent in the Abyssinian Sea than in any other sea.

305. I have found that ship captains of the China, India, Zanj, Yemen, Red and Abyssinian seas, from among Sirafi and Omani sailors, report information regarding the Abyssinian Sea that mostly contradicts what philosophers and others have stated regarding distances and areas, as

cited above. These sailors report that certain parts of that sea are without end. Likewise, I encountered ship owners and captains of the Mediterranean Sea, both military and commercial—these are called *Nawatis*, *Ashab al-Arjul* and commanders who equip ships for war---all of whom inflate the length and width of the Mediterranean and the great number of its gulfs and branches. These captains include Lawun, nicknamed “Abu’l Harith”, a former slave of Zurafa, governor of Tripoli in al-Sham, on the coast of Damascus. I met him after the year 300.

306. The same view of the Mediterranean was expressed to me by `Abdullah ibn Wazir, governor of the town of Jabala, on the coast of Homs in al-Sham. There is no one remaining at this time, which is the year 332, who is more knowledgeable or experienced about the Mediterranean than him. There is no ship captain, military or commercial, who does not listen to his advice and does not admit his great knowledge and experience of that sea, in addition to his piety and his record of *jihad* in it.

307. We have mentioned in our previous works the wonders of these seas, their history and their dangers as we heard them from people named above, and what these people witnessed in those seas. We will include below and in brief a resumé of reports concerning them.

308. Some people have a certain method for detecting signs of the presence of water and the places where it collects underground. They say that water may be found in places where plant life, such as reeds, esparto and soft grass are visible. These plants are an indication to those who dig that water is near. Otherwise, water would be far. In the book called *al-Filaha** I found the following information. Anyone wishing to know whether water is near or far should first dig a hole in the ground to a depth of three or four *dhira`*. He should then take a brass pot or earthenware crock, with a wide opening, and smear it with grease on the

side up to a straight level. Once the sun has set, he should take a piece of white, washed and fluffy wool, then take an egg-sized stone and wrap the wool around it like a ball, then smear a side of the ball with molten wax and stick it into the bottom of the vessel, smeared with grease or fat. Then one should place the vessel at the bottom of the hole. The wool would be stuck, held in place by the wax, and would be wrapped around the stone. Then earth should be strewn up to a depth of one or two *dhira`*s and the whole thing be left in place for the night. The following dawn, before the sun has risen, the earth is cleaned off and the vessel is removed. If water is seen stuck to the inside of the vessel in the form of many drops next to each other and the wool is full of water, it means that water is present nearby. If the drops of water are disconnected and neither collected together nor near each other and the wool is only moderately moist, water is neither near nor far. If the water drops are far from one another and the wool has only a little moisture, water is far. If neither little nor much water is found in the vessel or the wool, there is no water in that locality so one should not bother to dig for it.

309. In some copies of the book called *al-Filaha* on this same subject [i.e. dowsing] I found the following piece of information. If one wishes to gain knowledge of this subject, let him regard the colonies of ants. If he finds that ants are thick in body, black, and slow in movement, water is as near to them as their slow movement will carry them. If ants are found to be agitated and moving so fast that they can hardly be followed, water is at a distance of about 40 *dhira`*s from them. The first water will be found sweet and tasty while the second will be heavy and salty. This is another indication for anyone who wishes to dig for water.

310. In our work *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we set forth in detail the information provided above. In this work we simply mention what needs to be mentioned by alluding to a subject without treating it or explicating it at

length. Now that we have given a resumé of information about the seas and other subjects, let us turn to a history of the kings and people of China and related subjects, God willing. There is no strength save in God.

Chapter 15. An account of the Kings of China and the Turks, the dispersal of the children of Gomer, a history of China and other matters related to this chapter

311. Opinions differ regarding the genealogies of the Chinese and their origins. Many authorities state that the progeny of `Amur son of Tubil son of Yafith son of Noah---after Faligh son of Arfakhshad son of Sam son of Noah had divided the earth among Noah's progeny---set out to the east. Some of them, from the children of Ar`u, crossed the northern azimuth and dispersed over the earth, forming several kingdoms among which are the Dailam, Jil, Tailasan, Babr, Muqan, the inhabitants of the Caucasus mountain with various kinds of al-Lakz, then al-Lan, Khazar, Abkhar, Sarir and Kashak, together with all other nations of that region reaching to Trebizond, the Sea of Azov, the Black Sea, the Caspian up to the Bulghar and nations nearby.

312. Many other children of `Amur crossed the Balkh river [Oxus] heading in the direction of China and dispersed into several kingdoms in that land and spread out in those regions. Among them are the Khuttal, the inhabitants of Khuttalan, the Ruwaisan, Ashrusana, Sughd, who live between Bukhara and Samarqand, then Farghana, al-Shas, Isbijab and the inhabitants of the land of Farab. They built towns and villages while others settled in the wilderness. Among the latter are the Turks, Kharlukh and Tughuzghuz, who inhabit the city of Kushan, a kingdom between Khurasan and China. At this present time, i.e. the year 332, there is no race of Turks more powerful, domineering or more orderly in their kingdom than these. Their king is Uighur Khan and their religion is Manichaeism. No other Turkish race follows this religion.

313. Among Turkish races are the following; the Kimakiyya, Barskhaniyya, Baddiyya and Majghariyya. The most warlike are the Ghuzziyya. The prettiest and tallest are the Kharlukhiyya who rule the regions of Farghana, al-Shas and nearby territories. To them belonged kingship and among them was the Khaqan of Khaqans, who used to gather in his dominion all other Turkish kings and to whom these kings submitted. Among these Khaqans was Farasiyab the Turk, who conquered the Persian realm. Among them too was Shabah. At present, there is no Khaqan to whom Turkish kings submit, and this ever since the city known as `Amat was destroyed. This city was located in the deserts of Samarqand. In our previous work called *al-Awsat* we related how and why kingship passed away from that city.

314. One group of the progeny of `Amur headed towards India and these territories affected them so that their color changed from those of other Turks and became like the color of Indians. They are both sedentary and nomadic. A second group settled in Tibet [Tubbat] and chose a king to rule over them who used to submit to the Khaqan. When the dominion of the Khaqan ended, as mentioned earlier, the people of Tibet called their king Khaqan in imitation of the earlier Turkish kings who were called the Khaqan of Khaqans.

315. The majority of the progeny of `Amur marched along the coasts of the sea until they reached their furthest penetration in the land of China, dispersing in that country and its regions. They settled the land, built it up, building towns and cities. As capital of their kingdom they built a great city which they called Yansu [Kiang-Sou?]. Between that city and the coast of the Abyssinian Sea, which is the China Sea, is a journey of three months, passing through continuous towns and built-up areas.

316. The first king to reign over them in that land, namely in the city of Yansu, was Nastartas son of Ba`ur son of Madaj son of `Amur son of

Yafith son of Noah. He reigned for a little over 300 years. He dispersed his people throughout that land, dug canals, killed the wild beasts, planted trees and grafted fruit trees, then died. A son of his called `Awun succeeded. He laid his father's body inside a statue of red gold, as a mark of grief and veneration, and set it up on a throne of red gold studded with precious stones, placing his own throne below it. He and the people of his kingdom then began to bow in worship morning and evening to his father who was inside that statue, as a sign of respect. He lived for 250 years after his father then died.

317. A son called `Aithdun succeeded him. He too placed his father's body in a statue of red gold and laid it on a throne of red gold below that of his grandfather's. He, along with the people of his kingdom, would worship these statues, beginning with his grandfather's then his father's. He ruled his subjects well and made them equal in all their affairs, and spread justice among them. The population increased and the land was fertile. He reigned for about 200 years until he died.

318. He was succeeded by his son `Aithnan, who also placed his father's body in a statue of red gold and continued the custom of worship and reverence. His reign lasted long, and his kingdom came to adjoin that of the Turks, his cousins. He lived for 400 years and in his days he created many crafts of exquisite manufacture.

319. Succeeding him was his son Haratan who built ships loaded with men and fine Chinese products, and sent them in the direction of Sind, Hind, Babylon and other kingdoms near and far by sea. To the kings he sent wondrous presents and valuable gifts, and ordered his own expedition to bring back whatever they found to be of delicate or luxurious manufacture together with varieties of food, drink, clothing and furnishings. They were also instructed to study the policies of each king and the religion of each nation, its laws and its customs, and to make

people desire what there was in their own country [China] by way of precious stones, perfumes and instruments. The Chinese fleet then circulated among various countries, visiting kingdoms and doing what they were ordered to do. In every kingdom, the Chinese were met with great admiration, and the products they carried were found captivating. The kings of coastal kingdoms also equipped ships and sent them to China, carrying goods not found in that country and sending letters to the Chinese king with presents in return for what he had sent. So prosperity was widespread in China and he ordered its affairs well. His reign lasted around 200 years until his death.

320. The people of his kingdom were filled with grief at his death and mourned him for a whole month. They then turned to his eldest son and appointed him as their king. He laid the body of his father in a statue of gold and followed ancient practice in imitation of his ancestors. The name of this king was Tatal. His affairs were well ordered and he instituted a number of praiseworthy laws none of which had been instituted by any previous king. He claimed that kingship can only be made stable through justice, since justice is the balance of the Creator. He also claimed that justice decrees that an increase in liberality depends upon an increase in good works. He thus elevated some people and honored or greatly esteemed others, ordering people in ranks and vindicating their way of life.

He once went out to scout a place where he might build a temple and found a site full of plants and flowers and traversed by waters, so he planned to build his temple on that spot. Stones of diverse colors were brought to that place so he built the temple and topped it with a dome with air vents evenly placed. Rooms were built and set aside for those who wanted to pray in solitude. Once the temple was finished, he placed on its dome the statues of his ancestors and said: "If I abandon this

custom I would be transgressing wisdom. This is a custom that shall last for ever.” He ordered that great reverence be paid to those bodies atop the dome.

321. He collected together the elites of his kingdom and informed them that he was of the view that people should abide by a religion which would be their point of reference, unite them and establish order among them. If kingship lacks a religious law and orderly government it cannot be immune from instability, corruption and confusion. So he instituted for them a religious policy and rational obligations and made it binding upon them along with punishments to be administered, both spiritual and corporal. He also instituted regulations to do with licit marriages whereby women can be properly married and genealogies are suitably maintained. The laws were arranged in ranks. Some were obligatory and mandatory with grave consequences if violated while others were voluntary and to be performed at will. He mandated for them certain prayers to their creator to draw near to their object of worship where there is no bowing or prostration, and to be performed at certain designated times by night and day, while other prayers involved bowing and prostration at certain designated times in a particular year or month. He also instituted feast days for them.

322. He decreed certain punishments for adultery, and women who sought to practice prostitution were made to pay a designated tax and could not be legally married at any time. If they abandoned that profession they would no longer pay tax. Any male issue born to them would be made soldiers or slaves of the king, while female issue would remain with their mothers and follow their profession. He also ordered them to provide sacrifices for the temple along with vapors and incense offered to the planets. Each planet was assigned a particular time for worship through vapors prepared from specific perfumes and lotions. All

affairs were thus firmly regulated, his days witnessed an era of stability and the population increased. His lifespan lasted 150 years until his death. 323. The people were stricken with grief at his death. They placed him in a statute of red gold studded with various precious stones, built a great temple for him and placed on its roof seven types of precious stones representing in their colors the sun, moon and five planets with their colors and shapes, and made the day of his death a day of prayers and a holy day where they would gather at that temple. They painted his picture and his life on a golden panel and placed it on the heights of the temple where all could see him in order that he would act as a model of sound policy and righteous manner of life to the kings who followed him. His image was also placed on the gates of the city, on their gold and copper coins, and on textiles. Most of their money is yellow gold and copper.

324. The city of Yansu remained the capital of the Chinese kingdom, and a distance of a three months' journey or more separated it from the sea, as already noted above. They have another great city in the western portion of their kingdom called Madu, which borders the land of Tibet. Wars are continuous between that city and the land of Tibet.

Kings who followed him continued to practice orderly government, with stability, prosperity and justice spread wide and injustice unknown in their country. They continued to follow the laws instituted by the last mentioned king, but their wars against their enemies were unending, their frontier posts were well fortified, salaries to soldiers were paid regularly, while merchants kept travelling by land and sea to their country from every land, carrying all kinds of merchandise.

325. Their religion is that of their ancestors and is called Samaniyya [Shamanism]. Their mode of worship resembles the worship of Quraish before the coming of Islam. They worship idols and pray to them, though the intelligent among them direct their prayers to the Creator, to whom all

power and glory, and view the idols as merely symbolizing the direction of prayer. However, the ignorant among them who lack understanding associate these idols with divinity and worship both. These latter believe that their worship of idols brings them nearer to God by flattering him. They further believe that their status as worshippers renders them deficient in worshipping the Creator because of his majesty, glory and power. Thus, their idol worship is a kind of submission to him and a way to approach him.

This was the case until there appeared in China new religions deriving from Dualism and Materialism [*Ahl al-Dahr*]. Before that time the Chinese in their religious opinions and idol worship were similar to the commoners and elite of India. Then their situation began to change, and discussions and debates arose among them, though they still abide in all their regulations by the laws instituted for them beforehand.

326. The Chinese realm adjoins the realm of the Tughuzghuz. These latter, as noted above, are Manicheans and believe in light and darkness. Before that time they were plunged in total ignorance and their beliefs resembled those of the other Turks. Then there came among them a devilish Manichean, and through rhetorical flourish showed them how this world was made up of opposites and contradictions such as death and life, health and sickness, wealth and poverty, light and darkness, unity and disunity, connection and separation, risings and settings, existence and non-existence, night and day, and other oppositions and contradictions. He then cited the various kinds of painful diseases which befall all animals, human and non-human alike, and what befalls children and idiots and mad people, and that the Creator has no need to harm them. He showed them that a mighty and opposing principle had invaded the principle of virtue, this being God---may God be far above this

calumny-- in his actions. With such fantasies he was able to corrupt their minds and they came to believe what he told them.

327. Hence, when the king of China is a Samani in religion and slaughters animals, war between him and Uighur Khan, ruler of the Turks, is continuous. But when the Chinese king is a Manichean, kingship is held in common between them. The kings of China hold diverse views and religious beliefs, but despite this diversity in religions they do not abandon rationality and the principles of justice in appointing judges and arbitrators, and both elite and commoners submit to their judgment.

328. The Chinese are of diverse races and tribes, just like the Arabs with their various tribes and clans and their complex genealogies. They care for and respect their genealogies. A man among them might claim descent from as many as fifty fathers, or more or less, going all the way back to `Amur. Those belonging to a certain tribe do not marry anyone of their own tribe. To give an Arab example, a man from say Mudar would marry a woman from Rabi`a or vice versa, or be from Kahlan and marry from Himyar or vice versa. They claim that this produces a healthier progeny, more sturdy bodies and longer-lived individuals, citing other reasons for this practice along the lines just mentioned.

329. Justice continued to prevail in China as instituted by their ancient kings until the year 264 [877/8]. In that year, events took place which shook the foundations of government and destroyed their regulations and laws. This crisis has lasted until the present time, which is the year 332. A rebel named Yanshu [Huang Chao] who lived in a city in China and was not a member of the royal house led a rebellion. He was an evil man who was intent on civil war. To him rallied all immoral and criminal elements. The king and his administration paid no attention to him because he was of no consequence and unworthy of notice. His movement thus grew

stronger, as did his reputation, and his insolence increased as did his power. Criminals would cross great distances to join him, so his army swelled and he marched from his original locality raiding built up areas until he reached the city of Khanfu [Guangzhou]. This is a major city located on a great river, greater than the Tigris or similar, which flows into the China Sea. Between this city and the sea is a six or seven days' journey. Into this river sail ships arriving from Basra, Siraf, Oman, the cities of India, the Zanj islands and al-Sanf, as also from other kingdoms, bearing diverse goods and merchandise.

330. The rebel then approached the city of Khanfu which was inhabited by a mixed population of Muslims, Christians, Jews, Magians and other Chinese. That enemy arrived at the city and laid siege to it. The king's troops advanced to meet him but he defeated them and violated the womenfolk. His armies swelled and he captured the city of Khanfu by force, massacring its inhabitants to an extent too enormous to be counted. From among Muslims, Jews, Christians and Magians two hundred thousand were either killed or drowned from fear of the sword. The number just cited could be verified because the kings of China take great care to count the number of subjects of their realm as well as people from other nations who live under royal protection, inscribing this in special bureaus and entrusting this task to secretaries who carry out the census of population. So great is their care for those living in their realm.

331. The rebel then proceeded to cut down the forests of mulberry trees, cultivated so that its leaves may be fed to the silkworms which produce silk. The destruction of these trees led to a cessation in the export of Chinese silk to Islamic lands.

Yanshu then marched with his army to one city after another, conquering them. He was joined by countless criminals, thieves and others who feared for their lives. He headed towards the city of Khumdan

[Chang'an], the capital of the kingdom, at the head of three hundred thousand horsemen and infantry. The king marched out to meet him with about one hundred thousand who had remained loyal to him. The two armies met and war was continuous between them for a month. The two sides remained steadfast but eventually the king was defeated and fled. The rebel pursued him and the king took refuge in a city on the border of his kingdom.

332. The rebel then captured the capital, seizing the royal palace and the treasuries of former kings which had been set aside for emergencies. He raided all inhabited regions and conquered cities, though he realized that he could not be a king since he was not of the royal house. He thus grew ever more violent in destroying the land, plundering all wealth and shedding blood.

333. Meanwhile, the king, now in the city of Madu on the borders of Tibet, as mentioned above, wrote to Uighur Khan, king of the Turks, pleading for his help, informing him of his dire situation and reminding him of the obligations of royalty when fellow royals plead for help. These, he wrote, were among the duties and obligations of kingship. Uighur Khan came to his aid by sending his son at the head of four hundred thousand horsemen and infantry. By then the rebellion of Yanshu had become vast. The two armies met and wars between them were continuous and lasted a whole year, and a great number of lives were lost on both sides. Eventually, Yanshu went missing; some said he was killed while others said he drowned. His family and intimates were captured and the king of China returned to his capital and realm.

334. The commoners call this king Baghbur which means "Son of Heaven", as a mark of respect for him. The most typical name of Chinese kings with which they are normally addressed is "Tamghaj Khan" but they are not addressed as "Baghbur".

335. Each strong man now came to rule over a particular region, a situation similar to the rise of the kings of separate principalities (*Muluk al-Tawa'if*) which came into existence when Alexander son of Philip the Macedonian killed Darius son of Darius, king of Persia, and also similar to our situation in the Islamic world of today, which is the year 332. The King was content with their submission to him and with addressing him as king but was unable to march out to all regions in his kingdom nor overcome those who had come to rule these regions. He was satisfied with what we described above while the independent rulers stopped sending money to him. He left them alone and in peace. Meanwhile, each independent ruler attacked his next-door neighbor according to his resources of power, and so general order and stability, which had once been instituted by ancient kings, broke down throughout the kingdom.

336. These ancient kings used to practice policies and norms consistent with justice and the requirements of reason. The story goes that a merchant from Samarqand, from the land of Transoxania, travelled from his homeland with a lot of merchandise until he reached Iraq where he carried its merchandise and descended to Basra whence he travelled by ship to Oman. From there he sailed to Kala which is roughly the halfway point to China, and where Muslim ships of the Omanis and Sirafis end up at this time. In Kala these merchants meet with ships coming from China. This was not the case in former times, since Chinese ships would sail as far as Oman, Siraf, the coasts of Persia and Bahrain and all the way to al-Ubulla and Basra. Likewise, ships from those regions would sail all the way to China. When order and justice broke down and corruption was rife following the events in China described above, the two groups would meet at the halfway point between them.

337. This merchant then boarded a Chinese ship at Kala and sailed to the city of Khanfu where ships normally dock as stated earlier. The king

heard of these ships and the merchandise they carried so dispatched a servant of his whom he trusted and who was a eunuch---the Chinese make use of eunuchs as servants for tax collection and other tasks, and some castrate their own children seeking their advancement. The royal servant arrived in Khanfu, summoned the merchants, including the Samarqand merchant, and pointed out the merchandise he needed but set aside things that would be fit for the king. The royal servant negotiated with the Samarqand merchant for his merchandise, offering him a sum which did not satisfy him. An argument ensued until the servant ordered the merchant to be dragged away and forced to acquiesce. The slave had given the merchant assurances regarding the justice of the king. So the Samarqandi merchant travelled at once to Khumdan, capital of the kingdom, and there assumed the attitude of one seeking justice. This is so because when a person seeks justice after having arrived from a distant land, he wears a kind of red silk garment and stands in a special spot set aside for such people. Some rulers of the regions are delegated with the task of holding people seeking justice who stand in these spots, and then sending them on the postal service from their own lands for a journey of about one month.

338. This was what happened to the merchant. He stood before the provincial ruler who was delegated with the task mentioned above. The ruler then said to him: "You have put yourself in a very dangerous spot where your life is in danger. Make sure that what you say is the truth or else we shall dismiss you and send you back where you came from." This was the ruler's normal address to those who claimed that they were unjustly treated. If that person hesitated in his speech or showed signs of fear he was beaten one hundred strokes with a stick and sent back where he came from. If, however, he showed tenacity and patience, he was dispatched to the king to stand in his presence and have his case heard.

339. When the Samarqandi merchant displayed firmness in his demands and his plea for justice, and they saw that he was telling the truth and was neither fearful nor stammered in his speech, he was dispatched to the king. He stood in his presence and told him his story. When the interpreter drew near and heard his plea for justice, the king ordered him to be taken to certain quarters where he was put up and well treated. The vizier was summoned together with the commander of the right and the commander of the left, these latter being officials delegated to deal with crises and at times of war. Each knew his own rank and what was required of him. The king ordered each of them to write to his own appointed deputy in Khanfu---each of them had a deputy in every province---to inform them about the merchant and the royal eunuch, and the king likewise wrote to his deputy in that province.

340. The news about the merchant had spread widely in that province. The letters then arrived on the postal mules confirming the merchant's story. The kings of China have on all their provincial highways mules with upraised tails to carry the post and postal bags. The king ordered his royal servant brought to him, and when this latter stood in his presence the king confiscated all that he had bestowed upon him, then addressed him as follows: "You undertook on purpose to mistreat a merchant, one who had travelled from a distant land, crossed kingdoms and passed by kings on sea and land and was nowhere molested, who sought to reach my kingdom, trusting in my justice. And you treated him in this manner! He would have left my kingdom, denouncing me in all kingdoms and spreading ugly tales about my conduct. Were it not for your previous service to me I would have executed you. But I shall punish you in a manner which, if you truly grasp its significance, is in fact worse than death. I shall put you in charge of the tombs of previous kings since you

have failed in your duty to the living and in carrying out the task entrusted to you.”

341. The king then treated the merchant well and sent him back to Khanfu, saying to him: “If you find yourself willing to sell what has been chosen for us of your merchandise at the very best price, so be it.

Otherwise you are free to market your property as you please. You may stay here if you wish, sell your merchandise or leave in peace whenever you want.” He then sent the royal servant to the tombs of the kings.

342. Al-Mas`udi said: Among other entertaining stories of Chinese kings is the following. A man from Quraish, from the progeny of Habbar ibn al-Aswad, who was a wealthy inhabitant of Basra, headed to the city of Siraf. This happened during the well-known rebellion of the Master of the Zanj in Basra. From Siraf he sailed to the Indian Sea. Embarking on one ship after another and passing through one Indian kingdom and country after another he finally ended up in China and in the city of Khanfu. However, he was determined to reach the capital of the kingdom which at that time was the city of Khumdan, one of the great cities of their realm.

343. He remained for a long time outside the royal gate, submitting one petition after another in which he stated that he belonged to the family of the prophet of the Arabs. Eventually the king ordered that he be lodged in a house and that all his grievances and needs be satisfied. The king then wrote to his deputy in Khanfu instructing him to inquire from merchants there as to the claim of the man to be related to the prophet of the Arabs. The deputy in Khanfu answered by confirming his genealogy. So the king admitted him to his presence and conferred much wealth upon him which he carried back with him to Iraq.

344. He was an old man of understanding. He related the following regarding his audience with the king. The king began by asking him how

the Arabs managed to destroy the Persian realm and he answered: "It was done with the help of the Almighty and because the Persians worshipped fire and bowed in prayer to sun and moon instead of to God." The king said, "The Arabs have conquered the greatest of kingdoms, the widest in extent, richest in income and wealth, most rational as regards their inhabitants, and most widespread in their fame." The king then asked him, "How do you rank the kings of the world?" He answered, "I have no knowledge of this." The king said to the interpreter, "Tell him that we count kings as five in number. The widest in realm is the king of Iraq because he is in the middle of the earth and all other kings surround him. His name in our traditions is 'King of Kings'. Next is the king of China whom we call 'King of Mankind' because no other king is our equal in sound policy, and in control over his realm, nor is there a population more submissive to its kings than ours. We therefore are the 'Kings of Mankind'. Next is the 'King of Lions' who is our neighbor, the king of the Turks, who is king of the lions among men. Next is the 'King of Elephants' who is the king of India. We regard him in our tradition as the king of wisdom because wisdom originated among them. Next is the king of the Byzantines whom we call the 'King of Men' because nowhere on earth are found men more handsome or more beautiful of face. These are the elite among kings and all others are below them in rank."

345. The king then told the interpreter to ask him: "Would you recognize your friend---meaning your prophet---if you saw him?" I replied, "How can I see him when he is now with Almighty God?" "I did not mean that. I meant his picture." I said, "Yes." He ordered a pouch to be brought in from which he took out a dossier and said to the interpreter, "Show him his friend." In that dossier I saw pictures of the prophets so I quietly moved my lips in blessings upon them. He was not expecting me to recognize them so said to the interpreter "Ask him why he moved his

lips.” I replied, “I was mouthing blessings upon them”. He asked, “How did you recognize them?” I answered: “I recognized them through what has been painted of episodes in their lives. Here is Noah in his ship escaping with his companions when God ordered the whole earth to be flooded with all its inhabitants but God saved him and those with him.” The king laughed and said, “You are right in identifying Noah. As for the flood, we do not know it. The flood affected only parts of the earth and did not reach our land. If what you assert is true regarding that part of the earth, we in China, India, Sind and other communities and nations know nothing of what you assert, nor did our ancestors transmit to us any such report. The kind of flood you mention which overwhelms the whole earth is a great catastrophe that people would remember and reports concerning it would circulate among the nations and be widely transmitted.”

346. “I was anxious not to respond to him and offer him any proofs since I knew he would reject them so I said, ‘And here is Moses with his stick and the Israelites with him.’ He said, ‘Yes, though his country was tiny and insignificant and his own people rebelled against him.’ I said, ‘And here is Jesus riding on an ass with the apostles surrounding him.’ He said, ‘He did not live long. His prophetic ministry lasted a little more than thirty months or so.’ He proceeded to recount the stories of other prophets only a few of which are mentioned here.

347. This man of Quraish called Ibn Habbar then claimed that he saw above each picture a large piece of writing which he estimated recounted their names, countries, ages and their prophetic lives and careers. “I then saw a picture of our prophet Muhammad on a camel with his companions around him, their feet in Arabic sandals made of camel skins. Around their midst they hung ropes of fiber to which were attached toothpicks. When I saw that picture, I wept.” The king asked the interpreter to ask me the reason for my crying and I replied, “This is our prophet and master

and my cousin Muhammad ibn `Abdullah.” “You are right,” said the king, “He and his people came to rule over the greatest kingdoms but he did not live long enough to see the kingdoms conquered. This was left to his successors, to those who ruled his nation after him.”

348. “I saw the pictures of prophets many of whom pointed with their right hand, their forefinger and thumb forming a ring as if to say that mankind could all fit into a ring while others pointed to heaven with their forefinger as if to warn mankind to what lies above them. The interpreter claimed that these were Chinese and Indian prophets. The king then asked me about the caliphs and their attire and about many of our laws and I answered to the best of my knowledge. Then he asked, “How old is the world according to your people?” I replied, “There is some dispute concerning this matter. Some say six thousand years, some say a little more, some a little less.” “Is this what your prophet actually says?” he asked. “Yes,” I replied. He roared with laughter as did his vizier standing next to him, indicating his rejection of this last answer. He said, “I doubt that your prophet has said this.” I insisted that he did so. I saw an expression of dissent on his face and he told the interpreter to say to me, “Tell him to weigh his words carefully. Kings are not addressed except with precision and reason. As to your claim that there is a dispute among you about this issue, you have simply disputed regarding what your prophet actually said. The speech of prophets must not be a subject of dispute but be accepted on trust. Beware of saying these or similar things.”

349. Ibn Habbar mentioned many other things which he had now forgotten because it happened so long ago. “The king then said to me, ‘Why did you leave your own domain which is nearer to you than we are both as homeland and by ties of kinship?’ I replied, ‘Because of what happened in Basra and my escape to Siraf, I determined to come to you,

O king, having heard about the stability of your realm, your virtuous conduct, your widespread justice and the soundness of your policy that embraces all your subjects. I wished to visit this kingdom and see it for myself. God willing, I shall return to my country and to my cousin's kingdom and shall spread the news about what I have seen of the majesty of this realm, the wide extent of its land, the prevalent justice and your virtuous conduct, O king, whose character is worthy of all praise. I shall describe all this in the highest terms of praise.”

350. “The king was pleased and ordered that an expensive gift and fine garments be bestowed upon me, then commanded that I be transported on the postal mules to Khanfu. He wrote to the ruler of Khanfu to treat me with all honor and to set me above all other elites of the foreign people in his province and to provide me with suitable lodging until I was to leave China. I remained there living a life of the greatest ease and comfort until I left China.”

351. Al-Mas`udi said: In the year 303 [915-16], I was told by Abu Zaid Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Sirafi in Basra, in which city he had settled after moving from Siraf, he being a man of education and understanding and the cousin of Mazyad ibn Muhammad ibn Abrad ibn Bistasha, ruler of Siraf, that he asked the man from Quraish, Ibn Habbar, for a description of the capital city of Khumdan. Ibn Habbar mentioned its wide area and numerous inhabitants and stated that it was divided into two parts separated by a long and wide avenue. The king, his vizier, his chief judge, his troops, his eunuchs and all his royal officials reside on the right side, towards the east. No commoners are allowed to mingle with them and there are no markets on that side but only canals dug in straight rows with trees planted alongside and imposing mansions.

352. The left side, facing west, is the home of the citizens, merchants, stores and markets. In the daytime, one can see the king's stewards,

household officials, young commanders and their deputies, both mounted and on foot, entering the side where the markets and merchants are located and getting their daily rations and needs then leaving. None of them returns to that part of the city except on the following day. In that part are found lovely gardens and lawns and plenty of canals. However, the palm tree is not found there.

353. The Chinese are among the most skillful of God's creatures in handcrafts such as carving and all other similar crafts. Among all nations they are second to none in these skills. A man among them will make some object with his hands that he thinks others are incapable of making so he takes that object and goes to the gate of the king, seeking a reward for his original creation. The king will then order that object to be displayed at the royal gate for one whole year. If no one can find fault with it, the man is inducted among royal craftsmen. If a fault is found, the object is rejected and the man is not rewarded.

354. The story goes that a Chinese painter painted a stalk of grain on a silk canvas on which was perched a bird. No one who saw it could doubt that it was a picture of a bird on a stalk. The canvas stayed at the royal gate for a while. Then a hunchback passed by and criticized it. When the hunchback was admitted into the king's presence and the painter was summoned, the hunchback was asked what fault he found in it and said, "All people agree that a bird cannot perch on a stalk without bending it, whereas this painter depicted the stalk as straight and the bird too as standing straight. This is the fault in this painting." The hunchback's criticism was judged to be sound and the painter received no reward. Their intention in these and similar matters is to train those who practice such crafts and to force them to be very careful, cautious and rational in whatever each person makes with his hands.

355. There are strange and entertaining tales told about the Chinese and we shall mention some of these in brief later on in this work, though we have already mentioned all other tales in our two previous works, the *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. It may also happen that we mention in this work certain reports that were not mentioned in these earlier works.

Chapter 16

A brief account of reports about the seas, what they contain and their surroundings with respect to their wonders, nations, classes of kings and so forth as also reports about al-Andalus, the sources of perfume and its origins and kinds, and other subjects.

356. We mentioned above in brief the layout of the seas, both connected and disconnected. In this chapter, we shall mention in summary form reports having to do with the Abyssinian Sea, and kingdoms and kings associated with it, together with how the seas are arrayed and other kinds of wonders. We stated above that the waters of the seas of China, India, Persia and Yemen are all connected, but the turmoil or calmness of these seas differ depending upon the blowing of their winds and the times in which these winds blow, as also upon other factors.

357. Thus, the Persian Sea has high waves and is difficult for sailors to navigate when compared to the calm of the Indian Sea, its easy sailing and its low waves. However, the Persian Sea becomes calm and its waves become low and easy to sail in when the Indian Sea becomes very rough with high waves, darkness and difficulty of sailing in it. Turmoil in the Persian Sea begins when the sun enters Virgo and the autumn equinox approaches. That sea remains agitated each day until the sun passes to Pisces and is at its most agitated during late autumn when the sun is in Sagittarius. The sea then returns to calmness when the sun is once more in Virgo. It is at its calmest at the end of spring when the sun is in Gemini. The Indian Sea remains very rough until the sun enters Virgo

when sailing in it becomes possible. It is at its calmest when the sun is in Sagittarius. One can sail on the Persian Sea at all times of the year from Oman to Siraf, a distance of 160 *farsakhs*. From Siraf to Basra is 140 *farsakhs*. There are no other crossings on this sea than to the two just mentioned localities and their vicinity.

358. In his work entitled the *Al-Madkhal al-Kabir ila `Ilm al-Nujum*, the astronomer Abu Ma`shar *related what we mentioned above about the turbulence and tranquility of these seas when the sun enters the constellations named earlier. Hardly any crossing is possible from Oman to India in the fourth month [*Tir Mah*] except in boats risking their safety and with a very light cargo. Such boats if they cross to India at that time of year are called in Oman “Tir Mahi” boats. This is because in India and the Indian Sea this season is *al-Yasara*, which is winter. When it rains in our country in December, January and February this is summertime for them and contrariwise when the hot season begins in our country in June, July and August. Thus our winter is their summer and their summer is our winter. This is the case for all the cities of India, Sind and other neighboring lands to the furthest reaches of that sea. Whoever spends winter in India during our summer is said to have “*yasara*” in India, that is, spent the winter there. This is because of the sun drawing near or moving away.

359. Diving for pearls in the Persian Sea lasts from the first of April till the end of September, but in no other months of the year. In our previous works, we treated of the various diving spots in this sea since there are no pearls in other seas. It is thus peculiar to the Abyssinian Sea and to localities like Kharak, Qatar, Oman, Sarandib and others on that sea. We also mentioned in these works of ours how pearls are formed and the differing opinions concerning this subject, and how some attribute their formation to the rain and others to other causes. We also described the

appearance of the shells of pearls of both the ancient (*`atiq*) variety and the new (*hadith*), called *al-Mahar* and commonly known as *balbal*, as also the meat and grease to be found inside the shell. For it is an animal which fears the pearl divers for the pearls inside just like a mother fearing for her children.

360. In our earlier works, we treated the subject of diving for pearls and how this is done and how the divers barely eat any meat except for fish and dates, but no other food. We also explained the harm done to their ear drums because they exhale from them rather than their nostrils. This is so because they place on their nostrils a piece of turtle shell from which combs are made, or else of horn. These grip the nostrils like an arrow-head but not made of wood. We also described how they insert in their ears pieces of cotton dipped in grease, a small portion of which they squeeze on the seabed which then lights up; and how they smear their feet and legs with black matter to ward off attacks by beasts of the sea, which shun black; how they shout to one another below water like dogs and how their voices reach each other. Marvelous stories are related about divers, diving and pearls and about the animals which enclose them. In our previous works we described all this, as also the characteristics of pearls, their distinguishing marks, prices and weights.

361. The beginning of the Abyssinian Sea which lies beyond Basra, al-Ubulla, Bahrain and from the wooden props of Basra, is the sea of Larawi on which are located the lands of Saimur, Subara, Tana, Sandan, Kanbaya and other lands of India and Sind. Then comes the Sea of Harkand*, then the Sea of Kalah Bar*---the sea of Kalah and the islands---then the sea of Kanduranj*, then the Sea of Sanf---from where comes Sanfi wood--- then the Sea of China, also called the Sankhi Sea*, beyond which there is no other sea.

362. As already mentioned, the Sea of Persia begins with the props of Basra and the locality known as Kankala. These are wooden props set in the sea to act as signs for ships. From there to Oman is a distance of 300 *farsakhs*. On this sea lies the coastline of Persia and the lands of Bahrain. From Oman, whose capital is called Suhar, or Mazun in Persian, to Musqat, a village where ship captains draw sweet water from wells, is a distance of 50 *farsakhs*. From Musqat to Ra's al-Jumjuma is 50 *farsakhs*. This is where the Sea of Persia ends, its total length being 400 *farsakhs* as measured by sailors and ship captains. Ra's al-Jumjuma is a mountain which is connected to the land of Yemen and the territories of al-Shihr and al-Ahqaf. The sandy part of that mountain, i.e. Ra's al-Jumjuma, has an undetermined extension below water. In the Mediterranean, if a mountain is found both on land and below the sea it is called *al-sufala*. Thus, there is a *sufala* on the coast of Saluqiya* in Byzantine territory which stretches below water almost to the island of Cyprus. Upon this many Byzantine ships have been wrecked and lost. Here, we reproduce the terms used by the people of each sea and in their common usage.

363. From Ra's al-Jumjuma, ships set out to the second sea of the Sea of Persia, known as the Sea of Larawi [Gujarat]. This is a sea whose depth, extension and limits are unknown because of its vast volume of water and wide horizons. Many sailors claim that no description can adequately account for its limits because of its numerous gulfs, described above. Ships might cross it in two or three months or else in one, depending on the winds and safety of passage. In none of the seas, i.e. of the Abyssinian Sea, is there a greater or more arduous sea than Larawi. Its width is formed by the Sea of the Zanj and their lands. Amber in this sea is scarce since most of it is found in the land of the Zanj and on the coastline of al-Shihr in the land of the Arabs.

364. The people of al-Shihr are Arabs from the tribe of Quda`a ibn Malik ibn Himyar as well as other Arab tribes. Arabs inhabiting this land are called *al-Mahra*, and have long hair hanging down to their ears. Their Arabic pronunciation is somewhat different from common speech. Thus they substitute *shin* for *kaf* and say *lash* instead of *lak* and *ma`ash* instead of *ma`ak*,* in addition to other cute and odd forms of speech. They are a poor people and have swift camels which they ride by night called *Mahriyya* camels, which resemble *Bujawiyya* camels. In fact, some claim that the *Mahriyya* are faster. They mount these camels by night and proceed along the seashore. If the camels feel the amber thrown out by the sea they crouch down, having been trained to do so, and the rider simply picks the amber up.

365. The best kind of amber is that which is found in the region just mentioned and in the islands and coasts of al-Zabaj*. This is round in shape and blue in color, the size of an ostrich egg or a little smaller. Another kind is that which is swallowed by the above mentioned whale. This is because when the sea is rough it casts out from the sea-bed the size of mountain boulders or less, as already described. When a whale swallows this amber, it kills him so the whale floats to the surface. There, observing it, are men in boats from al-Zabaj or elsewhere, who throw hooks and ropes and drag it to the coast where they split open its belly and extract the amber. What comes out of the whale's belly has a fishy smell and is known to perfumers of Iraq and Persia as *nadd*. If any amber is found on the other side of the whale it is pure and of good quality, depending on how long it stayed in its belly.

366. Between the third sea, Harkand, and the second, Larawi, as already mentioned, there are numerous islands scattered between the two seas. Some say these are 2000 in number though a more accurate estimate puts their number at 1900 islands. These are all inhabited and all owned by

one woman. This has been their custom since ancient times, namely, not to be ruled by a man.

367. Amber is also found in these islands where the sea casts it out. It is found in their sea to be as big as bits of boulders. More than one sailor from Siraf and Oman as also merchants who frequented these islands told me that amber is formed in the bed of that sea, shaped like a mushroom, both black and white, or a truffle. When the sea grows very rough it throws out from the seabed rocks and stones and pieces of amber.

368. The people of these islands are all of one opinion and are innumerable, like the armies of their queen. Between one island and the next is a distance of one mile or one, two or three *farsakhs*. Their palm tree is of the Coconut Palm (*narjil*) variety but there is no date palm. Some people who specialize in animal breeding and the grafting of trees claim that the Coconut palm is in fact the Theban (or *Doum*) Palm (*muql*), which was affected by the soil of India when planted there and turned into the Coconut Palm, though it is in fact the Theban Palm.

369. In a previous work of ours entitled the *Kitab al-Qadaya wa'l Tajarib*, we set forth how every region on earth and its climate affect animal life, human and otherwise, and how these regions impact plant life, both that which grows and that which does not, i.e. is inanimate. For example, consider the effect of the land of the Turks on their faces and their small eyes to the point where this affects their camels, whose limbs are short, necks are thick and fur is white. Or else consider the land of Gog and Magog and its effect on their faces, and other such effects which a person of knowledge, whether living in the east or the west on this earth, would find to be as we described.

370. Among islanders of the seas, there are none more skillful in all crafts and industries, whether in textiles, tools or otherwise. The monies of this queen are seashells in which is found a kind of animal. When the

treasuries are depleted, the queen orders the islanders to cut down coconut palm leaves which they plait and throw into the water. This animal then begins to form on the surface of the leaves and these are collected and deposited on the sandy beaches. The sun burns the animals inside the seashells and these become empty, thus refilling the treasuries.

371. These islands are all known as *Dibajat* [Maldives] from which most *Ranaj*, which is *Narjil* [coconut] is imported. The outermost of these islands is Sarandib beyond which are other inhabited islands stretching for a thousand *farsakhs* and known as *al-Ramni*.* In them are found kings and numerous gold mines. Beyond them is the land of Fansur* from where comes Fansuri camphor. A year that witnesses a lot of thunder, lightening, tremors, eruptions and quakes is one where camphor appears in plenty. If these conditions are less frequent, camphor decreases in quantity.

372. The food of most of the islands mentioned is the coconut. From these islands are also imported brazilwood (*baqqam*), bamboo and gold. They have many elephants, and among the islanders are some cannibals. These islands are connected to the islands of Lanjabalus*, populated by strange looking nations who go about naked. When ships appear they go out in boats carrying amber, coconut and other products. These they exchange for iron and cloth and do not deal in dirhams or dinars. Next to them are islands known as Andaman populated by black people of strange visage and wooly hair. The foot of one of them is longer than a *dhira`* and they have no ships. If a person who is shipwrecked ends up on their shores, they eat him, as also ship passengers wrecked on their shores.

373. Some sailors have told me that they would at times observe in that sea small white clouds from which dangles a long white tongue reaching down to the sea. If it touches the sea, the sea boils and great storms issue

forth which will destroy everything in their path. Then a foul-smelling rain will come down which contains the impurities of the sea.

374. The fourth sea, known as Kalah Bar, mentioned above, means the “sea of Kalah”. This is a shallow sea, and when its waters decrease, this results in more problems and evils. It is a sea with many islands and narrow passages (*surr*; plural *sara’ir*), since sailors when traversing one gulf to the next call this a *surr*. This sea contains strange varieties of islands and mountains. Here we simply allude briefly to them without giving a full account.

375. So too is the case with the fifth sea known as Kanduranj. Here too one finds many islands and mountains in which there is camphor and camphor water. It is a shallow sea with much rainfall, which is almost uninterrupted. It is inhabited by several varieties of nations, one of which is called Fanjan, who have wooly hair and strange faces. They go out in boats to meet passing ships and shoot strange arrows dipped in poison. Between that nation and the land of Kalah are mines of white lead and mountains of silver. Also present are gold and lead mines which can hardly be told apart.

376. Beyond it is the Sanf Sea in the order we outlined above. In it is the kingdom of the Maharaj*, king of the islands. One can barely estimate the extent of his realm or the number of his troops. No one can traverse his island realm, even in the fastest of ships, in less than two years. This king has at his disposal all sorts of spices and perfumes, and no other king possesses what he does. From his land the following items are imported: camphor, wood, cloves, sandalwood, nutmeg, aniseed, ginger and cubeb, among other products not mentioned here.

377. The islands of that sea are connected to another sea whose extension and end is unreachable and unknown. It lies next to the Sea of China. On its outlying islands [Japan?] are many mountains whose inhabitants have

white faces and perforated ears, their faces resembling beaten parts of a shield. They cut their hair just as hair is shaved from a water skin, i.e. in rows [chonmage?]. From their mountains fires rise by day and night, red in color by day and black by night, reaching to the uppermost sky as they ascend upwards. This is accompanied by extremely loud noises, resembling thunder. From them may also come a strange and terrifying sound presaging the death of their king but if the noise is less loud it may presage the death of a leader. This warning sign is well known among them through long experience and habit, and does not vary. This is one of the major volcano areas on earth.

378. Beyond it is an island from which are heard at all times sounds of drums, oboes and lutes and other delightful musical sounds, together with the rhythms of dancing and clapping. Whoever hears these sounds can distinguish between the various musical instruments. Sailors who pass by that island allege that the Anti-Christ (*al-Dajjal*) lives there. In the kingdom of Maharaj is the island of Sribuza* which stretches for about 400 *farsakhs* into the sea, with uninterrupted habitations. To this king belongs also the islands of al-Zabij and Ramni and other islands and realms which cannot be enumerated. The Maharaj is thus master of the sixth sea, which is the Sanf Sea.

379. The seventh is the Sea of China as per the order we outlined above, and is also known as the Sankhi Sea. This is a treacherous sea with high waves and *khibb*; *khibb* is an expression meaning great hardship at sea. We here reproduce the expressions used by the people of each sea in their own linguistic usage. In it are many mountains, and ships are forced to pass through them. When the sea is very rough, black figures appear from it, each about 4 or 5 *shibr** in length, like young Abyssinian children, and uniform in shape and height, who climb aboard the ships in large numbers but cause no harm. When sailors witness this, they are certain

that hardship will follow since their appearance is always a sign of *khibb*. So they prepare for it, and they either survive it or they do not.

380. If it turns out that a sailor survives the ordeal, he will see at the top of the mast----called *duli* by ship captains in the China and Abyssinian seas and *sari* by sailors in the Mediterranean---something like a bird which glows with light. An onlooker cannot keep staring at it nor does he know what to make of it. When this creature settles on top of the mast, they find the sea has grown calm, the waves abate and the *khibb* subsides. That glowing light then disappears and no one knows how it appeared or how it vanished. This then is the sign and omen of salvation. What we relate here is not disputed by any sailors or merchants from Basra, Siraf and Oman and others who cross these seas. Indeed, what we relate is possible, and neither implausible nor necessary, since it is within the power of the Almighty to save His creatures from destruction and relieve their hardship.

381. In this sea is a kind of crab which comes out of the sea and is about a *dhira`* or *shibr* in length, or more or less than this. If it leaves the water in a rapid movement and reaches land it turns into stone and abandons its animal nature. These stones are used in preparing *kohl* or medicament for eyes, and what we relate about it is again common knowledge. Wonders are related about the China Sea, which is the seventh sea and is known as Sankhi. In our previous works, cited above, and devoted to this subject, we related a lot of reports about that sea and seas connected to it. In what follows we shall also mention brief reports about kings.

382. Beyond China from the direction of the sea there are no known kingdoms or lands that can be described except for the land and islands of Sila [Korea]. No foreigner from Iraq or elsewhere has ever visited that land and then left it, except in rare cases. This is because of its healthy air, pure water, fertile soil and plentiful blessings. Its people are bound by

treaty to the people and kings of China and gifts are constantly exchanged between them. Some say that its people are a branch of the progeny of `Amur who settled in that land in the same manner in which we described above the settlement of the Chinese in their land.

383. China has a number of great rivers like the Tigris and Euphrates. These originate in the lands of the Turks, Tibet and Sughd; those latter live between Bukhara and Samarqand, where rise the mountains of ammonium salt. In summer and at night fires are seen rising from these mountains at a distance of one hundred *farsakhs*. In the daytime, smoke only is seen rising because of the prevalence of the sun's rays and its radiance during the day. From that locality ammonia salt is extracted. In wintertime, and if anyone wishes to cross over to China from Khurasan, he arrives at that locality where there is a valley some forty or fifty miles in length. The traveler goes to some people who live at the mouth of that valley and tempts them with high wages so they carry his merchandise on their shoulders. Carrying sticks in their hands, they strike the traveler's sides to prevent him from becoming exhausted, or from stopping and dying from the malignancy of the valley. He is kept in front of them until they come out at the head of the valley, where there are forests and swamps in whose waters they plunge to relieve themselves of the hard ordeal and the heat of ammonia.

384. No beast of burden can take that road because the ammonia flames like fire in the summer and no one "who calls out or answers" can cross that valley. In winter, when there is much snow and humidity, this locality is covered by it and the heat and fire of the ammonia is quenched, making it possible for people to cross that valley. The beasts of burden cannot bear its heat, as mentioned above. Likewise, anyone who arrives from China is beaten in the same way as the one crossing over to China.

385. The distance from Khurasan to China via that locality is about a forty-day journey. The route passes through inhabited and uninhabited regions, soft soil and sand. An alternative route traversed by beasts of burden is a four-month journey but that route has guard-posts manned by various kinds of Turks. I once encountered in the city of Balkh a venerable old man of reason and understanding who had entered China many times and had never travelled by sea. I also met a number of people in Khurasan who had travelled from the land of the Sughd via the ammonia mountains and into Tibet and China.

386. India is connected to Khurasan and Sind through the land near al-Mansura and Multan, and caravans are continuous between Sind and Khurasan, as also to India, reaching the land of Dhabulistan, i.e.

Zabulistan.* This is a land of wide extent and known as the kingdom of Fairuz ibn Kabak. In it are found wondrous and strong forts, and several languages and nations. There is some dispute about the genealogy of these people. Some attach them to the progeny of Yafit son of Noah while others assign them to the First Persians by way of a lengthy genealogy.

387. Tibet is a kingdom distinct from China. Most Tibetans are from Himyar and among them are some *tubba`*s as will be mentioned when later in this work we come to the kings of Yemen. This is found in the book of the history of the *tubba`*s. The Tibetans are both sedentary and nomadic. Their steppe lands are full of Turks innumerable, and no other Turkish steppe-land is its equal. All other Turks venerate them because royalty subsisted in them in ancient times and most Turks believe that royalty will once again return to them.

388. Tibet has a number of wondrous qualities with respect to its air, water, soil, plains and mountains. A person who lives there will always be found laughing and happy, and suffers from no sorrow, distress or

worry. Its agricultural products, flowers, meadows and rivers have countless and wondrous characteristics. It is a land where sanguine humor predominates over all animals, speaking and otherwise. You will barely find a sad old man or woman. Rather, joyfulness is common to all, old and young alike. The inhabitants are of a delicate, smiling and generous disposition, which inclines them to use many musical instruments, to drinking alcohol and to various kinds of dance. When a person dies, even his next of kin hardly display any of the sorrow displayed by other peoples when afflicted by death or loss. They are very solicitous of one another, and mutual affection [reading *tatayyum*] is common among them, which is also true of their animals.

389. The name "Tibet" derives from those who permanently settled (*thabat*) and put down roots in that land from among the people of Himyar. So the word comes from their settlement in it, though other derivations have also been given. The most common derivation however is the one we have cited. The poet Di`bil* ibn `Ali al-Khuza`i boasted of this in an ode where he opposes the poet Kumait and boasts of the merits of the tribes of Qahtan as against the tribes of Nizar:

It was they who wrote the letter [of safe-conduct, i.e. conquered]at the Gate of Merv,

And it was they who wrote that letter on the Gate of China.

It is they who called Samarqand after Shamr,

And they who planted there the people of Tibet.

Later in this work, and under the heading of the history of Yemeni kings, we shall relate some of the history of these kings and those among them who traversed the earth.

390. Tibet lies next to China and its land is adjacent to one of its borders. It is also close to India, Khurasan and the deserts of the Turks. It has many cities and buildings of strength and power. In ancient times they

used to call their kings *tubba`s* after the *tubba`*, the title of Yemeni kings. Then times changed and their language diverged from Himyarite and became closer to the languages of that region and of nations nearby, so they called their kings *Khaqan*.

391. The land of the musk deer, both Tibetan and Chinese, is one, and musk is common to both lands. However, Tibetan musk is superior to Chinese in two respects. First, Tibetan deer graze on spikes of fragrant plants and spices whereas Chinese deer graze on grass and not on fragrant plants like Tibetan deer. Second, the people of Tibet do not normally remove the musk from the musk glands but leave it as is, whereas the Chinese do so and deceitfully mix musk with blood, and practice other kinds of deceptions. In addition, Chinese musk is transported along vast distances by sea, undergoing much humidity and changes of climate. However, if no deceit is practiced by the Chinese in their musk, and if the musk is placed in glass bottles and is well sealed with leather and arrives in Muslim lands via Oman, Persia, Iraq and other places, it can be as fine as Tibetan musk.

392. The best and most fragrant musk is that which is secreted by the deer when it reaches full maturity. In point of fact, there is no difference between our deer and musk deer in shape, form, color or horns, but this becomes apparent in their tusks which resemble elephant tusks. Each deer has two tusks that come out of its jaws and are white and straight, around a *shibr* in length, more or less. In Tibet, the deer are trapped by ropes, traps and nets or sometimes shot with arrows. They kill the deer and remove the musk glands while the animal's blood is still flowing from its navel, fresh and soft and uncongealed. The musk will then have a bad stench. It is then left for a while until that stench disappears and, through certain elements in the air, turns into musk. A parallel case can be

detected with fruits that are cut off from trees before ripening and before they reach their full growth on the tree and attaining fruition.

393. The best musk is the one that matures in its vessel and is captured in the animal's navel after having matured inside the animal and reached the utmost in the ripeness of its substance. This is so because nature propels the blood ingredients towards its navel. When the blood is concentrated there and begins to age, this hurts the animal and makes it itch. The animal then takes to the boulders and rocks warmed by the sun and rubs itself against them, which causes it pleasure. The musk gland then bursts and the blood flows on these boulders and rocks, like the bursting of an abscess or a pustule when filled to the brim with the substances accumulated in it. The animal delights in this bursting. When it has emptied the contents of its gland or *surra*---a Persian word meaning navel---the wound heals. Thereafter, blood substances gather there again as they did at first.

394. The Tibetans then go out seeking the deer's grazing grounds among trees and mountains and find that the blood had dried on these rocks and stones, now matured in substance and its animal character ripened by nature, dried by the sun and affected by the air. They gather it, being the best musk in quality, and put it in glands removed from other deer they had hunted and made ready for the purpose. This is the musk used by their kings and exchanged as gifts, and which merchants from their land carry on rare occasions. Tibet has many cities and the musk of each region is ascribed to it.

395. Al-Mas`udi said: the kings of China, of the Turks, of India and of Zabaj, together with all other kings of the world, have conceded that first among kings in prestige are the kings of Babylon and that they are the first kings of the world. That king is to them what the moon is to the stars, because his region is the noblest of all, and because he is the richest

of kings, the best in character, the most politically skillful and the most decisive in action. This used to be the case when kings of Babylon were classified in ancient times, but is no longer the case in this year, i.e. in the year 332. They called that king *Shahan Shah*, which means “King of Kings”, claiming that his status in the world is like that of the heart in the human body or the precious stone in the midst of a necklace. Next comes the king of India who is the king of wisdom and of elephants because, according to the kings of Persia, wisdom originated in India.

396. Next to the King of India comes the king of China, king of best supervision over his people, of governance and of superior craftsmanship. No king in the world is more solicitous and caring for his people, both soldiers and civilians, than the king of China. He possesses great might and invulnerability as well as soldiers on a war-footing, cavalry and weapons. He pays his troops like the king of Babylon. Next to the king of China is a king of the Turks, ruler over the city of Kushan. He is king of the Tughuzghuz, a Turkish nation, and is called king of lions and horses, since there are no kings whose troops are more mighty or more warlike than his, nor any more willing to shed blood or more numerous in cavalry. His realm lies in a broad valley between China and the wilderness of Khurasan and his most common royal title is Uighur Khan. The Turks have many kings and also races that do not submit to any king, but none comes anywhere near him in power.

397. Next in order comes the king of the Byzantines, called the king of men. This is because there are no men more handsome than his men. Thereafter the other kings of the world are about equal in rank and status. Some people who know intimately the history of the world and its kings quote the following verses which describe in summary form the ranks of kings, their realms and titles:

The great realms are two in number: Iwan and Ghumdan,

And royalty is two in number: Sasan and Qahtan.
The greatest of lands is Persia, and of regions is Babylon,
Of Islam is Mecca, and of the earth is Khurasan.
The two most massive, where life is rough,
Are Bukhara then royal Balkh.
Then comes Bailaqa, with Tabaristan in between,
And Rayy is its lion, and the two Jils are Jilan.
All mankind he ordered in ranks:
Marzuban, Patricius and Tarkhan.
The Persians have Kisra, the Byzantines Caesar,
The Abyssinians Najashi and the Turks Khaqan.

398. The ruler of Sicily and Ifriqiyya in the Maghrib before the coming of Islam was known as Jurjir (*Gregory*) while the ruler of al-Andalus was called Ludhariq (*Roderick*). All kings of al-Andalus were known by that name. It is claimed that these kings were descended from the Ashban, a nation descended from Yafit son of Noah and which became extinct in that land. Better attested though among Muslim inhabitants of al-Andalus is that Ludhariq was a Galician [*Jalaliqa*, from Latin *Callaicoi*], a type of Franks (*Ifranj*). The last Ludhariq who was the king of al-Andalus was killed by Tariq, client of Musa ibn Nusair, when he conquered the lands of al-Andalus and captured their capital city Toledo (*Tulaitula*).

399. Crossing the city of Toledo is a great river called Tagus (*Tajuh*). It originates from the land of the Galicians and the Basques (*Washkand*), this latter being a great nation, with a king, who wage constant war against the people of al-Andalus, just like the Galicians and the Franks. That river flows into the Mediterranean [!]. It is one of the celebrated rivers of the world. On its banks and at some distance from Toledo is the city of Talavera (*Talabira*) where there is a great bridge called the Bridge of the Sword (*al-Saif*) built by ancient kings with great skill and renown.

Its arches are more splendid than the bridge of Sanja on the frontier of al-Jazira near Samosata and the region of Sarja. Toledo is a well fortified city with impregnable walls.

400. Following its conquest by the Umayyad dynasty, the people of Toledo rebelled against the Umayyads and defied them for two years. After the year 315 [927-8], Toledo was re-conquered by the Umayyad `Abd al-Rahman* ibn Muhammad ibn `Abdallah ibn Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Hakam ibn Hisham ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn Mu`awiya ibn Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan ibn al-Hakam. This `Abd al-Rahman is currently the ruler of al-Andalus, namely in the year 332.

401. When `Abd al-Rahman conquered Toledo, he demolished many of its buildings, and Cordoba then became the capital until the present time. From Cordoba to Toledo is a journey of about seven stages (*marahil*), and from Cordoba to the sea is approximately a three-days journey. The people of al-Andalus also have a city called Seville (*Ishbiliya*) on the seashore [!]. The total circuit of the towns and inhabited regions of al-Andalus is about a two-month's journey and they have around forty well known cities.

402. The Umayyad rulers of al-Andalus are called "the children of caliphs" and are not addressed as caliphs because the caliphate in their view must involve rule over the two sacred shrines of Mecca and Medina. However, the ruler is addressed as "Commander of the Believers" (*Amir al-Mu'minin*). The first `Abd al-Rahman, i.e. ibn Mu`awiya ibn Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, had crossed over to al-Andalus in the year 139 [756-7], and ruled it for thirty-three years and four months. At his death he was succeeded by his son Hisham who ruled for seven years, then by al-Hakam his son for about twenty years, and his descendants rule it to the present day. We mentioned above that its current ruler is

`Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad and his designated successor is his son al-Hakam. He is the most virtuous, fairest and most just of rulers.

403. The current ruler of al-Andalus `Abd al-Rahman had in 327 [938-9] led an army of more than a hundred thousand men to the kingdom of the Galicians where he besieged their capital, a city called Zamora (*Sammura*), protected by seven walls of marvelous construction and fortified by previous kings. Between the walls were ramparts and moats and much water. `Abd al-Rahman's army had breached two of its walls when the people of the city counter-attacked and killed some forty thousand Muslims who could be counted and known---some say fifty thousand. So it was a victory for the Galicians and the Basques, and the Muslim frontier posts adjoining the Frankish lands were also captured. In the year 330 [941-2], the city of Narbonne (*Arbuna*) was also lost to the Muslims alongside other towns and forts in their possession. At this time, which is the year 336 [947-8], the Muslim frontier post in eastern al-Andalus remains the town of Tortosa (*Turtusha*) on the Mediterranean, then the region to the north of it, i.e. Fraga (*Afragha*) on a great river, then on to Larida. It has reached me that these frontier posts face the Franks and are the narrowest regions of al-Andalus.

404. Before the year 300, there arrived at al-Andalus ships from the sea with thousands aboard them who attacked its coasts [Vikings]. The people of al-Andalus claim that these people were Magians who attack them from that sea every few hundred years. They further claim that these people arrive in their country via an inlet from the surrounding ocean which is not the same as the inlet where there is the bronze lighthouse. My view, and God knows best, is that this inlet is connected with the Azov and Black Seas, and that these people are the Rus mentioned above, since none but they cross those seas which are connected with the Ocean.

405. In the Mediterranean, and next to the island of Crete (*Iqritush*) were found planks of teak wood belonging to ships with holes tied together by *narjil* fibers which had foundered and their planks were carried by the waves of the sea. Such planks are only found in the Abyssinian Sea since Mediterranean and Arab ships all use nails whereas the ships of the Abyssinian Sea cannot sustain iron nails. This is because the sea-water melts these iron nails which then grow soft and weak. Accordingly, the people of that sea tied planks together with fibers instead, and then coated them with grease and slaked lime. This proves, and God knows best, that the seas are all connected, and that the sea of China and the land of Sila curves around the land of the Turks and ends in the seas of the West through certain inlets of the surrounding Ocean.

406. Once, on the coasts of al-Sham, some amber was found which the sea had thrown up. This is a most unusual occurrence in the Mediterranean and never attested before. It may be that amber found its way into this sea in the same manner as those planks from ships of the Sea of China, and God knows best how this could have happened. Amber is plentiful on the coasts of al-Andalus from where it is transported to Egypt and elsewhere. Amber is carried to Cordoba from its coastline, from towns called Santarem [Shantarin] and Medina Sidonia [Shadhuna]. In al-Andalus, an *uqiyya* [ounce] of amber costs three *mithqals* of gold, counting by the Baghdad *uqiyya* [33 grams] while an *uqiyya* in Egypt costs 10 dinars. This amber is not of good quality and the amber found in the Mediterranean may have been carried by the waves from the Sea of al-Andalus to the Mediterranean, because the waters of the two seas are connected.

407. In al-Andalus there is a great silver mine and one of mercury, but the latter is not of good quality. These are transported to other lands, both Islamic and infidel. From al-Andalus too are exported saffron and ginger

roots. The basic perfumes are five in number: musk, camphor, aloes wood, amber and saffron. All are imported from India and lands nearby except for saffron and amber which are found in the land of the Zanj, in al-Shihr and in al-Andalus. The spices are of twenty-five kinds: spikenard, cloves, sandalwood, nutmeg, rose, bark of *`arfaj*, saffron, cinnamon, stork's bill, cardamom, cubeb, green cardamom, elderberry seeds, jasmine flower, *mahleb*, dye-wood, mandrake, scented sea shells (*azfar al-tib*), myrobalam, mastic, cistus, benzoin resin, kumkum tree, lemon grass stalks and civet musk. In our *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we described silver, gold and mercury mines and the various kinds of perfumes, making it unnecessary to treat these subjects in detail in this book.

408. The Maghrib sea has many strange tales where it draws near to the inhabited regions of the black peoples and at the furthest reaches of the Maghrib. Scholars who concern themselves with the history of the world state that Abyssinia and all the lands of the blacks require seven years to traverse, and that the land of the blacks occupies one-sixtieth part of the earth, while the earth itself requires five hundred years to traverse: a third of it built and inhabited, a third uninhabited wasteland and a third of it sea.

409. The furthest reaches of the land of the naked blacks adjoin the realm of the progeny of Idris ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib which is part of the Maghrib, namely, the territories of Tlemcen, Tiaret and Fez, and all the way to the Near Sus. Between the Near Sus and the territory of al-Qairawan is a distance of two thousand three hundred miles, and between Near and Far Sus is a journey of about twenty days of continuous habitations until it reaches the Valley of Sand (*Wadi al-Raml*) and the Black Palace (*Al-Qasr al-Aswad*). This then leads to the wilderness of sand where the city known as the City of Brass (*Madinat al-Nuhas*) and the Domes of Lead are to be found. This is

where Musa ibn Nusair* marched in the days of the caliph `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan and saw all these wonders, mentioning his adventures in a book widely circulated among people. It is also claimed that the above-mentioned wilderness refers to a land that adjoins al-Andalus, called the Great Land* (*Al-ard al-kabira*).

410. It was Maimun ibn `Abd al-Wahhab ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn Rustam al-Farisi, an Ibadi sectarian, who introduced into the Maghrib the doctrine of the Khawarij. Some say they* are remnants of the Ishban. It was Maimun who built up these lands and waged war against the Talibids. Later on in this work we will relate the arguments adduced regarding the origins of the Ishban and the view of those who maintain that they are Persians transported from the region of Isbahan. In that part of the Maghrib are found Khawarij of the Sufriyya sect who have well developed cities like the city of Dar`a, where there is a great silver mine. That part of the Maghrib lies to the south and adjoins the land of Abyssinia, and the wars between them are unceasing.

411. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we set forth a history of the Maghrib, its cities and its inhabitants from among the Ibadi and Suffriyya sects of the Khawarij, and who settled in the Maghrib from among the Mu`tazila, and the wars between them. We also made mention of Ibn al-Aghlab al-Tamimi and his appointment as governor of the Maghrib by the caliph al-Mansur, his residence in Ifriqiyya* and his history in the days of the caliph Harun al-Rashid, and how his descendants ruled Ifriqiyya and other lands of the Maghrib. This dynasty ended with Abu Mudar Ziyadat Allah ibn `Abdullah ibn Ibrahim ibn Ahmad ibn al-Aghlab ibn Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn al-Aghlab ibn Ibrahim ibn Salim ibn Sawada al-Tamimi, who was the principal champion of the Abbasid cause. He was driven out of Ifriqiyya by Abu `Abdullah al-Muhtasib* al-Sufi, who championed the ruler of al-Mahdiyya when he appeared among the

Kutama and other Berber tribes in the year 297[909-10] in the days of the caliph al-Muqtadir Billah. We also mentioned how this man Abu `Abdullah marched to al-Rafiqa and al-Raqqa. He was originally from the town of Ramhurmuz, in the district of al-Ahwaz.

412. We now turn back to speak of the ranks of kings and continue with a description of the kingdoms that remain on the Abyssinian Sea which we had begun to describe. We state that the king of the Zanj is called *Waflimi*; the king of al-Lan* is called *Karkudanj*; the king of Hira is from the clan of Banu Nasr, both Nu`manids and Manadhira; the king of the mountains of Tabaristan used to be called *Qarin* and the mountain is still called by his name and that of his descendants up to the present day; the king of India is called al-Ballahara; the king of Qannuj from among the kings of Sind is called Baruza, this being the name of every king who ruled Qannuj and where there is a city called Biruza, named after that dynasty. Today this city is within the Islamic realm and is part of the region of al-Multan. From this city issues a river which, when joined with others, becomes the river of Mihran al-Sind, a river that al-Jahiz claimed issues from the Nile. Others claim that it issues from the Oxus in Khurasan. Baruza, king of Qannuj, is an enemy of Ballahara, king of India.

413. The king of Qandahar from among the kings of Sind and its mountains is most commonly known as *Jahaj*. From his country flows the river known as Rawi, one of the five sources of the Mihran al-Sind [Indus]. Qandahar is also known as the land of Rihyawt. One other river of the five flowing from the land and mountains of Sind is known as Bahatul. This river traverses the land of Rihyawt, which is the land of Qandahar. The fourth river flows from the land and mountains of Kabul, this being located on the frontiers of Sind, next to Bust, Ghaznin, Durghash, Rukhkhaj and the land of Dawar, adjoining Sijistan.

414. Another river of the above-mentioned five originates from the land of Qashmir, whose king is known as al-Rai, this being the most common title of all their kings. Qashmir is one of the great kingdoms of Sind and its mountains whose realm includes sixty to seventy thousand towns and villages. No inhabitant of this realm can reach his hometown except through one entry point, and a single gate shuts in all that we mentioned. This is because of towering and invulnerable mountains which no man or beast can climb because of their height. Only the birds can fly over them. Where there are no mountains there are rugged valleys, trees, thickets and fast-running rivers, impossible to cross. What we have mentioned of the invulnerable character of this mountain is well known in Khurasan and other lands, and is one of the world's wonders.

415. As for the kingdom of Baruza, the realm of Qannuj, the total area of his kingdom is about 120 *farsakhs* by about the same, these being *farsakhs* of Sind where a *farsakh* is eight miles as measured by our mile. This is the king we mentioned above as having four armies that face the four directions of the winds, each army counting 700,000---some say 900,000, men. With the northern army he fights the ruler of Multan and the Muslims with him on that frontier. With the southern he fights the Ballahara, king of Mankir. With the other armies he fights whatever king he faces from whatever direction. It is claimed that his realm contains, within the area mentioned above, and as far as can be counted, cities and towns and villages numbering one million and eight hundred thousand, all lying among trees, rivers, mountains and meadows. As compared to other kings, he has few elephants and has only two thousand war elephants.

416. If an elephant is tall, experienced and courageous and his rider is a knight; and if he holds in his trunk a type of sword called *qartal* and his trunk is covered with a coat of mail and iron; and if his entire body is

covered with dried leather, bark and iron; and if he is surrounded by 500 infantrymen who protect him front and back, he can take on 6,000 cavalymen in battle. At the very least, and if the elephant has 500 infantrymen, he can charge 5,000 cavalymen, passing in and out of their ranks, and moving freely among them like a knight on a horse. This is how their elephants conduct their wars.

417. As for the ruler of Multan, we have already stated that kingship is vested in the progeny of Sama ibn Lu'ayy ibn Ghalib*. He has a strong army. Multan is one of the major Muslim frontier posts. Around the frontier city of Multan is about 120,000 villages, as far as these can be counted. In Multan, as mentioned before, is found the well known Multan idol, where the people of Sind and Hind come from their furthest regions bearing the idol votive offerings of money, jewels, incense wood and all kinds of perfumes. Thousands go on pilgrimage to that idol and most of the income of the ruler of Multan is derived from the fine incense wood called *Qimari* the purest of which costs 200 dinars a *mann**. If *Qimari* is stamped, the stamp leaves an impression like that on wax. Other wondrous offerings are also carried to that idol. If infidel kings descend on Multan and the Muslims are unable to resist them, they threaten the infidels with breaking and destroying the idol, so the enemy army retires. I entered the land of Multan after the year 300 [912-13] and its king at that time was Abu al-Lahhab al-Munabbih ibn Asad al-Qurashi al-Sami.

418. At that same time I also entered the land of al-Mansura whose king was Abu al-Mundhir `Umar ibn `Abdallah. There I met his vizier Riyah and his two sons Muhammad and `Ali. There too I saw an Arab notable and one of its kings known as Hamza. In Mansura, there lives a large number of descendants of `Ali ibn Abi Talib together with those of `Umar ibn `Ali and Muhammad ibn `Ali. Between the kings of Mansura and the family of the judge Abu al-Shawarib there is a close kinship. This

is because the kings of Mansura in whom kingship is vested at this time are descended from al-Habbar ibn al-Aswad and are known as Banu `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz al-Qurashi. This latter is to be distinguished from `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz the Umayyad.

419. When all the rivers mentioned above traverse the territory known as Farj Bait al-Dhahab, which is Multan, they join together at a place called Dushab, between Multan and Mansura, a three-days' journey beyond Multan. When all these waters reach the west of the city of al-Rur, in the district of Mansura, they are there called Mihran. The waters then divide into two parts and both then flow into that great river called Mihran al-Sind at the city of Sakara, in the district of Mansura, which then runs into the India Sea at a two-days' journey from the city of Daibul.

420. Between Multan and Mansura is a distance of 75 Sindi *farsakhs*, each of which, as mentioned above, is eight miles. The total number of estates and villages belonging to Mansura comes to 300,000 villages, planted fields, trees and continuous habitations. Wars are frequent with a race called Mand, a kind of Sind, and with other races. Mansura is the frontier region of Sind, as also Multan and what belongs to it by way of built up areas and cities. Mansura was called after Mansur ibn Jamhur, the Umayyad governor.

421. The king of Mansura has eighty war elephants and each elephant, as mentioned above, is assigned 500 infantrymen while the elephant itself can take on thousands of horsemen. I saw two enormous elephants that belong to that king, well known by repute among the kings of Sind and India for their courage, great power and ability to scatter armies. One was called Manfarqlus and the other Haidara. Of Manfarqlus wondrous tales and praiseworthy acts are related, well known to people in those regions and elsewhere. It is related, for example, that when one of his mahouts died, he remained for many days without food or drink, expressing his

sorrow and moaning like a grieving person, with tears running endlessly down from his eyes. Another tale goes as follows. He went out from his keep one day, this being the elephant house, followed by Haidara and with the eighty others marching behind them. Manfarqlus ended up in a narrow street of Mansura and along his way he of a sudden encountered a woman. When she saw him, she was startled and in her fright fell on her back, and her private parts were exposed as she lay in the middle of that street. When Manfarqlus saw this he stopped astride that street, his right side blocking the other elephants behind him and preventing their further progress for the woman's sake. He then waved his trunk at the woman, urging her to stand up, gather her clothes together and cover herself up. When the woman, having recovered from her fright, stood up and moved away, the elephant proceeded on his way followed by the rest of the elephants.

422. Strange tales are told about both war and working elephants. Some elephants that do not fight are used to pull wheels, bear heavy burdens and are employed in the threshing of rice and other grains, just like water buffaloes on a threshing floor. We shall revert to the subject of elephants when speaking of Zanj history later on in this book and how elephants live in that land, for in no land are more elephants to be found than in the land of the Zanj, where all their elephants are wild. This, then, has been a short account of the history of the kings of Sind and India.

423. The language of Sind is different from the language of India [*Hind*]. Sind is the region that lies next to the lands of Islam, and beyond Sind lies India. The language of the people of Mankir, the capital of the kingdom of Ballahara, is called Kiriyya in reference to the region which is called Kira. The language of its coastal regions like Saimur, Subara and Tana and other coastal cities is called Lariyya in reference to the sea on whose coasts they live, namely Larawi, mentioned above.

424. This coast has great rivers which flow from south to north, contrary to other rivers of the earth. There are no rivers on earth that flow from south to north except the Nile of Egypt and Mihran al-Sind and a few others. All other rivers on earth flow from north to south. In our work *Akhbar al-Zaman* we mentioned the reason for this and what people said about this subject and which regions of the earth are elevated and which others are low-lying.

425. Among the kings of Sind and India none is more considerate towards Muslims living in his realm than the Ballahara. In his kingdom Islam is respected and protected. The Muslims have well built and well attended mosques for the five daily prayers and a king there rules for forty or fifty or more years. The people of his kingdom claim that their span of life grows long by reason of their just treatment and reverence towards Muslims. He is a king who pays his troops from his own treasury as do Muslim kings with their troops. They have dirhams called *tatiriyya*, each dirham weighing one and a half dirhams of the royal mint. They date the beginning of the history of their kingdom by the death of successive kings. His war elephants are innumerable.

426. His country is also called the land of Kumkan. Warring against them from one side of the kingdom is the king of Juraz*, a king who owns many horses, camels and troops. It is claimed that the only king more eminent than he is the king of Babylon, which is in the fourth clime. This is so because this king [i.e. of Juraz] is haughty and aggressive towards all other kings and is also inimical to Muslims. He has many elephants and his kingdom is located on a promontory. Mines of gold and silver are found in his land and they use these metals in commercial transactions.

427. Adjoining him is the king of Taqi who has peaceful relations with nearby kings and respects Muslims. His armies are not as numerous as the armies of the other kings just mentioned. No Indian women are better

or prettier or more white in skin than these women. They are well known for being ideal companions in seclusion and are mentioned in books of sexual conduct. Mariners compete in buying them and they are known as *Taqiyyat* women.

428. Adjoining that king is the kingdom of Dahram*, Dahram being the most common title of their kings. His enemy is Juraz whose realm is next to his. Dahram also wars against the Ballahara from one periphery of his kingdom. His troops, elephants and horses are more numerous than those of the Ballahara, the king of Juraz and the king of Taqi. If he marches out to battle his normal disposition is to lead fifty thousand elephants and to wage war only in winter because elephants cannot bear to go thirsty for any length of time. Those who exaggerate inflate the number of his troops alleging that merely the fullers and laundrymen in his army amount to ten to fifteen thousand.

429. The battle formation of the above-mentioned kings is the square [*kurdu*], with twenty thousand in each square facing in four directions, each having five thousand soldiers. The kingdom of Dahram pays its troops in aloda shells (*al-wada`*), which is the currency of the country. In his country are also found incense wood, gold, silver and textiles unparalleled for their fine and delicate texture. From his country is also imported those twigs known as *samar*, used as a fly whisk enclosed in ivory or silver handles, and employed by servants who stand over the heads of kings as they sit in their assemblies.

430. In his country too is found the animal known as the spotted *al-bishan* which the common people call *al-karkadann* (rhinoceros). It has a single horn on its forehead. It is smaller than the elephant in body but larger than the water buffalo, has a blackish color and ruminates like cows and other ruminants. Elephants run away from it and there is no animal species hardier than it. This is because most of its bones are

compressed together and it has no joints in its limbs so it does not kneel down nor sleeps, but is found in woods and swamps leaning against trees when sleeping. The Indians eat its meat as do Muslims who live there because it is a species of cow and water buffalo. The water buffalo is found in plenty in Sind and India. The rhinoceros is mostly found in the forests of India but is most numerous in the Kingdom of Dahram where their horns are more limpid and of better quality. Its horn is white in color in the middle of which is a dark image. In the white area an image can be detected of a person or of a peacock with its outline and shape, or else the image of a fish or a picture of itself or of some other kind of animal found in that country.

431. The horn is sawed off and from it are made leather girdles in the shape of gold or silver ornaments worn by Chinese kings and their elite. They compete in wearing them and go over the top in paying for them so that a girdle can cost two to four thousand dinars, from which hang golden pendants of remarkable beauty and craftsmanship. Its horn could also be crammed with various kinds of precious stones in filaments of gold while the outlines of these images are drawn in black on white, though white on black may be found in its horns. However, these images described above are not found in rhino horns of all countries.

432. Al-Jahiz claimed that a rhino is carried in its mother's belly for seven years and that its head appears from its mother's cavity and grazes then reinserts itself in that cavity. This is a statement he made in his *Book of Animals*, relating it as a bizarre anecdote. This statement led me to ask all who had travelled widely in those lands from among the people of Siraf and Oman and also the merchants I met in India. They all expressed their astonishment at what they heard from me. When I asked them, they all told me that the rhino's gestation and birth is similar to that of cows

and water buffalos. I do not know how al-Jahiz heard that story and whether he read it in a book or was told it by someone.

433. The realm of Dahram encompasses both land and sea. Next to it is a realm which has no sea and is called the kingdom of Lakshmipur. The people of this kingdom have pierced ears. They have elephants, camels and horses, and both their men and women are good looking. Next to them is the realm of Tanluinj* which encompasses both land and sea and is located on a headland jutting into the sea. Much amber is found in that country and also a small amount of pepper. Their king has many elephants and compared to other kings is mighty and proud though his pride is greater than his might and his boasting is greater than his power.

434. Next to this kingdom is the kingdom of al-Muja. The people of this kingdom have white skins, are good looking and do not have pierced ears. They have many horses and formidable military resources. Musk in their country is plentiful and is extracted from their deer, as described earlier in this work. This nation resembles the Chinese in their dress, and their white-topped mountains rise to very great and inaccessible heights. In all of Sind, India or other kingdoms we have mentioned there are no mountains that rise higher than these or are more difficult of access. Their musk is well known and is named after them, and mariners whose business it is to trade in musk and import it recognize its worth. It is referred to as Mujahi musk.

435. Next to the kingdom of al-Muja is the kingdom of Mabud, a realm with many cities, wide habitations and great armies. Their kings employ slaves and eunuchs in their mine industries, in tax collection and in administering their provinces, among other employments, as is done by the Chinese kings, described above. The realm of Mabud adjoins the kingdom of China and ambassadors travel to and fro between them bearing gifts. Between the two realms are towering mountains and

difficult mountain passes. The Mabud king has great might and is very violent and powerful. When his ambassadors reach China they are kept under surveillance and are not permitted to roam in that country for fear they might spy out their roads and the weak points of their land, for the Mabud have an exalted view of their own strength and numbers.

436. The nations mentioned above, that is, India, China and others, have their own habits and manners in eating, drinking, marriage customs, clothes, medical treatments, and medicines such as cauterization by fire and so forth. It is related of some of their kings that they do not approve of holding wind inside the belly and believe that this causes a harmful malady. Thus they do not think it unseemly to break wind in any social situation. Their wise men act in the same way and believe that holding back a fart is a harmful malady while releasing it causes a healthy relief. They think farting is the best remedy, and that it relieves a person suffering from colic and constipation or one suffering from a malady of the spleen. Thus they do not hold back a fart or a muted fart and do not consider this shameful.

437. The Indians are very advanced in the craft of medicine and are sophisticated and skillful in its practice. The person who related this information asserts that in their opinion coughing is uglier than farting, that belching is judged similar to a muted fart, and that the sound of the fart is good for the stomach and is what dissipates its odor. That informant adduced as proof of the truth of what he related about India the fact that this piece of information about them is very widely spread among people to the point where it is very frequently cited in their customs, histories, anecdotes and poetry.

438. Thus, for example, the poet Aban ibn `Abd al-Hamid has the following verses in his ode known as “The Ode dressed in Silk” (*Dhat al-hulal*):

*The Indian sage and true counselor
Made a statement that I find of much merit.
Do not hold back a fart when it is at hand
But let it go, opening its door as wide as it wishes.
The worst of maladies is to hold it back,
While respite and relief come when one unchains it.
Ugliness is in coughing and blowing one's nose,
And sneezing, not farting, is the evil omen.
As for belching, it is a muted fart ascending,
And is more foul-smelling than a muted fart.*

439. The informant goes on to relate that the wind in the stomach is the same substance but has different names depending on its exit points. What goes up of this wind is called belching and what goes down is called a muted fart but there is no difference in odor except for the difference in point of exit. Thus one speaks of a slap (*saf'a*) and a clout (*latma*): the first refers to the face while the second refers to the back of the head or the behind, whereas both are of the same kind. They have two different names because of the different places where the blow lands. The reason why the human or speaking animal suffers from so many maladies and takes so many medications and why he has multiple diseases like colic, stomach pains and other symptoms is because he holds back the malady inside him and neglects to bring it out when agitated and when nature is intent upon driving it out. Dumb animals on the other hand are free from such maladies and symptoms of disease because they are quick to release whatever internal ailments are blocking and swirling inside them and not to hold them back in their guts.

440. It is also claimed that the philosophers and distinguished sages of the Greeks like Democritus, Pythagoras, Socrates and Diogenes, and other sages of other nations also did not believe that any of these actions should

be held back because of their knowledge of the maladies that would ensue together with other consequences. They stated that this can be felt by any person of feeling and is something known by nature and understood by reason. However, some people who adhere to religious views and to revealed scripture hold these acts to be reprehensible because they are not allowed according to religious law and normal custom.

441. Al-Mas`udi said: In our two earlier works, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, we related the history of the above-mentioned nations and what we ascertained of their customs and curious habits and behavior. We also related the history of the Maharaj, king of the islands, of perfume and spices, along with the history of all other Indian kings, of the Fijabat and other mountain kings who face these islands, like Zabij and other mountains of China. We also related the history of the kings of China and the kingdom of Sarandib along with the realm of Mandura Fattan [Madourapatan] which faces Sarandib just as the land of Qimar faces the islands of Maharaj like Zabaj and others. Every king who rules Mandura Fattan is called Fandia. In what follows in this work we shall make mention of the kings of the east, west, north and south such as the kings of Yemen, the Persians, Byzantines, Greeks, the Maghrib, the various kinds of Abyssinians and Blacks as also the kings who are the progeny of Yafith, and other histories and wonders of the world.

Chapter 17

An account of the Caucasus mountains and a history of its nations such as the Alans, Avars, and the Khazar together with various kinds of Turks, Bulgars, and a history of al-Bab wa'l Abwab and neighboring kings and nations

The Caucasus (*Jabal al-Qabkh*) is a massive mountain and a most imposing region, comprising many kingdoms and nations. This mountain

encompasses seventy-two nations, each with its own king and language separate from the others. This mountain has many mountain passes and valleys and the city of al-Bab wa'l Abwab [Derbent] is located on one of these passes. This city was built by Chosroes [*Kisra*] Anushirwan and he sited it to lie between the Caucasus and the Caspian. Its wall was extended right into the sea to a distance of about a mile, then up onto the heights, depths and mountain passes of the Caucasus for a distance of about forty *farsakhs* until it reaches a fortress called Tabasaran (*Tabarsaran*). At every three miles of that wall, or less or more, depending on the road for the sake of which the gate was built, an iron gate was built. Inside each of these gates a tribe was stationed to protect that gate and the wall adjacent to it. This was done to repel the ravages of nations living on that mountain like the Khazar, Al-Lan, varieties of Turks, Avars (*al-Sarir*) and other kinds of infidels.

443. The Caucasus mountain, in height, length and breadth, is a journey of two months, perhaps more. Round about are nations whose number is known only to Him who created them. One of its passes is on the Caspian next to Derbent, as already related. Other passes adjoin the Sea of Azov, mentioned above, which flows into the Gulf of Constantinople. On the Black Sea coast lies the city of Trebizond, which has many market days throughout the year, and is frequented by a host of merchants of diverse nations such as Muslims, Byzantines, Armenians and others, and also from the land of the Circassians (*Kashak*).

444. When Anushirwan built the city known as al-Bab wa'l Abwab and the wall that traverses land, sea and mountain, he settled on it diverse nations and kings and assigned them ranks, conferring separate honors on each and giving each a distinct realm, as was done by Ardashir ibn Babik when he organized the kings of Khurasan. Among the kings of those regions adjacent to the lands of Islam that Anushirwan settled was a king

of a territory called Bardha`a, named Shirwan. His kingdom is named after him and he is thus known as Shirwan Shah. Every king who rules that territory is called Shirwan Shah.

Al-Mas`udi said: His realm at this time, which is the year 332, is about a month's journey in extension. This is so because he conquered lands not assigned to him by Anushirwan so these were added to his realm. The king at the time of our writing this work---and God knows best---is a Muslim called Muhammad ibn Yazid, a descendant of Bahram Jur, there being no dispute regarding his genealogy. The king of al-Sarir [Avars] is also a descendant of Bahram Jur. Similarly, the ruler of Khurasan at this time of writing is a descendant of Isma`il ibn Ahmad, and Isma`il is also a descendant of Bahram Jur, there being no dispute about this genealogy because it is so well known. The above-mentioned Muhammad ibn Yazid, known as Shirwan Shah, seized the city of al-Bab wa'l Abwab following the death of his brother-in-law, a man called `Abdullah ibn Hisham, a descendant of the Ansar, whose family had ruled that city. That family had lived in those regions ever since these were penetrated by Maslama ibn `Abd al-Malik and other Muslim princes in ancient times.

445. Next to the kingdom of Shirwan is another kingdom of the Caucasus called Laizan, whose king is known as Laizan Shah. At this present time, Shirwan has dominated this kingdom as also another kingdom called al-Muqaniyya. The kingdom of Shirwan relies for support on the kingdom of Lakz, a nation too numerous to count and living on the heights of the mountain. Among them are infidels, called al-Dudaniyya*, who do not submit to the rule of Shirwan, are barbarous (*jahiliyya*) and have no king. Curious tales are told of their marriage customs and other practices.

446. The Caucasus has valleys, passes and trails inhabited by nations that do not know each other; so rugged is that mountain, so high in elevation,

so many are its thickets, forests, and waterfalls, so massive its boulders and rocks. This man known as Shirwan Shah has come to dominate many mountain kingdoms that Anushirwan had once assigned to other rulers whom he had appointed there. Muhammad ibn Yazid added these kingdoms, among which are Khursan Shah and Zadan Shah, to his realm. We shall later on mention how he took over the kingdom of Shirwan, having once been, along with his father, a ruler over Laizan only from among the other kingdoms. Next to the kingdom of Shirwan in the Caucasus is the king of Tabaristan who at present is a Muslim and nephew of `Abd al-Malik, formerly ruler of al-Bab wa'l Abwab. This is the first nation that borders on al-Bab wa'l Abwab.

447. The people of al-Bab wa'l Abwab suffer the ravages of a kingdom called Khaidhan [*Khaidhaq*], a nation included in the realm of the Khazar. The capital of that kingdom was a city eight days' journey from al-Bab called Samandar. Today, it is inhabited by a population of the Khazar. It had been conquered in early Islamic times by Salman ibn Rabi`a al-Bahili, God have mercy on his soul. So the seat of the kingdom moved to a city called Atil, a journey of seven days from the first capital. Atil is at present the seat of the Khazar king. The city has three quarters separated by a great river [Volga] which flows down from the heights of the land of the Turks. One branch of the river flows towards the land of the Burghur [Bulghar] then into the Azov Sea. The city is on two sides of the river, in the middle of which is an island which is the seat of the kingdom. The king's palace is located at one extremity of that island. It has two bridges built of boats linking it to the two river banks. In this city lives a population of Muslims, Christians, Jews and pagans.

448. As for the Jews, the king, his courtiers and the Khazars belong to that religious community. The King of the Khazar had embraced Judaism in the days of the caliph al-Rashid. A population of Jews joined him,

coming to him from diverse Muslim and Byzantine lands. This is because the current king of Byzantium in this year of 332, Armanus [Romanus I], forcibly converted the Jews of his realm to Christianity. Later in this work, we will mention the history of the Byzantine kings and their number as well as the history of this particular king and those who were his partners in rule at the time of composing this work. So a large number of Jews fled from the land of Byzantium to that of the Khazars, as already mentioned. The manner in which the king of the Khazar embraced Judaism is a narrative whose place is not here in this work, for we have mentioned that history in our earlier works.

449. As for the pagans in his realm, these belong to different races such as the Slavs [*Saqaliba*] and the Rus who inhabit one quarter of the city. They burn their dead along with their mounts, armor and jewelry. When a man dies his wife is burnt with him while alive, but if a wife dies the husband is not burnt. If a bachelor dies, he is made to marry after his death. Women are content to be burnt because they imagine that they will enter paradise. This is also practiced in India, as mentioned above, except that in India a wife is not burnt with her husband unless she herself desires it.

450. The most powerful element in this kingdom are the Muslims because they constitute the king's army and are known in that land as al-Arsiyya, in origin migrants from the vicinity of Khwarizm. In ancient times, their land suffered a severe drought and epidemics so they migrated to the realm of the Khazar. They are a people of might and bravery, and the Khazar king's principal source of support in his wars. Their residence in his country is conditional upon certain mutually agreed terms. Thus they are permitted to practice their religion openly in their mosques, are permitted the call to prayer, and that the vizierate belongs to them. The vizier nowadays is of their number and is named Ahmad ibn

Kuwaih. Another condition is that if the king wages war against Muslims they would keep to their own camp and not fight their co-religionists but will fight with the king against all infidels. At this present time about seven thousand of their archers will march out with the king wearing their coats of mail, helmets and armor. Among them too are spearmen, as is the case with the weaponry of other Muslims.

451. They also have Muslim judges. The judiciary in this capital of the Khazar kingdom is organized as follows: there are seven judges, two for the Muslims, two for the Khazar who judge in accordance with the Torah, and two for the Christians who judge by the Gospel. There is another judge for the Slavs and the Rus who judges in accordance with non-religious (*Jahliyya*) laws which are in fact rational principles. If a major legal problem arises, and these judges do not know how to deal with it, they resort to the Muslim judges and submit to the verdict of Muslim religious law. In that part of the world, and among eastern kings, only the Khazar king employs mercenaries, and every Muslim in that land is called by the name of that community, al-Arsiyya.

452. The Rus and Slavs whom we earlier called “non-religious” are the king’s bodyguard and slaves. Apart from the Arsiyya, there is a large Muslim population of merchants and craftsmen who have come to settle in that king’s realm, drawn to it by his justice and the security of the kingdom. The Muslims have a congregational mosque whose minaret overlooks the royal palace. They have other mosques too to which are attached elementary schools (*makatib*) where boys are taught the Qur’an. If the Muslims and Christians in that land agree on some issue, the king cannot resist them.

453. Al-Mas`udi said: When we speak about the king of the Khazar, we are not referring to the Khaqan. This is because in the Khazar kingdom there exists a figurehead called the Khaqan who by custom must be

completely subject to another king and share his place of residence. Thus, the Khaqan is kept deep inside the palace and never rides out or appears before elites or commoners, or leaves his place of residence, but is closeted with his womenfolk, neither commanding nor forbidding anything, and has no say whatsoever in the affairs of the kingdom. Yet the kingdom of the Khazar cannot be legitimate unless there is a Khaqan who resides in the king's capital and inside his palace. If the land is struck by drought or by some major crisis, or if some enemy attacks and they fail to ward them off or for any other similar emergency, the Khazars, elite and commoners, proceed *en masse* to the Khazar king and tell him: "We perceive an evil omen in this Khaqan and his times, and we regard him as an evil portent. Kill him or else deliver him to us so that we can kill him." The king would then deliver him to them to be killed or else would himself kill him, or might feel compassionate and defend him as being innocent and guilty of no crime. This at present is the custom of the Khazar. I do not know if this practice is ancient or modern. In my view, it may be that the title "Khaqan" belonged to a family of their notables who may have been the royal house in times past. God knows best.

454. The Khazar have boats on which passengers sail along a river which runs above the city and flows into their river from its heights. That river is called Burtas. Along the river dwell communities of settled Turks who are part of the Khazar realm. Their habitations are continuous all the way from the Khazar kingdom to the kingdom of the Bulghar. That river flows from the vicinity of the land of the Bulghar and boats sail back and forth on that river between the Bulghar and the Khazar. Burtas, as mentioned above, is the name of a nation of Turks who dwell along the river that is named after them. From their land are exported the furs of foxes, both red and black, known as Burtasiyya. Each black fur is worth one hundred

dinars though the red is less expensive. These black furs are worn by Arab and foreign kings who are proud to wear them. They consider these furs more valuable than sable, young jackal fur or other furs. Kings wear them as a headpiece, caftan or cape, and it would be hard to find a king who has no caftan or cape lined with these black Burtasiyya furs.

455. On the heights of the Khazar river, its mouth is connected to a gulf of the Black Sea called the Sea of the Rus, which only the Rus cross and who inhabit one of its coasts. The Rus are a great and pagan nation which has neither a king nor a law. Among them are traders who trade with the capital of the kingdom of the Bulghar. In their own land, the Rus have a silver mine similar to the silver mines in the mountain of Banjhir in the region of Khurasan. The capital of the Bulghar is located on the coast of the Sea of Azov and I believe that their territory lies in the Seventh Clime. They [Bulghars] are a variety of Turks and caravans travel constantly back and forth between them and the country of Khwarizm in the land of Khurasan. But the route runs through deserts inhabited and guarded by other Turks. The king of the Bulghar at this present time, that is, the year 332, is a Muslim who embraced Islam during the caliphate of al-Muqtadir Billah after the year 310 [922-3], and this happened because of a vision he had seen. He had a son who went on pilgrimage and passed by Baghdad and carried away with him as gifts from the caliph al-Muqtadir a pennant, black cloth and money. The Muslims have a mosque in that land.

456. This [Bulghar] king raids the land of Constantinople with fifty thousand horsemen or more, and conducts raids all around it reaching all the way to the land of Rome, al-Andalus, the Burgundians [*al-Burjan*], the Galicians and the Franks [*Ifranja*]. Between the land of that king and Constantinople is a two-month journey through both inhabited and desert terrain. When the Muslims set off on their naval raids from the Shami

port of Tartus, led by the commander of the frontier posts, the royal servant Thumal known as al-Dulafi, with a fleet of Shami and Basran ships in the year 312 [924-5], they crossed the mouth of the Gulf of Constantinople, then the mouth of another gulf of the Mediterranean which has no outlet, and ended up in the land of Fanadiya. There came to their rescue by land a group of Bulghar and told them that their king was in the vicinity. This proves the accuracy of our assertion above that Bulghar raids reach all the way to the Mediterranean coasts. Some Bulghars in fact went aboard the Tarsus ships and sailed with them back to Tarsus. The Bulghar are a numerous nation of great might and courage to which all nearby nations submit. A single Bulghar knight who has embraced Islam along with their king is a match for one hundred or two hundred infidel knights. The people of Constantinople can resist them only by hiding behind their wall. Similarly, all who live in that region of the world can resist them only by taking refuge behind forts or walls.

457. At certain times of the year, night in the land of the Bulghar is extremely short. Some of them claim that a man would barely finish cooking his dinner in his cauldron before morning is upon him. In our previous works we mentioned the reasons for this from the astronomical point of view and the reason why in certain localities the nights last six continuous months without any daylight, and the days six continuous months without night, this latter occurring in regions to the south. Astronomers in their almanacs have set forth the reasons for this from the astronomical point of view.

458. The Rus comprise many and diverse nations. One race among them, the most numerous, is called Al-Ludh`ana, who trade back and forth with al-Andalus, Rome, Constantinople and the Khazar. Sometime after the year 300 [912-13], some five hundred boats of the Rus, each holding about a hundred souls, arrived and entered the Black Sea where it

connects with the river of the Khazar. At that particular locality, the Khazar king had stationed well-armed troops to repel enemies approaching from that sea or from land at a point where a branch of the Khazar river flows into the Black Sea. The reason is that Ghuzz nomads come to that territory to spend winter there. It may happen that the water in that branch of the river which connects the Khazar river to the Black Sea becomes frozen, enabling the Ghuzz to cross it with their horses. This is a great body of water but nevertheless does not crack beneath them because the intense cold has made it hard as stone. These nomads then proceed to raid the lands of the Khazar. It may happen then that the Khazar king would march out to meet them if those troops stationed there cannot repel them. He would thus attempt to drive them off that body of frozen water and so defend his realm. However, the Ghuzz Turks have no means of crossing it in summer.

459. So when the Rus ships approached the Khazar garrison stationed on the mouth of the gulf, they wrote to the Khazar king requesting permission to pass through his lands and sail down his river and enter the Khazar river, thus reaching the Caspian Sea which is the sea of Jurjan, Tabaristan and other Persian lands, as already stated. The Rus undertook to give the Khazar king half the booty they gained from nations living along that sea, so he granted them permission. They then entered the gulf and reached the mouth of the river, sailing up river on that branch of water until they reached the Khazar river down which they sailed to the city of Atil.* They passed through Atil and reached the mouth of the river where it flows into the Caspian Sea. From the mouth of the river to Atil is...[lacuna]. This is a great river and a large body of water. The boats of the Rus spread out in that sea sending expeditions against the Jil, Dailam, Tabaristan, Abscun, which is on the coast of Jurjan, the land of Naffata

and towards Adharbaijan. The city of Ardabil in Adharbaijan is about a three days' journey from the sea.

460. The Rus shed a great deal of blood, seized women and children, and gained much booty, raiding, destroying and burning. Nations living around that sea were loud in grievance because they had not been accustomed since ancient times to an enemy attacking them, for only merchant ships and fishermen's boats would sail on that sea. The Rus waged war against the Jil, Dailam, the Jurjan coast and the port city of the people of Naffata belonging to the kingdom of Shirwan, known as Baku. When returning from their coastal raids, the Rus would retire to some islands near the territory of Naffata and at some miles' distance from that land. The king of Shirwan at that time was `Ali ibn al-Haitham. The people readied themselves, went aboard the boats and ships of merchants and headed towards these islands. The Rus counterattacked and thousands of Muslims were killed or drowned. The Rus remained for many months in that sea as we have described and neighboring nations could find no way to overcome them. Meanwhile all the peoples of that sea [Caspian] remained on alert and very anxious since it is a sea densely inhabited by diverse nations.

461. Having gained much booty, they grew tired of their activities and sailed towards the mouth of the Khazar river where it flows into the sea. They then corresponded with the Khazar king, sending him his share of wealth and booty, as previously stipulated between them. The Khazar king has no boats and his men have no sailing experience for otherwise great harm would have resulted to Muslims from him. The Arsiyya and other Muslims in the land of the Khazar heard about the Rus and said to the Khazar king: "Leave us to deal with these people for they have raided the lands of our fellow Muslims and have shed their blood and captured their women and children." The king was unable to prevent them but sent

word to the Rus informing them of the warlike intentions of the Muslims. The Muslims drew up their ranks and marched out to pursue the Rus as they sailed down the river. When they came face to face, the Rus left their boats to meet them. The Muslims numbered around fifteen thousand with their horses and armor. With the Muslims was a large number of Christians, inhabitants of Atil. The battle between them lasted for three days, God granted victory to the Muslims, and the Rus were put to the sword and were killed or drowned. So far as could be counted, thirty thousand Rus were killed by the Muslims on the bank of the Khazar river. Only five thousand of them escaped by taking to their boats and crossing over to the other bank of the river which is next to the land of Burtas, where they abandoned their boats and fled on land. Some were killed by the people of Burtas while others who ended up in the territory of the Muslim Bulgars were killed by them. That year, the Rus did not return to do that which we described above.

462. Al-Mas`udi said: We cited this story in order to refute those who allege that the Caspian is connected to the Azov Sea and the Straits of Constantinople. Had the Caspian been connected to the Straits of Constantinople by way of the Azov or Black Seas, the Rus would have entered it since the Caspian was their sea, as mentioned above. All nations who border the Caspian are agreed that this sea has no straits connecting it with other seas, it being a small sea whose total area can be ascertained. What we mentioned regarding the boats of the Rus is widely known among all nations in that region, together with the year in which that event took place, namely sometime after the year 300, but I no longer remember its exact date. It may be that those who claim that the Caspian is connected to the Straits of Constantinople intend to assert that the Caspian is in fact the Azov and Black Seas, which is the sea of the Bulgar and Rus. But God knows best about how this might be so.

463. The coast of Tabaristan lies on that sea [Caspian]. There is a city there called Alhum, a small harbor town near the coast and an hour's travel by day from Atil. On the coast of Jurjan on that sea is a city called Abaskun, a three days' journey from Jurjan. Along that sea also live the Jil and the Dailam. Ships and merchandise go back and forth between them and the city of Atil, reaching it through the Khazar river. In that sea, boats sail back and forth between the localities we have mentioned on its coasts and the city of Bakuh, where is found white naphtha and other substances. There is no place on earth—and God knows best---where white naphtha may be found except here, which is the coast of the kingdom of Shirwan. In this land of naphtha (*naffata*) are found mounds (*atama*) which are runnels of fire that never cease at any time and whose flames shoot upwards.

464. Opposite that coast in the sea are several islands one of which lies at a three-day journey from the coast and which has great mounds that hiss at certain seasons of the year from which huge flames spring up into the air as high as the highest mountains, lighting up most of that sea. This conflagration is seen on land from a distance of about one hundred *farsakhs*. These mounds resemble the volcano in the land of Sicily in the territory of the Franks which is seen [reading doubtful] from the territory of Ifriqiyya in the Maghrib. Of all such mounds on earth none are louder, blacker in smoke or blaze more intensely than the mounds in the kingdom of the Mahraj, followed by the mounds of Barahut valley, near Ashgha and Hadramawt in the land of Shihr, which lies between Yemen and Oman. Its noise is heard from many miles away. They throw out from their depths burning coals as large as mountains and bits of black rocks until this rises up in the air and can be felt from many miles away. These then fall back into its depths or else around them. The coals that issue from them turn red in color because of the heat of the fire. We have

discussed the reasons why these fire mounds form on earth and what their substances consist of in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

465. In that Caspian Sea are also islands facing the coast of Jurjan in which a kind of white falcon is stalked. This type of falcon is the fastest of all birds of prey to respond, and the least companionable but this type also has a weakness. This is so because the person stalking them in that island first feeds them with fish but when their food changes they become weak. Most experts on the various types of birds of prey among the Turks, Persians, Byzantines, Indians and Arabs maintain that a falcon whitish in color is, of all falcons, the fastest, most handsome, most imposing in body, most daring in heart and the easiest to train; further, that it is more powerful than all other falcons in its ascent and its ability to soar further than all others into the sky because of its body heat and its brave heart. They further assert that the difference in color among falcons is due to difference in habitat. This is why white falcons breed especially in lands where snow is plentiful such as Armenia, the Khazar land, Jurjan and regions nearby from the land of the Turks.

466. The following saying is attributed to a wise Turkish Khaqan, these being kings to whom all Turkish kings pay homage: “When the falcons of our land give birth to their chicks in the sky after feeding [reading *ra`a`*], they ascend upwards to the furthest reaches of the sky where the air is thick and cold. The chicks are then made to live among certain small animals that live there and they feed upon these animals. The chicks soon grow in strength and mature because the food acts quickly to nourish them. It may sometimes happen that the nests of these animals will be found to contain their scattered remains.” Galen says that air is hot and moist and that the cold affects it because of the strength of high altitude winds but the air is not free from growing creatures and living inhabitants. Balinas [Apollonius? Apollinarius?] has said: “It follows

logically that if the two elements of earth and water contain living things who inhabit them then the two upper elements, that is air and fire, must also contain living things that inhabit them.”

467. In the history of the caliph Al-Rashid I found the following story. He once rode out to the hunt in the region of Mosul carrying a white falcon. The falcon trembled in his hand so he let him go and the falcon ascended into the sky and was lost to view. When they despaired of his recovery, he reappeared clutching a small animal like a snake or a fish, with feathers like fish fins. The caliph ordered this creature placed in a large bowl. Returning from the hunt he summoned scholars and asked them: “Do you know of any creature that lives in the air?” Muqatil* replied: “O Commander of the Faithful, it has reached us from your ancestor `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas that the air is full of different species of animals who live in it. The nearest to us are small animals which produce eggs in the air and thick air carries these upwards and cares for them until they hatch in the form of snakes or fish which have featherless wings. These animals are food for white falcons that breed in Armenia.” So the caliph ordered the bowl to be brought out and showed them that small animal and rewarded Muqatil.

468. Several scholars in Egypt and elsewhere told me that they had seen snakes flying in the air faster than lightening, and white in color; that they fall upon a terrestrial animal and kill it; that their flight can sometimes be heard at night; and that when moving through the air they emit a sound resembling the tearing of a new garment. It may happen that a man of no understanding or some ignorant women say that that noise is produced by a witch in flight with wings made of reeds. People have many views about these subjects and the proof they resort to is what exists of living beings in the element of water. Thus, building upon this observation, one must conclude that within the two light elements, air and fire, there

necessarily exist growth and animal life too, just as they exist within the two heavy elements, earth and water.

469. Al-Mas`udi said: Wise men and kings have described the falcon and heaped praise upon it. A Turkish Khaqan said: "The falcon is brave and vicious." Kisra Anushirwan said: "The falcon is a companion who knows how to be patient and never misses his chance when it is within reach." Caesar said: "The falcon is a noble king. What he needs, he takes, and what he does not need, he forsakes." Philosophers have said: "Suffice the falcon the merit of speed which he displays in pursuit of his prey and his power to obtain his food from on high if his legs are long and his shoulders are broad. This makes him fly further towards his prey and makes him faster in flight because of his light weight. Do you not see how hawks do not attain their objectives except by flying further, faster and more powerfully and doing so repeatedly because of their long legs and thick bodies, whereas the falcon attains his object quickly because of his short wings and light body? If the pursuit grows long this baffles him until he grows more hardy in spirit. Game birds can only be hunted because of their short legs. Do you not see that the pheasant, the quail, the partridge and similar species with their short legs are more limited in what they can do?"

470. Aristogenes said: "The falcon is a bird with no covering over the eye, and what he lacks in limbs he makes up for in his toes and legs. He is the weakest of birds in body but the bravest in heart and the most courageous due to the heat in him which is greater than in all other birds. We have found its breast to be knitted with sinews and without any flesh." Agreeing with Aristogenes, Galen said: "The falcon builds its nest only in a tree entwined with thorns and with crooked and diverse branches of rough wood, seeking shelter and warding off the harm of heat or cold. When ready to hatch, it builds for itself a house-like structure

with a roof that is impermeable to rain or snow, fearing for itself and its chicks from the cold or harm.”

471. Adham ibn Muhriz has stated that the first person to amuse himself with hawks was al-Harith ibn Mu`awiya ibn Thawr al-Kindi, royal ancestor of the tribe of Kinda. One day he observed a hunter who had set a trap for birds. A hawk dived down and snatched a bird that had been trapped and began to eat it, though the hawk itself was now trapped--- hawks are known also as *al-Akdar* and *al-Ajdal*. The king was amazed at the sight and ordered the hawk to be brought to him. The hawk's wing was broken but nevertheless continued to eat the bird. The hawk was placed in some part of a house. The king saw that the hawk had become domesticated and remained where he was, showing no signs of wanting to flee. When food was thrown at him the hawk would eat it and if he saw meat he would climb onto his master's hand, to the point where, when called, he would respond and eat from his master's hand. So they felt proud to handle him. One day, he saw a pigeon and flew away from his master's hand and grasped it. So the king ordered that the hawk be used for hunting. One day, as the king was walking, a rabbit sprang up and leapt forward and the hawk flew off and pounced upon the rabbit, so the hawk was used to hunt both birds and rabbits which he killed. Thereafter, the Arabs began to use the hawk for hunting and this became common among other people.

472. As regards *shahins*, or Indian falcons, the philosopher Aristogenes says, in a book sent as a present to the caliph al-Mahdi by the Byzantine king, that a king of the Greeks called Fisian once saw a *shahin* diving down upon a water bird, pecking it then flying up again, the *shahin* doing this repeatedly. The king said: “This is a bird that is harmful, as proven by the great speed with which he dived down on the water bird, while his rapid ascent into the sky shows that it is a runaway bird.” When he

observed how well he executed his repeated attacks he was impressed and was the first to employ the *shahin* for hunting.

473. Sa`id ibn Kathir ibn `Ufair relates from Hashim ibn Khudaij the following story: Constantine, king of Macedonia, was out hunting with falcons and arrived finally at the gulf of the Black Sea which flows into the Mediterranean. He passed into a broad and spacious meadow between that gulf and the sea and saw a *shahin* pouncing on the water birds. The king was amazed by his speed, viciousness and courage in hunting and ordered it to be captured and domesticated. Constantine was thus the first to employ *shahin* falcons. He then looked at that wide meadow adorned with all kinds of flowers and said: "This is an impregnable location between a river and a sea, and is wide and spacious and suitable as a site for a city." So he built Constantinople. In later portions of our book which deal with Greek kings we shall revert to the history of this Constantine, son of Helen, and events of his life. It was he who made Christianity triumph. The above story is one version cited for the reasons behind the building of Constantinople.

474. Ibn `Ufair related from Abu Zaid al-Fihri that it was a customary ceremonial of the Ladhariqa [Vandal] kings of al-Andalus that when a king among them rode out, *shahin* falcons would fly into the air and form something like an umbrella for his army and the royal procession, flying down towards it then up again. They were trained to do so and continued this pattern of flight as long as the king was riding. When the king dismounted, the *shahins* would gather round him. A king among them called Awariq [Geiseric?] rode out once with the *shahins* arrayed above him as described. A bird was stirred to flight and a *shahin* pounced upon it and seized it. The king was impressed and trained the *shahins* to hunt. He was thus the first to employ them for hunting in the Maghrib and in al-Andalus.

475. Al Mas`udi said: Likewise, a number of experts on this subject state that the first to play with eagles were the people of the Maghrib. When the Greeks saw how powerful they were in capturing their prey and how strong their weapons the wise among them said: "These are creatures whose good compensates for their evil." It is related that Caesar once sent Chosroes an eagle as a gift and wrote informing him that the eagle performed better than the hawk whose hunting had impressed him. Chosroes then ordered it to be released, and it pursued a passing gazelle and struck it dead. Chosroes was amazed at this and went away pleased with it. He then starved the eagle intending to domesticate it and the eagle leapt upon a child of his and killed him. Chosroes said: "Caesar has injured our children without resorting to an army." Chosroes then sent a leopard as a gift to Caesar and wrote to him saying that it was an animal that killed gazelles and other wild animals but made no mention of what the eagle had done to his own child. Caesar was impressed by the handsome appearance of the leopard which appeared to resemble a panther, so he ignored it. The leopard then devoured some of his bodyguard. Caesar said: "Chosroes has hunted us after we had hunted him, so we are even."

We have been led away to speak of birds of prey when discussing the sea and islands of Jurjan. We shall revert briefly to the subject of falcons and other birds of prey when we come to speak of Greek kings.

476. Let us now go back to speak of al-Bab wa'l Abwab and nations lying beyond the wall and Mount Caucasus. We mentioned earlier that the most vicious of kingdoms among nations nearby is the kingdom of Khidhan [Khidhaq]. Their king in this year of 332 is a Muslim who claims he is an Arab from the Qahtan tribe and is called Salifan. There is no other Muslim in his kingdom except him, his family and his children, and my view is that Salifan is a title of the kings of that territory.

Between the kingdom of Khidhan and al-Bab wa'l Abwab are groups of Muslim Arabs who know no other language but Arabic and live there in thickets, forests, valleys and rivers and in villages. They have settled in that territory ever since the early conquests of these lands by nomadic Arabs. These live next to the kingdom of Khidhan but cannot be subjugated because of the trees and rivers. They live at a distance of about three miles from al-Bab wa'l Abwab and the people of that city come to their aid.

477. Next to the kingdom of Khidhan near the Caucasus Mountain and al-Sarir is a Muslim king known as Barzaban and his country is known as Kurj*. They are tent dwellers. Each king who rules this kingdom is called Barzaban. Next to the kingdom of Barzaban is a realm called Ghumiq. These are Christians who follow no kings but have their own leaders and live in peace with the kingdom of Al-Lan. Next to them in the direction of al-Sarir and the Mountain is a kingdom called Zirikaran*, a word which means "workers in coats of mail" because most of them work in fashioning coats of mail, stirrups, bridles, swords and other iron instruments. They are of diverse religions: Muslims, Christians and Jews. Their country is rugged and thus impenetrable by other nations.

478. Adjoining these is the kingdom of al-Sarir [Avars] whose king is called Filan Shah. He is a Christian. Earlier in this work we mentioned that he is a descendant of Bahram Jur. He was called "Owner of the Throne" (*Sahib al-Sarir*) because Yazdajird, the last king of the Sasanid dynasty, when defeated and in flight, sent ahead his golden throne, treasuries and money with a descendant of Bahram Jur in order to convey them to that kingdom where they were to be kept under guard until Yazdajird's arrival. Yazdajird went on to Khurasan and was killed there. This happened during the caliphate of `Uthman ibn `Affan, as will be mentioned in this work. The man entrusted with all the treasures settled

down in that kingdom and took it over, passing it on to his progeny. So he was called the “Owner of the Throne”. The capital of his kingdom is known as Khunzakh and he rules over twelve thousand villages and can enslave any person in them he wants. His country is rugged and thus impregnable and comprises one mountain range of the Caucasus Mountain. He conducts raids against the Khazar and overpowers them because they live on a plain whereas he lives on a mountain.

479. Next to this kingdom is the kingdom of al-Lan* whose king is called Karkundaj, this being the commonest name of their kings, just as Filan Shah is the commonest name of the kings of al-Sarir. The capital of this kingdom of al-Lan is called Maghas, which means “that which repels.” The king has palaces and parks elsewhere than in this city, and he moves his place of residence from one to another. A marriage alliance exists between him and the king of al-Sarir, as each has married the other’s sister. After the coming of Islam and during the days of the Abbasid state, the kings of al-Lan had embraced Christianity, having been pagans before that. After the year 320 [932] they apostasized from Christianity and expelled all bishops and priests in their country. These had been sent to them by the king of the Byzantines. Between the kingdom of al-Lan and the Caucasus Mountain is a fortress and a bridge across a great valley. The fortress is called the “Gate of al-Lan” [Narikala] and was built in ancient times by an early Persian king called Isbandiar ibn Bistasf. He stationed troops at that fortress to prevent al-Lan from crossing over into the Caucasus Mountain. The al-Lan have no other route they can use except the bridge beneath the fortress, and the fortress is built on a hard and solid boulder. There is no way to capture it or to have access to it except with the consent of its guardians. The fortress built upon this rock has a spring of sweet water which is located in its midst flowing from the top of the rock. It is a fortress that is widely known to be one of the most

impregnable in the world. The Persians make mention of it in their poetry and how Isbandiar ibn Bistaf built it.

480. Isbandiar waged many wars in the east against diverse nations. He it was who marched to the furthest reaches of the lands of the Turks, destroying the city of Sufr. This was a city totally impregnable and the Persians use it in their proverbs. The achievements of Isbandiar and what we have mentioned here are related in a book called *al-Baikar* which Ibn al-Muqaffa` translated into Arabic. When Maslama ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan* arrived in that region and overpowered its people, he settled some Arabs in that fortress who guard that place until the present time. It may happen that wages and food is conveyed by land to these guardians from the frontier city of Tiflis, this being a journey of about five days. Even if there is only one man in that fortress he can prevent all the kings of the infidels from passing through that locality, so elevated is that fortress and so commanding is it over the road, bridge and valley. The king of al-Lan marches at the head of thirty thousand horsemen and is known among kings for his immense power, courage and wise political conduct. His kingdom has contiguous habitations such that when one cock crows all other cocks in the kingdom answer it---so closely connected are the settled areas one to the next.

481. Next to the kingdom of Al-Lan is a nation called Kashak [Circassians] who live between the Caucasus Mountain and the Mediterranean Sea. They are a wholesome and clean nation that follows the Magian religion. Of all the nations we have mentioned inhabiting that region of the world there is no nation that has clearer skins, purer colors, more handsome men, more comely women, a more shapely physique, more delicate waists, more prominent buttocks and backsides or more attractive figures than this nation. Their women are noted for the charm of their intimacy and they wear white garments and Byzantine silk

brocade, *ciclatoun* and other types of gold-threaded silk. In their land may be found kinds of garments made of linen, one type of which is called *al-Tala*, which is finer than Dabiqi linen, more hardy and longer-lasting. A garment of this kind costs ten dinars. This cloth is exported to Muslim countries nearby. These kinds of garments may also be exported by neighboring nations but the finest in quality is exported from this particular nation.

482. Al-Lan dominate over this nation which cannot revenge itself upon them, but they take refuge from al-Lan in fortresses they possess on the seashore. There is some dispute as to which sea this nation is on. Some say it is the Mediterranean, others the Black Sea, but they are near by sea to the territory of Trebizond, and commerce by shipping is continuous between the two lands. The reason why the Kashak nation is weaker than al-Lan is that they have neglected to appoint a king who would unify them. Had they been of one word, neither al-Lan nor any other nation would be able to resist them. “Kashak” is a Persian word meaning haughtiness and boasting. Thus, when a person is haughty the Persians refer to him as “Kash.”

483. Next to this nation on that sea is another nation known as “The Seven Countries”. This is a large nation, hardy and inaccessible. I do not know its religion nor has news reached me of their beliefs. Next to it is a great nation separated from the Kashak by a mighty river like the Euphrates and which flows into the Black Sea. Along that river is the land of Trebizond. The nation is known as Irm. They have an odd appearance and their views are pagan. Of this country which borders the sea a curious story is related. A huge fish comes to them every year and they help themselves to its flesh. When it returns, it turns its other side to them and they help themselves again while the flesh removed the first

time grows once again. The story of this fish is very widely known in those infidel lands.

484. Next to this nation is a shoreline lying between four mountains, each inaccessible and rising high in the sky. Between these four mountains is a distance of approximately one hundred miles of desert. In the middle of this desert is a circular dwelling as if drawn by a compass. The circumference is a trench carved in solid and sunken rock as in a perfect circle. That sunken circumference is about fifty miles in length. It is fashioned in one piece that sinks downwards like a wall built from below upwards, with a depth of about two miles. There is no way to reach the bottom level of that dwelling. At night may be seen many fires in different sections of it and by day can be seen villages and habitations and rivers running between these villages, together with humans and dumb beasts. However, they appear to have slender bodies because of the depth of that location. It is not known to which nation these people belong nor can they ascend in any direction while those living above cannot descend to them in any way whatsoever.

485. Beyond the four mountains on the seashore is another sunken but not deep depression. In it are found thickets and forests with types of monkeys with straight backs and round faces. Most resemble human faces and shapes but they are hairy. It might happen on rare occasions that if one of these monkeys is tricked and captured, it will turn out to be exceedingly intelligent and perceptive but has no tongue to speak with though it understands all that is communicated to it by signs. It might also happen that one of them is carried away to be presented to some king of a nation where the monkey is taught to stand over the king with a fly whisk at mealtimes because of the monkey's peculiar knowledge of poisons in food and drink. The king brings his food near the monkey who smells it and then some food is thrown to the monkey. If the monkey eats the food,

the king eats it but if the monkey refrains the king knows it is poisoned and is on his guard. Most kings of China and India use monkeys for that purpose. We have mentioned in this book the report of the Chinese delegation who came to the caliph al-Mahdi and what they mentioned to him regarding the benefits of monkeys to their kings at meal times. We also mentioned the report concerning monkeys in the Yemen and the iron tablet written by Solomon son of David as a covenant for the monkeys of Yemen. We further mentioned their story with the governor of Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan and the letter that the governor wrote to his master where he describes a great monkey with the tablet around his neck. Among monkeys of the world no breed is more intelligent or more wily than these.

486. Monkeys live in warm regions of the earth like Nubia and the upper reaches of the lands of the Abyssinians near the heights of the source of the Nile. These are known as Nubian monkeys. They have small waists and faces and are dark but not black in color, like Nubians. These are the monkeys found with monkey handlers. They climb up a spear and reach its top. Some are found in the north in thickets and forests as in the lands of the Slavs (*Saqaliba*) and other nearby nations. These resemble the monkeys we have described and their similarity to humans. Some monkeys are found in the gulfs of the land of Zabij in the China Sea and in the kingdom of the Mahraj, king of the islands. We have already stated that his realm equals that of the Chinese king, and his kingdom is located between the kingdom of Ballahara and that of China. These monkeys are well known in that region of the earth and known to be large in number in these gulfs, and they are perfect in form.

487. Some monkeys in chains were presented to the caliph al-Muqtadir Billah. Among them were some with beards and mustaches and they varied in age: adults, old and young. Included in those presents also were

large snakes and other wondrous gifts from the seas. All these presents were carried by Ahmad ibn Hilal, the emir of Oman at that time. These monkeys are well known to sailors from Siraf and Oman who sail to the lands of Kala and Zabij, and how these monkeys use trickery to hunt crocodiles from deep waters. Al-Jahiz, however, states that crocodiles are found only in the Nile of Egypt and the river of Mihran al-Sind. But we have earlier in this work mentioned what has been said about this subject, and specified where crocodiles may be found.

488. As for Yemen, there is no dispute among those who have entered that land that monkeys are found in numerous localities and in countless numbers. Some are found in Nakhla Valley between the lands of al-Janad and Zabid, whose governor [i.e. Zabid] in this year of 332 is Ibrahim ibn Ziyad, companion of al-Harmala. Between this valley and Zabid is a day's journey and between it and al-Janad a journey of a day or more. This valley is dense with habitation and many watercourses pour into it. It has many banana trees and many monkeys, and it lies between two mountains. Monkeys move in herds, each led by a monkey known as a *hazar*, which is a great masterful male monkey acting as leader. Monkeys might give birth in one delivery to ten or twelve infants just as a sow gives birth to many piglets. A female monkey carries some of her children as a human mother carries her children while the male monkey carries the rest. They have assemblies and meeting places where a number of them congregate and they are heard speaking and talking to each other and whispering. Female monkeys, like human females, keep themselves apart from the males. If someone hears the conversing of these female monkeys at night but does not see them among those mountains and trees and banana plantations, he would be in no doubt that they were humans because of their great number by day and night.

489. In no region where monkeys are found are there monkeys more handsome, more cunning or more swift to learn than the monkeys of Yemen. The Yemenis call the monkey *rabbah*. Both males and females have combed heads of hair, some of which is as black as hair can be. When seated, they sit in ranks below their chief and imitate humans in all their actions. Some Yemeni monkeys are found in the land of Ma'rib between San`a and the fort of Kahlan in certain wildernesses there [reading *hunak*] and they look like clouds in these mountains and steppes, so numerous are they.

490. The Kahlan just mentioned is one of the fortresses (*makhalif*) of Yemen in which resides As`ad ibn Ya`fur, king of Yemen at this present time. He is secluded from people except his close intimates, and is a descendant of the kings of Himyar. He has at his command of men and horses about fifty thousand mercenaries who receive their wages each month. The time for disbursing these wages is called *nuzla*. The troops gather together then come down from these fortresses, called *makhalif*. That man, As`ad, waged war in Yemen against the Qaramita* and the ruler of Mudhaikhira, `Ali ibn al-Fadl, after the year 290. `Ali was a figure of great importance in Yemen until he was killed and Yemen fell under this man As`ad.

491. There are many places in Yemen where monkeys are found, as also in other regions of the earth. We refrain from mentioning them here since we have already stated the reason why they are found in certain regions of earth and not others and also reports concerning the *nasnas* in our work *Akhbar al-Zaman*. The same holds true for `arabid, singular `irbid, which is a type of serpent found, it is alleged, in the territory of Hajr in the Yamama. The caliph al-Mutawakkil had at the start of his caliphate asked Hunain ibn Ishaq* to arrange to have some specimens of *nasnas* and `irbid sent over. Only two *nasnas* survived the journey to Samarra'

and Hunain failed to devise a way to transport a *`irbid* from Yamama. This is because when a *`irbid* is carried away from Yamama and when a certain well known point is reached on the journey, the *`irbid* expires in the container in which it is being transported. The people of Yamama make use of it in warding off snakes, scorpions and other crawlers just as the people of Sijistan make use of the hedgehog. This is because the people of Sijistan have covenanted since ancient times that no hedgehog is to be killed in their country, for it is a land of much sand and was built up by the Two-horned king [Alexander] during his expeditions. It is surrounded by many sand dunes which are closed off with wooden planks and reeds. The land has numerous and diverse kinds of snakes and were it not for the many hedgehogs the people there would have perished.

492. So too is the case with the people of Egypt in the Sa`id region and elsewhere. They have a small animal called *`ara`is* [mongoose] which is larger than a rat but smaller than a weasel, red in color with a white belly. Were it not for this small animal, snakes of the *thu`ban* variety, a species of large snakes, would have prevailed over the people of Egypt. A *thu`ban* wraps itself around this animal which expels wind upon it so the *thu`ban* desists from the stench. This is the characteristic of this animal. In the eastern portions of the earth there exists a number of peculiar natural characteristics in their lands, seas, animal and plant life and in their minerals, and the same is true of the western, southern and northern portions. We have mentioned elsewhere the nature of each quarter of the earth but mentioning them here would divert us from the purpose we have set for ourselves.

493. Let us therefore return to what we had been discussing earlier, namely the nations that surround al-Bab wa`l Abwab, the wall, the Caucasus Mountain, and the lands of Khazar and al-Lan. Lying to the west of the lands of Khazar and al-Lan are four Turkish nations all

descended from a single ancestor in their genealogies, and in their manner of life are both settled and nomadic. They possess great might and courage and each nation has its own king. Each kingdom is a few days' journey in extent and some of their kingdoms are adjacent to the Black Sea. They raid as far as the land of Rome and regions near to al-Andalus and overpower all nations there. Between them and the king of the Khazar there is a treaty as also with the ruler of al-Lan. Their lands adjoin the lands of the Khazar. The first of these nations is called Bajnai [Capni]; next to it is a nation called Bajghird [Magyars]; next a nation called Bajnak [Peceneg], the mightiest of these nations; next is a nation called Nawkarda, whose kings are nomads.

494. These nations waged wars against the Byzantines in and after the years 320. On the frontier with these nations, the Byzantines had a great city called Walandar [Vunundur?] densely inhabited and impregnably situated between the mountains and the sea. Its inhabitants constituted a barrier against the above-mentioned nations. The Turks had no access to the Byzantine lands because the mountains, the sea and that city prevented it. Wars broke out among these nations when a dispute arose among them over a Muslim merchant from Ardabil who was a guest of one of these nations. Another nation defrauded him of his rights so a dispute arose among them. The Byzantines in Walandar then raided Turkish lands while the Turks were otherwise preoccupied, enslaved a large number and captured much booty. The news then reached these nations while busy with their own civil wars so they agreed to unite, forgave each other the blood that was shed and, united, they marched on Walandar, numbering some sixty thousand horsemen. That number of horsemen collected together without any proper assemblage or mobilization. Had they mobilized, they would have numbered some one hundred thousand horsemen.

495. When the news reached Romanos king of the Byzantines at this time, which is the year 332, he sent against them twelve thousand Christian converts in Arab garb, mounted on horses and carrying spears, to which he added fifty thousand Byzantines. The army reached the city of Walandar in eight days, camped behind the city and proceeded to fight their enemy. The Turks had already killed a large number of Walandar's inhabitants who had taken refuge behind their walls until the Byzantine reinforcements arrived. When the four Turkish kings ascertained the number of converts and Byzantines opposing them, they sent word to their countries to collect all Muslim merchants found in their lands who had come via the lands of Khazar, al-Bab, al-Lan and elsewhere. Among the four nations were some people who had embraced Islam and who did not make common cause with them except when fighting infidels. When the armies drew up for battle, and the converts lined up in front of the Byzantines, out came the Muslim merchants who accompanied the Turks and called upon the converts to embrace Islam. They explained that if they obtained assurances of safety from the Turks, the latter would conduct them to the land of Islam. They refused and the two sides began to fight. The converts and Byzantines were victorious because they outnumbered the Turks and then reached their battle stations.

496. The four kings of the Turks then held a council. The king of Bajnak said: "Put me in charge for tomorrow's battle." The other kings agreed. When morning came, he placed many battle squares on the right wing, each square holding one thousand, and did the same on the left wing. When the battle lines faced each other the squares left the right wing and aimed their arrows at the Byzantine center then moved to the left wing, while the squares of the left wing aimed their arrows at the Byzantine center and moved to the places vacated by the right squares. The arrows kept falling and the squares kept going back and forth like millstones

while the center and left and right wings of the Turks remained steadfast as the squares did their work, one thousand followed by another. This is because whoever left the Turkish right wing would first shoot their arrows at the Byzantine left wing, pass by and shoot at their right wing and end by shooting at their center. Whoever left the left wing would shoot at the Byzantine right wing, pass by and shoot their left wing and end by shooting at their center. The squares would thus be constantly meeting at the Byzantine center as we have described above. When the converted troops and the Byzantines saw the disorder in their ranks and the uninterrupted volley of arrows, they attacked with their ranks in disarray while the Turkish ranks remained firm. The Byzantine squares broke rank so all the Turks shot their arrows in one volley which led to the defeat of the Byzantines. Following that shower of arrows, the Turks then charged and overpowered the Byzantine ranks, for their squares had remained disciplined because they had been well arrayed. The Turkish squares then advanced running from right and left, the Byzantines were put to the sword, the horizon turned dark, and loud was the neighing of horses.

497. Sixty thousand Christian converts and Byzantines were killed, to the point where it was possible to climb over their bodies to reach the city walls. The city was then captured and put to the sword for some days and its inhabitants were enslaved. After three days, the Turks left the city and headed for Constantinople breaking through inhabited areas, meadows and villages, killing and enslaving, until they reached the walls of Constantinople. There they remained for about forty days selling captive women and children in return for a garment or a silk robe, and put to the sword all the men, sparing none. In some cases they even killed the women and children. They also conducted raids all the way to the Slav territory and to Rome, then continued these raids at this present time

reaching the frontier posts of al-Andalus, the Franks and the Galicians. These Turkish raids on the territory of Constantinople and other kingdoms just mentioned continue up to this present time.

498. Let us now turn back to speak of the Caucasus Mountain, the wall and al-Bab wa'l Abwab, since we have already made mention in general terms of the history of the nations that inhabit that region. Among these nations is one that lies next to the territory of al-Lan and is called Abkhaz. This is a Christian nation and has a king at this present time, though the king of al-Lan holds sway over them. Their land adjoins the Caucasus Mountain. Next to the realm of Abkhaz is the realm of Jurziyya [Georgia], where lives a mighty nation, Christian in religion, called Jurzan and has a king at this present time called Manbaghi. The capital of this king is a locality known as the "Temple of the Two-horned." In former days, the Abkhaz and Jurziyya used to pay tax to the ruler of the frontier city of Tiflis, ever since the city was conquered and settled by Muslims. This state of affairs lasted until the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil. In Tiflis there was a man called Ishaq ibn Isma`il and he and the Muslims with him held sway over neighboring nations who submitted to him and paid him tax, and his power over the nations there increased. This state of affairs lasted until the caliph al-Mutawakkil dispatched the general Bugha, who besieged Tiflis and waged war against it until he captured it with the sword and put Ishaq to death because he had come to dominate that region. It would take too long to narrate the history of that man Ishaq but that history is well known among the inhabitants of that region and others who concern themselves with world history. In my view, he was a man of Quraish from the Umayyad clan or else a client of theirs. Thus, the awe in which the Muslims were held in Tiflis vanished from that time to the present day. Neighboring kings refused to submit to them and seized most of the countryside of Tiflis, while the route from the Muslim

realm to the frontier city of Tiflis was cut by infidel nations which now surround that city. Its people are mighty and courageous though surrounded by the kingdoms mentioned above.

499. Next to the kingdom of Jurzan is one called al-Samsakha, a Christian kingdom with some pagans who have no king. Next, and between Tiflis and the fortress of Bab al-Lan mentioned above, is a kingdom called al-Sanariyya*, whose king is called Kuriskus, the name of most of their kings. They follow the Christian religion. These Sanariyya claim that they are Arabs from the tribe of Nizar ibn Ma`add and from Mudar, and that they are a clan of the `Uqail tribe who settled in that region from ancient times. They hold sway over many nations in that locality. I once encountered in the land of Ma`rib in Yemen some individuals from `Uqail who resembled Madhhij in all respects, with no difference between them in customs and manners because their viewpoints are undeviating and identical. They have horses and might. Throughout Yemen, there are no descendants of Nizar ibn Ma`add except that clan of `Uqail, save for the descendants of Anmar ibn Nizar ibn Ma`add and their entry into the Yemen as recorded in history, the story of Jarir ibn `Abdallah al-Bajali with the Prophet, and the story of the clan Bajila. The Sanariyya claim that they split off from the above-mentioned `Uqail in the land of Ma`rib in ancient times, citing a lengthy report about that event.

500. Next to the Sanariyya is the kingdom of Shakki, who are Christian with some Muslim merchants and other craftsmen among them. Their king at the time of writing our book is called Adarnarsa ibn Hammam. Next comes Qabala, its principal city being Muslim while the inhabited countryside is Christian. Their king at this time of writing our book is called `Anbasa al-A`war. He provides refuge to bandits, riffraff and criminals. This kingdom adjoins the above-mentioned kingdom of

Muqaniyya which is now subjugated and is part of the kingdom of Shirwan Shah. This country known as al-Muqaniyya is not the same as the one which lies on the Caspian coast.

501. At that time Muhammad ibn Yazid known as Shirwan Shah was the king of Laizan as were his ancestors before him, while the king of Shirwan was `Ali ibn al-Haitham. When `Ali died, Muhammad took over Shirwan as noted earlier, killed his paternal uncles and seized the territories already mentioned. He has a fortress in the Caucasus Mountain called Niyal. Among fortresses of the world, none is more impregnable save one in the land of Persia near the territory of Siraf on the Persian coast at a locality called Zirbad, belonging to the land of `Abdullah ibn `Umara. That fortress is called Dikdan. There are many wondrous fortresses in the world and Abu'l Hasan al-Mada'ini has devoted a whole book to these fortresses called *The Book of Reports about Fortresses* where he mentions some reports concerning some of them. We too in our *Akhbar al-Zaman* have set down a history of these fortresses.

502. Al-Mas`udi said: This in summary is a history of the city of al-Bab wa'l Abwab, the wall, the Caucasus Mountain and of the nations inhabiting that region. In our *Akhbar al-Zaman* we set down a shortened account of their history, characteristics, and conduct of war along with the tricks employed by their kings. All that we have mentioned of their histories and of the description of their kingdoms is merely a report of a factual state of affairs that direct witnesses can confirm, and is well known to anyone who has visited their lands.

503. In his work entitled *Routes and Kingdoms*, `Ubaydullah ibn Khurradadbeh* writes that the distance from point A to point B is such and such but gives no information about kings and kingdoms. There is nothing to be gained from knowing about distances and routes for this is the job of court messengers and mail and post carriers. He also mentions

that the taxes gathered from the country districts of Iraq are such and such amounts of money, but these sums rise and fall and decrease and increase depending on circumstances and changing times. He further states that Mount `Arj, which is between Mecca and Medina, is connected to al-Sham and even to Mount Keldag in the territory of Antioch and also to the Amanus. This is a strange assertion. Did he not know that all parts of the earth are connected to each other uninterruptedly and are not distant from one another? The earth, however, is full of depressions, highlands and curvatures. And yet his book is the best that may be cited on this subject. So too is his book of history and his discussion of pre-Islamic nations. I should note here that Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsi, companion of the caliph al-Mu`tadid, composed for his master a book on this subject where he dealt in brief with world history, most of whose content is quite different from the history of Ibn Khurradadbeh. My opinion is that this is a book falsely ascribed to al-Sarakhsi because, as a scholar, he is far more accomplished than what is to be found in that book.

504. Were it not for the Almighty's gracious wisdom, omnipotence and mercy towards His creatures by granting good fortune to those Persian Kings who built the city of al-Bab wa'l Abwab, the wall on land, sea and mountain and the fortresses, together with the nations they settled in those regions and the kings they appointed to rule them----were this not so, the kings of al-Jurz, al-Lan, al-Sarir, the Turks and other nations mentioned above would have invaded the lands of Bardha`a, al-Ran, Bailaqan, Adharbaijan, Zanjan, Abhar, Qazwin, Hamadhan, al-Dinawar, Nihawand and others such as the two citadels of Kufa and Basra and on to Iraq. However, the Almighty repelled them in the manner set forth above. This is especially fortunate at the present time when Islam is weak and non-existent, when the Byzantines have gained the upper hand over

the Muslims, when the pilgrimage is in disarray, *jihad* has died out, roads are cut off and treacherous, and when each region has fallen under the rule of a strongman. This resembles the period following the death of Alexander when his realm broke up into separate kingdoms and kings until the coming of Ardashir ibn Babik ibn Sasan. It was he who brought about concord and unity, reestablished security among his subjects and restored prosperity. This lasted until God sent the Prophet Muhammad who destroyed the symbols of idolatry and erased the rituals of other religions. Islam continued on its path of triumph until the present time when its pillars and foundations began to totter, this being the year 332 in the caliphate of Abu Ishaq al-Muttaqi Billah, Commander of the Faithful. May God help us for the situation we are in today.

505. Many reports exist about the wondrous buildings in the city of al-Bab built by Kisra Qubadh ibn Fairuz who is the father of Kisra Anushirwan. Such for instance is the place called Musqat in that city which is built in stone or the walls that Kisra built in the land of Shirwan and known as the “mud wall”, or else the stone wall known as “al-Barmaki” which is connected to the land of Bardha`a. We have omitted to mention these structures here, having mentioned them in our earlier works.

506. As for the river Kurr [Kura], it originates in the country of Jurzan in the kingdom of Jurjin, passes through the land of Abkhaz, reaches the frontier city of Tiflis, divides in the middle and flows in the land of the Siyawardiyya. These latter are a kind of Armenians of great might and courage as already mentioned when speaking of their history. The halberds known as *Siyawardi* are named after them. These weapons are used by Indian (*Sayabija*) and other non-Arab troops. The river Kurr flows on until it is at a distance of three miles from Bardha`a and runs into Bardaj in the district of Bardha`a. Into it then flows the river Rass

near Sannara. The river Rass [Aras] originates from near the city of Trebizond until it runs into the Kurr. The two rivers merge and then pour into the Caspian Sea. The river Rass runs between the country of Badhdh, the country of Babik al-Khurrami* in the land of Adharbaijan, and a mountain known as Abu Musa in the country of al-Ran. This is a mountain inhabited by diverse nations who live in the country of al-Ran, which is a region of the earth. The Rass river passes by the city of Warthan and ends where we have described, that is, where it flows into the Kurr river at a village known as Sannara. These rivers we have also described in our previous works.

507. Then there is a river known as Isbidh Rudh [Safid Rud], which means the “white river” though Persian and Arabic transpose noun and adjective. It flows through the land of the Dailam beneath the fortress known as Sallar, who is the son of Uswar the Dailamite, one of the Dailam kings. At this time of writing he has gained ascendancy in the land of Adharbaijan. The river then runs from the Dailam to the Jil after whom the territory of Jilan is named. In the territory of the Dailam another river flows into it called Shah Rudh, meaning “king of rivers”, so called because of its whiteness, softness and purity. All of these then flow into the Jil Sea which is the sea of the Dailam, Khazar and other nations living around that sea [Caspian]. Along the banks of these rivers live those Dailam and Jil who have grown in power and have come to rule a large territory.

508. Now that we have dealt with the histories of the Caucasus Mountain and the nations who live in or near it, together with the history of al-Bab wa'l Abwab and the Caspian Sea, let us turn to the kings of the Suryan who in almanacs and ancient histories are counted as the first kings of the world. They were followed by the kings of Mosul and Nineveh then by the kings of Babil who built the earth, dug canals, grafted trees, leveled

rough terrain and improved roads. These will be followed by First Persians known as Khudhahan, meaning the “Lords”, up to the reign of Afridun; then by the Iskan up to the reign of Dara son of Dara, who is Darius, and these are called the Saknun; then by kings of diverse principalities known as the Ashghan; then by Second Persians, the Sasanids; then the Greeks and Romans. We will also mention those who followed them among western kings and nations, the blacks, and Egypt and Alexandria and other regions of the earth, God willing. There is no strength but in God.

Chapter 18

An account of the Suryan kings* with a brief history

509. Prudent historians of the kings of the world mention that the first kings of the world after the Flood are the Suryan. There is some dispute concerning them and the Nabat*. Some believe that the Suryan are the Nabat, others that they are brothers of the progeny of Mash ibn Nabit while still others hold different views, depending on the divergent opinions of people regarding past generations and ancient eras. The first king among them was a man called Shusan. In the histories of the Suryan and Nabat he was the first to place a crown on his head. The other kings of the earth submitted to him, and he reigned for sixteen years causing havoc on earth, corrupting the land and shedding blood. His son Barbar reigned after him for twenty years before his death. He was followed by Ahrimun for ten years. He laid down city plans and organized the countryside, acting efficiently and managing his kingdom with skill, bringing about prosperity to his land. When his affairs were put in order and his kingship was well established, a king of India heard about the might, courage and prosperity of these people and that they were planning to conquer other kingdoms.

510. That Indian king had conquered neighboring Indian realms who had submitted to him and accepted his rule. It is said that his kingdom bordered Sind and India. So he marched towards the lands of Bust, Ghaznin, Baghnin and the country of al-Dawar along the river called Hirmand. This is the river of Sijistan and the river ends at a distance of four *farsakhs* from it. Along its banks are located the villages of Sijistan, their orchards, palm trees and parks at this time which is the year 332. This river is known as the Bust River in which boats sail from there to Sijistan carrying foodstuffs and other items. From Bust to Sijistan is a distance of one hundred *farsakhs*. The land of Sijistan is a land of wind and sand, a land known for its wind-driven mills* which transport water from wells to irrigate the orchards. There are no people on earth who use the wind more than they do. God knows best.

511. There is a dispute regarding the origin of that river known as Hirmand*. Some say it originates from springs in the mountains of Sind and India while others say it has the same origin as the river Kank [Ganges] which is the major river of India. This flows past many mountains of Sind and is a gushing and fast-running river. Along its banks most Indians torment themselves with weapons and drown themselves in it, out of an ascetical attitude to this world and a desire to leave it. They head for a locality on the upper reaches of this river called Kank where there are high mountains and ancient trees. There are men seated there with weapons and swords hanging from the trees and bits of wood. The Indians visit them from faraway kingdoms and countries and listen to these men who are posted on the bank of the river. These men speak to them about the need to be ascetical in this world and to desire something else. So the Indians fling themselves from the mountain heights and fall upon the ancient trees and the swords and weapons attached to them and are cut in pieces. These pieces then flow into the

river. What we have mentioned here is a well-known fact about their customary conduct along that river.

512. In that locality is also found a type of tree which is one of the wonders and rarities among plants of this world. It emerges from the ground in the form of entwined branches as pretty as any tree with leaves. It rises upwards as high as any palm tree then bends downwards in its entirety and sinks back into the ground little by little, reaching a depth equal to its earlier height until it disappears completely from view. It then throws up branches just as we described its emergence above, rises into the air then bends down again, there being no difference between the area it occupies by its rise and spread in the air and its disappearance beneath the ground. Were it not that the Indians have appointed people to cut it and keep an eye on it for a reason they mention and a matter which they describe as happening in the future, that tree would have taken over their land completely. Reports exist about this type of tree which would be too long to relate here, but these are well known to those who have visited that land, seen that tree or heard about it from others.

513. As already mentioned, the Indians torment themselves in all sorts of ways. They believe that what they will obtain of blessings in a time that is to come is commensurate with what they have done already by way of tormenting themselves in this world. Some will go to the royal gate and ask permission to burn themselves. That person will then roam the markets, a raging fire having being lit for him with people appointed to keep it aflame. He will walk in the markets preceded by drums and cymbals, his body covered by strips of silk which he has himself torn off. Around him are family and kin and on his head is a garland of sweet basil. He tears the scalp from his head and places burning coals on it together with sulfur and sandarac and walks about, with the crown of his

head aflame and the stench of his sizzling brain, chewing on betel leaves and areca nut.

514. In their country, betel leaves grow as small as the smallest basil leaves. If these are chewed with lime moistened with areca---this incidentally is now prevalent among the people of Mecca, the Hijaz and Yemen instead of chewing clay, and pharmacists use this recipe to treat tumors and some call it areca---if chewed as described, it tightens the gums, strengthens the roots of the teeth, refreshes the mouth, removes harmful moisture, stimulates the appetite and sexual desire, causes teeth to be as red as pomegranate seeds, causes the spirit to become joyful and charitable, strengthens the body and causes it to emit pleasant and mellow odors. The Indians, both elite and commoners, consider white teeth to be ugly and avoid consorting with people who do not chew what we have described.

515. When the self tormentor has walked through the markets and arrives at last at that fire, caring for nothing and neither changing his stride nor showing any faint-heartedness as he steps forward, some self tormentors, as they face the fire, now turned into a huge mound of glowing embers, will grasp a dagger, called by them *jari*, and plunge it in his chest. I was once in the land of Saimur in India, in the territory of al-Lar [Gujarat] in the kingdom of Ballahara. The year was 304 [916-17]. The king of Saimur was known as Janj and at that time that land had some ten thousand Muslim residents: Bayasira, Sirafis, Omanis, Basrans, Baghdadis and others from diverse countries who had married and settled in that country. Among them were many prominent merchants like Musa ibn Ishaq al-Sindburi while the *hazma* over Muslims was then held by Abu Sa`id Ma`ruf ibn Zakariyya. By *hazma* is meant the headship of Muslims. This is because the king appoints a man from among their notables as head of the Muslim community who settles their legal

disputes. The term “Bayasira” used above refers to Muslims born in the land of India and are called by this name; singular “Baysar”.

516. It was then that I witnessed an Indian youth who had roamed the markets as already described. When he approached the fire, he seized a dagger, placed it over his heart and tore his chest upon. He then placed his left hand inside his body, got hold of his liver and tore a piece out, talking all the while, cut that piece with the dagger and handed it over to his companions as a sign of contempt for death and joy over his journey to the other world. He then threw himself into the fire. If a king among them dies or is killed, many people will burn themselves because of his death. These are called “Balanjariyya”, singular “Balanjar”, which means “those who are faithful to him and die at his death or live when he lives.” Remarkable stories are told about India which shock the souls of those who hear them, and about the kinds of torments and self inflicted deaths which cause bodily pain and goose flesh when recounted. We have related many remarkable stories about India in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

517. Let us now return to the report concerning the king of India and his march to the land of Sijistan, aiming to reach the Suryani realm, and turn away from what we copied of Indian history. That Indian king was called Zunbil, this being the name of every Indian king up to the present time, that is, the year 332. Great battles were fought between the Indians and the Suryan lasting about a year. The Suryan king was killed and the Indian occupied all that realm seizing all that was in it. Some kings of the west then marched against him and defeated him, restoring the kingdom of the Suryan. They then chose as their king a man called Tustar, son the slain king, and he ruled for eight years before he died. Following him was Ahrimun who reigned for twelve years, then his son Huria who reigned for twenty-two years. Huria increased prosperity and planted trees.

Following him was Marub, who seized the throne and reigned for fifteen, some say twenty-two years. He was followed by Azur and Khalanjas, said to have been brothers, who ruled well and supported each other as kings.

518. It is said that one of these two kings was sitting one day and saw that a bird had hatched on the heights of his palace. The bird was beating its wings and screeching. The king observed the scene closely and saw a snake slithering upwards towards the nest to eat the bird's chicks. The king called for a bow and arrows, shot the snake and saved the chicks. A little later, the bird came beating its wings and carrying a seed in its beak and two seeds in its claws. Drawing near to the king the bird dropped what was held in its beak and claws, and as the king looked on, the seeds fell into the king's hands. The king pondered and said: "It must be for some reason that this bird dropped what it did. It no doubt wished to reward us for what we did to it." He examined the seeds closely but could not identify any seed resembling it in his realm. A wise man in his entourage, when he saw that the king was puzzled about the seeds, said to him: "O king, this sort of seed should be in the earth which will then reveal its secrets and the purpose behind it, and deliver what it holds of its substance." The king summoned farmers and commanded them to plant the seeds and take good care of what will come of it. The seeds were planted and the plant grew and wrapped itself around as a tree then produced unripe followed by ripe grapes. As the farmers tended it and the king took an interest in it, the plant reached its maximum growth, while they refrained from tasting it fearing it might be lethal. The king commanded some grapes to be pressed, placed in urns and the seeds removed while other grapes were to be left as is. The juice in the urns began to bubble and froth and from it exuded a powerful odor. The king said: "Get me an old man who is near death." An old man was summoned

and some juice was brought to him in a bowl and he saw it to be like red ruby in color, glowing radiantly and wondrous and perfect to behold. The old man was made to drink it. He had hardly drunk a third of that bowl when he leapt up, untied the wraps of his loincloths, clapped his hands, shook his head, thumped the ground with his feet, became jubilant and raised his voice in singing.

519. The king said: “This is a drink that causes one to lose his mind and it is only fitting that it should cause death. Do you not see how this old man reverted to the condition of a child, how his sanguine nature dominated him and how he increased in youthfulness?” The king ordered more drink to be given to the old man who then fell asleep. The king said: “He is dead”. The old man then woke up and demanded more of that drink, saying: “I drank it and all my troubles and sorrows vanished. The bird simply wanted to reward you with that noble drink.” The king said: “This is the noblest drink for men.” He had observed how the color of the old man had improved, how happy he was and how elated when in the ordinary course of nature he should have been sad and dominated by phlegm. His digestion had improved, he fell asleep with ease and he felt benevolent. So the king ordered that this vine should be planted everywhere and vineyards multiplied, but he forbade the commoners from drinking it saying: “This is the beverage of kings and it was I who caused it to exist so let none drink it but I.” The king used it for the remainder of his days but then it spread among people and they consumed it. It is said that Noah was the first to plant the vine, this being in a report detailing how Satan stole it from him when Noah left the Ark and settled on Mount Judi, a report found in the book called *Al-Mubtada’* [creation] and in other books.

Chapter 19

An account of the kings of Mosul and Nineveh, that is to say the Assyrians, with a brief history of them and their conduct

520. Nineveh is a city that faces Mosul, with the Tigris running between them. It lies between Qarda and Bazabda, two districts of Mosul. At this present time which is the year 332, Nineveh is in ruins on the site of which are found some villages and farms. It was to its inhabitants that God sent the Prophet Jonah son of Matta. The remains of its wall are clearly visible as also some stone images with writing on their front. Outside the city there is a hill with a mosque upon it and a spring called the "Spring of Jonah." This mosque serves as a retreat for ascetics and hermits. The first person to build this city and its wall was a mighty king to whom all kings and lands submitted and was called Ninus ibn Balus. He reigned for fifty-two years. In Mosul there was another king who warred against him and between them there were many battles and engagements. It is claimed that the king of Mosul at that time was called SABIQ ibn Malik, a man from Yemen. Ruling after Ninus was a woman named Samiram [Semiramis] who ruled them for forty years and fought the king of Mosul. Her realm stretched from the banks of the Euphrates to Armenia in the land of Adharbaijan up to the frontier with the Jazira, Mount Judi, Mount Tital and on to the land of Zawzan and other parts of Armenia.

521. The inhabitants of Nineveh were people we have called Nabat and Suryan, being of one race and language, though the Nabat differed by having slightly different letters in their language though the spoken language was the same. Following that queen came Lawustanas*, said to have been her son, and reigned for about forty years. The kings of Armenia marched against him and wars were continuous during his reign. The Armenians then conquered Nineveh and wars broke out between them and the kings of Mosul. It is said that Lawustanas was the last king

of Nineveh but it is also said that he was followed by twenty more kings of Nineveh who paid tribute to the kings of Armenia. These kings have histories, biographies and wars all of which we dealt with in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*.

Chapter 20

An account of the kings of Babylon, who are the Nabat, and others known as the Chaldeans

522. Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah al-Mas`udi said: A number of scholars known for their diligence and research abilities and who concern themselves with the history of the kings of the world assert that the kings of Babylon were the first kings of the world who leveled the earth and built it up, and that First Persians seized kingship from them just as the Romans seized kingship from the Greeks.

523. The first of their kings was Namrud [Nimrod]the Mighty, who reigned for sixty years. It was he who dug the canals of Iraq which issue from the Euphrates, among them, it is said, being the Kutha canal on the road to Kufa between Qasr ibn Hubaira and Baghdad. It is too well known to need mentioning. In what follows, we will mention many canals of Iraq when speaking of First and Second Persian kings and the other kings of independent kingdoms. The purpose of this work is in fact to summarize the history of the kings of the world and to refer to our earlier works.

524. Reigning after him for about seventy years was Bulus [Belus]. He was a violent king and a tyrant on earth and his reign witnessed many wars. He was followed by Qambirus who reigned for about a hundred years and was tyrannical; then Kisarunus for about fifty years; then Arfakhshad for about twenty years; then Samiram for about forty years, though some say more; then Zamis for about seventy years; then Arius for about thirty years; then Ablaus for about fifteen years; then

Mankhalus for about forty years; then Amramithris for about thirty years; then Balukus for about thirty years; then Sifrutus for about forty years though some give other dates; then Marnus for about thirty years; then Wastalim for forty years; then Amintas for about fifty years; then Balukus for about fifty years; then Al`adas for about thirty years; then Balatirus for about sixty years; then Sawsaris for about twenty years; then Baniyus for about fifty years though some say forty five.

525. He was then followed by Susarmus for about forty years. A king of Persia invaded and reached the center of his kingdom; then Misrus for about fifty years; then Tatamus for about thirty years; then Tatawus for about forty years; then Afrus for about forty years; then Lawstanas for about fifty years though some say forty-five; then Afritidis for about thirty years; then Afrutawus for about twenty years; then Afritanus for fifty years though some say forty-two; then Manturus for about twenty years; then Fulaqsma for about sixty years; then Qanqalrus for thirty-five years though some say fifty. He was at war with a king of the Sabeans. This was mentioned in the book on ancient history.

526. He was followed by Marjad who reigned for about three years; then Marduh for about forty years though some say less; then Sannajarib for thirty years. It was he who invaded Jerusalem; then Nashuh Manusha for thirty years though some say less; then the mighty Bukhtnassar for forty-five years; then Fil Marduh for about a year; then Baltasa`ar for about two years though some say less; then Qambisus for about eight years though some say ten; then Majusa for a year though some say less; then Darius for thirty one years though some say less; then Kasarkhus for twenty years; then Artaban for nine months until his murder; then Artakhshast for forty one years; then Kasarkhus for three years though some say two years and two months; then Sughdianus for one year though some say nine months; then Darius for twenty years though some

say nineteen; then Artakhast for twenty nine years; then Dara Alisa` for fifteen years, though some say ten.

527. Al-Mas`udi said: These kings* mentioned above by name and length of reign have their names recorded in books of ancient history. It is they who developed the kingdom, built cities, ordered the countryside, dug canals, planted trees, dug water wells, cultivated the land, dug mines of iron, copper, lead and other metals, made crude swords, adopted instruments of war and devised other military ruses, established war tactics like the heart, the right and left formations and the wings, deriving this from the model of the members of the body, and assigned each part a flag different from the others. The flag of the heart carried the picture of an elephant, a dragon or some other huge animal. The flags of the left and right flanks had pictures of wild beasts of various sizes and kinds, while the wings had flags with pictures of smaller wild animals like the panther or wolf. The troops lying in wait had flags with pictures of snakes, scorpions and other hard-to-see crawlers.

528. The colors used in each kind of flag were black or some other of the six colors namely, black, white, red, yellow, green and azure. Some people have stated that the colors are eight in number depending on where they fit best. They deny that red is mixed with any of the other colors except if tiny amounts are contained within the majority of animal images on these flags. They claim that analogy dictates that all war flags should be red since this is more appropriate and nearer the color of blood and more suitable if it is of a single color. However, what prevents its use is the fact that red is employed in entertainment, musical parties and times of joy, as also its use by women and children to express happiness. This necessitates the abandonment of red as a flag of war. They further assert that the sense of vision is similar to red. For the nature of vision is such that when it perceives red, the light of vision expands whereas if the

light of vision falls upon the color black, that light contracts and does not expand as with the perception of red. They claim that the reason for this is the match between the light of vision and the color red whereas difference and opposition exist between that light and black. These people have discussed the gradations of colors such as red, black, white and so forth as also the gradation of lights and how this relates to the secrets of nature. They speak of a common denominator between the light of vision and red and white and of the clear contradiction between black and the light of vision, to the exclusion of all other colors such as red, green, yellow and white. People have carried their discussion of these subjects to the point where they deal with the heavenly bodies such as the sun and moon and five planets and how they differ in color, taking in other heavenly bodies also. We have dealt with the opinions of these people in our previous works.

529. Likewise, we have dealt with the histories and conduct of the above-mentioned kings in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. Some people have argued that these kings were from the Nabat or other nations, and that some of them were subject to other kings like Persian kings, especially those who ruled from the city of Balkh. But what we mentioned is the better-known account. In what follows we shall make mention in brief of the history of the Nabat and their genealogy, God willing. There is no strength except in God.

Chapter 21

An account of the First Persian kings, with a brief history of them and their conduct

530. Al-Mas`udi said: The Persians, despite their diverse views, their far-flung habitations, the various places where they have settled and the care they take with their genealogies as transmitted from generation to generation and from the old to the young, assert that their first king was

Kayumarth. They then disagree about him. Some claim he is the son of Adam and the oldest of his children; others, who are in the minority, allege that he is the first ancestor and originator of the human race; yet others assert that Kayumarth is in fact Umaim ibn Lawid ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Nuh because Umaim was the first among the children of Nuh to settle in Persia. Kayumarth lived in Persia and the Persians have no knowledge of the Flood of Nuh. The peoples who lived between Adam and Nuh were Suryani in language and had no king but lived in one place---and God knows best. Kayumarth was the most prominent man of his age and the leader among them and the Persians claim that he was the first king to be crowned on earth.

531. The reason that led the people of that era to set up a king and leader is that they saw that most people were by nature vicious to one another, jealous of one another, unjust and aggressive. They recognized that nothing deters the evil man except fear. They then examined the condition of creatures, the body's mode of behavior and the form of the sensible and intelligent human being, and saw that the body in its structure and being has been provided with senses which lead back to some object other than themselves; that this object imports and exports these senses; that this object discriminates among what the senses import though diverse in its understanding, and that this object resides in the heart. They thus concluded that a healthy body requires to be ruled by the heart for once that ruler is corrupted, the rest of the body is corrupted and its sound and prudent actions can no longer be detected. Accordingly, having observed that this microcosm which is the visible [reading *mar`i*] human body cannot be put right nor can be suitably regulated unless its chief is properly instituted, they realized that people cannot be set on the right path unless they have a king who is fair to them, imposes justice upon them and implements laws in accordance with the dictates of

reason. So they approached Kayumarth son of Lawid, informed him of their need for a king and an overseer who treats them justly, and said: “You are the most virtuous, the noblest and the most senior amongst us and the last descendant of our ancestor. No one in this age is your equal. Take hold of our affairs and be our ruler. We hear and obey you and comply with all your wishes.”

532. He responded to their call and obtained assurances from them through covenants and pacts that they would hear and obey and abandon all disagreements concerning his appointment. When he had placed the crown over his head, being the first person on earth to do so, he stood up and delivered the following speech: “Blessings do not last except by offering thanks, and we render thanks to God for what He has done. We thank Him for His blessings and turn to him for further acts of grace. We ask Him to lend us His support for what we have been forced to accept. We ask Him to guide us to practice justice which brings people together and makes life pleasant. Be confident in expecting us to act justly, and you too must act justly towards one another, and we shall lead you to your noblest desires. I ask God’s forgiveness for me and you.” So Kayumarth continued to rule them in the best manner, acting towards people with justice, and the land became secure and the nation was quiescent throughout his rule. The act of placing the crown over the head is one for which they have symbolic interpretations which they mention and which we omit to mention here, having done so already in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*.

533. They say that Kayumarth was the first person to order silence at mealtimes in order that nature might run its proper course, the body gain in health while ingesting food, and the soul grow still, thus commanding each body member to act in such a manner as to lead to bodily health while ingesting food undisturbed. Hence, the food that arrives in the liver

and other body organs that are nourished by food is appropriate to each organ and grants it health. They further assert that when a human being is diverted from his meal in one manner or another, some of the regulatory process and of nourishment will end up in wasting energy and the occurrence of complications. This does harm to the animal soul and the human powers. If this happens constantly, it will lead the rational soul which is distinct from this visible human body, to leave, thus causing an abandonment of wisdom and of right action. Under this heading, they have a subtle symbolic explanation of the tie that exists between soul and body but this is not the place to go into this subject. We have made mention of this in our two books entitled *The Secret of Life* and the *Book of Degrees*, where we discuss the soul and its parts namely, the rational, righteously angry, sensitive and appetitive, and what people ancient and modern have said about this subject, both philosophers and others.

534. There is some dispute regarding the age of Kayumarth. Some say that he lived a thousand years, others say less. The Magians speak at length about Kayumarth, holding that he was the originator of mankind and that he and his wife grew out of the earth like a plant, the plant being the rhubarb, and that the first couple were Mashia and Mashiana [reading doubtful] plus other tales too indecent to mention. They further relate his story with Satan and how he killed him. He resided in Istakhr, in Persia, and reigned for forty years, though some say less.

535. Succeeding him was Awshhang son of Firwak son of Siyamuk son of Yarniq son of Kayumarth the king. Awshhang resided in India and reigned for forty years, though some say less. He is the subject of a dispute. Some say he is the brother of Kayumarth son of Adam, others that he was the son of the previous king. Succeeding him was Tahmurath son of Wayuwanjan son of Anqhadh son of Awshhang, who resided in Sabur. During his reign a man appeared called Budasf who created the

Sabean religion. He maintained that perfect nobility and goodness and the origin of life resided in that elevated dome [the sky], that the stars were the rulers of all that comes into being and goes out of being, and that as they rise in their constellations and cover their distances and touch certain points and leave others, they cause all effects in this world such as long and short lifespans, the coming together of simple things and the dissolution of complex things, the perfection of forms, and the appearance and disappearance of the waters. He further claimed that in the planets and their constellations is vested supreme management of the universe together with other views the description of which would require us to abandon our plan to abbreviate and summarize. He seduced a group of weak-minded people and it is said that this man was the first who originated the religion of the Sabeans, both the Harraniyya and the Kimariyya. Those latter differ from the Harraniyya in belief and they inhabit the region between Wasit and Basra in Iraq, in the neighborhood of the swamps and jungles.

536. Tahmurath reigned for thirty years until his death, though some mention other dates. His brother Jam, who resided in Persia, succeeded him. It is said that a flood occurred in his days. Many people claim that the Nairuz Festival was instituted in his days and was ceremoniously arranged as will be described later in this book. Furthermore, Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna* related from `Umar Kisra---a man who became famous for his knowledge of Persia and the history of its kings to the point where he was dubbed “`Umar Kisra”---that Jam reigned for six hundred years before he died, and some say seven hundred years and six months. Jam is said to have innovated on earth a number of crafts, types of buildings and professions and to have claimed divinity.

537. He was succeeded by Bayurasb son of Arwandasb son of Zinjad son of Barshand son of Tah son of Firwak son of Siyamuk son of Mashya son

of Kayumarth, who is al-Dahhak. His two names were Arabized and some Arabs called him al-Dahhak while others called him Buhraf. This is not correct. His true name is Bayurasb, as cited above. It is historically accurate to say that King Jam had been murdered before these kings. His [i.e. Bayurasb's] genealogy is disputed. Some say he is Persian, others say he is an Arab. The Persians claim him as one of them and that he was a magician who lived a thousand years and ruled over the seven climes. He was a tyrant on earth and the Persians relate long stories about him and claim that he is chained in irons on Mount Damavand between Ray and Tabaristan. Arab poets, both ancient and modern, have mentioned him. Abu Nuwas* boasted of him in the following line of verse, claiming he was from Yemen because Abu Nuwas himself was a client of the Yemeni tribe of Sa`d al-`Ashira:

Al-Dahhak was one of us,

Worshipped by young she-camels and wild beasts

As they headed to pasture.

538. He was succeeded by Afridun son of Athfiyan son of Jam, king of the seven climes. He seized Bayurasb and chained him on Mount Damavand as mentioned above. Many Persians and other experts in their history like `Umar Kisra and others maintain that the day that Afridun seized al-Dahhak was made by him into a feast day and called it al-Mihrajan, as will be mentioned later in this work together with what has been related about that event. The capital of Afridun's kingdom was Babil. That region derives its name from a village in those regions called Babil, on the banks of a canal dug from the Euphrates in the land of Iraq, and at a distance of one hour's journey known as Jisr Babil and the Nars canal. From Nars is derived a kind of cloth called Narsi. In that village is a pit called the pit of Daniel the Prophet visited by Christians and Jews at certain times of the year on their feast days. If one stands above this

village and overlooks it, one will discern great traces of ruined buildings that appear like mounds. Many people claim that in that village are found Harut and Marut, the two angels mentioned in the Qur'an in accordance with the manner in which the Almighty related in detail how and why this village was called Babil. Afridun reigned for five hundred years though both more and less years are also given. He divided the world among his three sons. After the coming of Islam, a poet of Persian origin wrote the following verses making mention of the three sons of Afridun:

We divided our realm in our own time,

As meat is divided from a spit.

We gave al-Sham and Byzantium

And all the way to where the sun sets

To the hero Salm.

Tuh was given lordship over the Turks

And all the way to China, which was ruled by a cousin.

To Iran we granted by force the knighthood of the kingdom

And won the greatest blessings.

539. People have discussed these subjects at great length, maintaining that the land of Babil was apportioned to Iraj, son of Afridun, and that his brother killed him in the lifetime of Afridun so he died without having assumed kingship and is not counted among kings. We will later on in this book mention how that region was apportioned to Iraj and how the letter “j” in “Iraj” was dropped and replaced by the letter “n” so that we get the phrase “Iran Shahr”, “shahr” meaning kingdom. Following Afridun came Manushahr son of Iran son of Afridun, in accordance with the dispute regarding his genealogy and his affiliation to Iraj son of Afridun. He reigned for twenty years and resided in Babil. It is said that the prophets Musa son of `Imran and Yusha` son of Nun lived in his days.

Manushihr warred against his two uncles, Tuh and Salm, who had killed his father. We made mention of these wars in our previous works.

540. Succeeding Manushihr was Sahm son of Aban son of Athfiyan son of Nudhar son of Manushihr. He settled in Babil and reigned for sixty years, though some say more. He waged many wars, and devised many political principles and practical policies which we detailed in our *Akhbar al-Zaman*. Succeeding him was Farasiyab son of Bashank son of Zay Arsan son of Turak son of Sabaniasb son of Durshasb son of Tuh son of Dusarun son of Tuj son of Afridun. Farasiyab was born in the land of the Turks; hence the mistake made by writers and historians who claim he was a Turk. He reigned for twelve years over lands he had conquered and many claim that he was four hundred years old. In the twelfth year of his reign Zu son of Tahmasf son of Kamjahubar son of Harasf son of Waidanj son of Ragh son of Manush son of Nudhar son of king Manushihr, rebelled against him and killed him and his followers after many years and rebuilt what Farasiyab had destroyed. His length of reign is disputed: some say three years, others more. He resided in Babil.

541. The Persians have discussed at great length how Farasiyab was killed and his wars and the wars and raids between Persians and Turks and the killing of Siyawukhs together with the history of Rustam son of Dastan. All of this is found in great detail in the book known as *Sakisaran* which Ibn al-Muqaffa` translated from Old Persian into Arabic. It relates the story of the killing of Isfandiyar son of Bustasf son of Luhrasb by Rustam son of Dastan and how Bahman son of Isfandiyar then killed Rustam together with other marvelous tales of ancient Persian history. This is a book held in great esteem by the Persians because it contains the histories of their ancestors and biographies of their kings. In our earlier works, we made mention, and God be thanked, of many of these histories.

542. It is stated that the first king among them to settle in Balkh and to move away from Iraq was Kaiqawus. He had marched on Yemen after having rebelled against God in Iraq and had built a structure in order to ruin heaven. The Yemeni king attacked by Kaiqawus was at that time Shammir Yar`ash. Shammir marched out against him and captured and imprisoned him in the narrowest of dungeons. A daughter of Shammir, named Su`da, fell in love with him and would show him and his followers in their dungeon acts of kindness in secret and unbeknown to her father. He remained a prisoner for four years until Rustam son of Dustan sent out from Sijistan an expedition of four thousand men who killed Shammir Yar`ash and rescued Kaiqawus, restoring him to his kingdom accompanied by Sa`da. Sa`da gained power over Kaiqawus and made him proud by giving birth to his son Siyawakhs who had that famous story with Farasiyab the Turk, and how Farasiyab came to trust him and how he married him to his daughter who gave birth to Kaikhusru. The story goes on to relate how Farasiyab killed Siyawakhs son of Kaiqawus and how Rustam son of Dastan killed Sa`da, as a revenge for the killing of Siyawakhs and how he killed other Turkish notables.

543. According to the Persians and as is mentioned in the book *Sakisaran*, Kaikhusru was preceded on the throne by his paternal grandfather Kaiqawus. Kaikhusru left no issue, so kingship passed to the progeny of Luhrasf. These people lived in Balkh which was their capital. The river of Balkh, the Amu Darya, is known in their language as Kalif. Many Persians living in Khurasan continue to call it by that name up to the present. They remained in Balkh until kingship passed to Humaia daughter of Bahman son of Isfandiyar son of Bistasf son of Luhrasf, who moved back to Iraq and resided in the region of al-Mada'in.

544. Succeeding Kaikhusru son of Siyawakhs son of Kaiqawus was the king Luhrasf son of Kaiuji son of Kaimanush son of Kaibasin son of Kaiabya son of king Qubadh. Luhrasf built up the land and acted virtuously and justly towards his subjects. Two years into his reign the Israelites suffered greatly at his hands and he dispersed them throughout the lands. Stories are told of the encounter between them too long to relate here. Some Persian histories relate that he built the beautiful city of Balkh because of its waters, trees and meadows. His reign lasted one hundred and twenty years. Ancient Persian histories relate the story of his killing by the Turks and how he was besieged by them and who exacted revenge for him after he was killed.

545. Many experts on Persian history mention that Bukhtnassar, the *marzuban* of Iraq and the west, was a deputy of that king. It was Bukhtnassar who invaded al-Sham, conquered Jerusalem and enslaved the Israelites. His exploits in al-Sham and the west are famous. The commoners call him Bukhtnassar. Most historians and story-tellers exaggerate his history and inflate the description of his exploits, while astronomers in their almanacs and historians in their books speak of him as a king. In point of fact he was a *marzuban* of some kings we have mentioned above, and the word *marzuban* means a person in charge of one quarter of the kingdom, an army commander, a vizier or else a governor of a province. He carried the enslaved Israelites eastwards and married a slave girl among them called Dinazad, who was responsible for restoring the Israelites to Jerusalem.

546. It is said that Luhrasf was the one who fathered a child on Dinazad, though other versions also exist. It is also claimed that queen Humaia was a descendant of the Israelites through her mother. It is related that Luhrasf dispatched Sannajarib, his deputy in Iraq, to wage war on the Israelites but he accomplished nothing so he sent Bukhtnassar in his stead, though

other versions exist regarding Bukhtnassar, which we will mention below when speaking of the reign of Bahman son of Isfandiyar son of Yistasf son of Luhrasf. Ptolemy, author of *Almagest*, dates the history in his book from the era of Bukhtnassar, *marzuban* of the west, while Theon, author of the book called the *Canon* on astronomy, dates his history from the reign of Alexander son of Philip the Macedonian.

547. Succeeding him was his son Bustasf who resided in Balkh. Thirty years into his reign, he was visited by Zaradusht [Zoroaster] son of Isbitaman. He is said to have been Zaradusht son of Burshasf son of Fidasf son of Urudasf son of Hijdasf son of Jakhnush son of Bitrasf son of Hushan son of Hirdar son of Isbitaman son of Widasf son of Izman son of Rajan son of Duwasrun son of king Manushihr. He was from Adharbaijan and the more common form of his name is Zaradusht son of Isbitaman. He was the prophet of the Magians who brought them the book known as *Zamzama* among commoners and *Bastah* [Avesta] among the Magians. Zaradusht performed miracles that awed their intellects and foretold events before they occurred, both general and particular. By general is meant foretelling public events while by particular is meant foretelling such things as that so-and-so will die or so-and-so will fall ill or so-and-so will be born on such-and-such a day, and similar things.

548. The alphabet in this book he brought them is based on an alphabet consisting of sixty letters, and no language possesses more letters than that alphabet. In our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, we dealt with this subject at length. Zaradusht brought them a book in a language which they could neither duplicate nor fully understand. We will mention later the contents of his book and the commentary, and the commentary on that commentary that he provided for it. The book was written in gold on twelve thousand parchment leaves. It contains promises of salvation and threats of damnation as well as commands, prohibitions and other

matters relating to legal acts and worship. Kings continued to follow the commandments of that book until the time of Alexander and his killing of Darius son of Darius, when Alexander burnt parts of that book. Following the era of independent principalities, kingship passed to Ardashir son of Babik who succeeded in uniting the Persians by reading a single chapter of that book called *Wandidad*. To this day, the Persians and Magians read nothing else.

549. The first book is called *Bastah*. Zaradusht then composed a commentary for those who could not understand it, and this commentary they called *Zand*. He then composed a commentary on that commentary which he called *Bazand*. Following the death of Zaradusht, their scholars composed a commentary on the two earlier commentaries and an interpretation which they called *Yarda*. Up to this day, the Magians are unable to learn their revealed book by heart so their scholars and priests enjoin upon many of them to learn by heart one-seventh or one-fourth or one-third of that book. One person begins by reciting what he has learnt of his portion, a second person follows by reciting his portion and a third person likewise, until they all together had recited the entire book. This is because no single person is capable of reciting the whole text. They used to say that there was a man of their community from Sijistan after the year 300 who made his living by reciting this book in its entirety.

550. Bustasf reigned for one hundred and twenty years before he embraced Magianism. He then died. Zaradusht's prophetic career among them lasted for thirty-five years and he died aged seventy-seven. When Zaradusht died, a scholar named Jamasb, a man from Adharbaijan, was appointed to take his place. He was the first priest (*mubidh*) to rise among them after Zaradusht, and was appointed by king Bustasf. Succeeding him on the throne was Bahman son of Isfandyar son of Bustasf son of

Luhrasf, who waged many wars against Rustam, ruler of Sijistan, until he killed Rustam and his father Dastan.

551. It is said that the mother of Bahman was an Israelite from the progeny of King Saul (*Talut*) and that it was Bahman who sent Bukhtnassar, the *marzuban* of Iraq, to the Israelites, with events ensuing as already described. Bahman reigned for one hundred and twelve years before he died, and it is said that it was during his reign that the Israelites were returned to Jerusalem. They thus stayed in Babil for seventy years before their return. This happened in the days of Cyrus (*Kurush*), appointed to rule Iraq by Bahman who then resided in Balkh. It is said that the mother of Cyrus was an Israelite and that Daniel the Younger was his maternal uncle. Cyrus ruled for twenty-three years. Other accounts hold that Cyrus himself was a king and not a deputy of Bahman, and that he became king when Bahman's reign ended. It is also claimed that Cyrus was an early king of First Persians but this is not commonly found in ancient books of history.

552. Daniel the Elder lived in the period between Noah and Abraham. He it was who worked out the science of what will happen in future days until the earth itself passes away, along with all who live on it and all kings of this world. This includes what will happen every year, month and day with the proofs for this derived from the heavenly spheres. To him is attributed the book called *al-Jafr* *. When the Israelites returned to Jerusalem they dug up the Torah and other writings from places in the ground where they had been buried, as we mentioned earlier.

553. Kingship then passed to Humaia daughter of Bahman son of Isfandiyar commonly known by her mother Shihrazad. This queen has a long history and waged war against the Romans and other kings of the earth. She pursued an upright policy where her subjects were concerned and reigned for thirty years after her father's death, though some say

more. Succeeding her was her brother Dara son of Bahman son of Isfandiyar, who reigned for twelve years and resided in Babil. He was succeeded by Dara son of Dara son of Bahman son of Isfandiyar. In their ancient language the Persians call Dara "Darius". It was him whom Alexander the Macedonian killed after he had reigned for thirty years.

554. It is said that Manushihr, when defeated in his war against the Turkish Farasiyab, marched to the mountains of Tabaristan and fortified himself in them. Then he, as well as many others, repented his decision and resumed the war against Farasiyab who had invaded Iraq and conquered that region. Farasiyab fled back to the land of the Turks. It is further stated that following Manushihr, kingship passed to two brothers, said to have been partners in rule, who rebuilt the land together and in agreement after the depredations of Farasiyab. One of the two kings was called [Zab son of] Tahmasaf son of Kamjahubar son of Warzaq[?] son of Hrasf son of Widanj son of [lacuna in text] son of Duwasrun son of Manushihr. The other king was called Kurshasf son of Nariman son of Tahmasf son of Ashak son of Narsi son of Arjan [lacuna in text] son of Manushihr. Kurshasf continued to wage war against Farasiyab while the other remained in Iraq rebuilding what Farasiyab had ruined. He dug the two canals called the Lesser and Greater Zab, as already noted earlier in this work. These two canals issue from the land of Armenia and flow into the Greater Tigris between Mosul and al-Haditha while the other pours into the land of Sann to which he gave his name. He dug another canal in the Sawad region of Iraq and gave it his own name. On that canal in Iraq he built three agricultural regions consisting of villages and estates which he irrigated by means of waterwheels. All of these have survived to the present day.

555. It is said that when Kaikhusru killed his grandfather in the region of Shiz and al-Ran in the land of Adharbaijan---- the grandfather having

been Farasiyab son of Bashank son of Zai Arsan son of Turk---Turk being the ancestor of all the Turks according to some people and was from the progeny of Durushab son of Afridun, a version of his genealogy already cited above--- Kaikhusru marched through the earth destroying kingdoms until he reached China, where he built a great city which he called Kankdiz. Several kings of China would reside there as they resided in Yansu and other of their cities. Some say that Kankdiz is in fact Yansu. It is also said that Kaikhusru built the city of Qashmir in India and that Siawakhs during the lifetime of his father built the city of Qandahar in the land of Sind, a city mentioned earlier in this work.

556. Al-Mas`udi said: The kings we have mentioned have histories and policies which we have set forth in detail in our earlier works. In this work we simply offer abbreviated accounts which we use to allude to the detailed accounts in our earlier works. The variety of accounts mentioned here is due to the divergence of the accounts themselves and the conflicting reports to be found in books of history. This is so in order that the readers of this work would know that we have exerted all our efforts in citing what everyone has said regarding these subjects. In God is success and succor.

Chapter 22

An account of the independent kings who reigned between First and Second Persians

557. Al-Mas`udi said: There is a dispute concerning the independent kings (*Muluk al-Tawa'if*) and whether they were Persians, Nabat or Arabs. Some historians who specialize in ancient history relate that when Alexander son of Philip killed Darius son of Darius, every strong man came to dominate his own region. Alexander concluded treaties with them and they were Persians, Nabat and Arabs. Alexander's aim was to divide their word and get them to break up into separate entities so that

each chief would gain mastery over his own region, thereby undermining royal authority and their submission to a single monarch who could unite them. Alexander would thus have the final say. However, most followed the Arsacids (*Ashghan*) who ruled the mountains of Dinawar, Nihawand, Hamadhan, Masabadan and Adharbaijan. Each king who ruled that territory would be called by the name most common to them, that is, Ashghan. So this name passed on to the Ashghan independent kings as an attribute since most owed allegiance to the king of that region.

558. Hisham ibn Muhammad al-Kalbi* reported from his father and other Arab scholars that they say that the first kings of the earth were the Achaemenids (*Akyan*) and we have cited their names among First Persians until Dara son of Dara. These were followed by the Ardawan who were kings of the Nabat and are counted among the independent monarchs. They resided in Iraq near Qasr ibn Hubayra, the land irrigated by the Euphrates, al-Jami`ayn, Sura and Ahmadabad, all the way to al-Nars, Hinniba, Tall Fakhkhar, al-Tufuf and the rest of that region. The Arab kings from the tribes of Mudar ibn Nizar ibn Ma`add and Rabi`a ibn Nizar and Anmar ibn Nizar and the Mudarites of the Nadr in Yemen, as also others from the tribe of Qahtan, were all [independent] monarchs. Each grouping had set up its own king in the absence of a king who would unite them. This is what Alexander was advised to do by his teacher Aristotle who had sent him letters to that effect. So Alexander made treaties with the kings of each region and appointed each of them king over his own territory, each of whom he crowned and then taxed. So each tyrannized over his own domain and kingship passed to his progeny, and they defended their possessions and sought to enlarge their domains at the expense of the others.

559. According to many experts in ancient history and dating, the era of independent kings lasted for five hundred and seventeen years, that is,

from the reign of Alexander until the coming of Ardashir son of Babik. Ardashir subjugated the independent kings and killed Ardawan, the king of Iraq, placing Ardawan's crown on his own head. He had killed him in single combat on the banks of the Tigris. That day is counted as the first day of Ardashir's reign since he later overcame the rest of the independent kings, as the various countries submitted to him and the structure of his state was put in place. Some of the independent kings were killed by Ardashir while others responded to his call and willingly submitted to him. The independent kings thus fall between First Persians, already named, and Second Persians, who are the Sasanids.

560. Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna al-Taimi relates from `Umar Kisra in a book of `Umar's dealing with Persian kings where he describes the classes of their kings, early and late, their histories, speeches and complex genealogies, as also the cities they built, the agricultural regions they developed, the canals they dug, their noble classes and what each group was called such as the Shaharija and others---relates that the first of the independent kings was Ashak son of Ashak son of Ardawan son of Ashghan son of the mighty Ass son of Siyawush son of Kikawus the king. Ashak reigned for twenty years. He was followed by Ashak son of Sabur son of Ashak who reigned for sixty years. In the forty-first year of his reign Christ appeared in the land of Palestine in Aelia [Jerusalem].

561. Next to reign was Judarz son of Ashak son of Ardawan son of Ashghan who reigned for ten years. He was followed by Nidhar son of king Sabur son of king Ashak who reigned for twenty-one years. It is said that in his days Titus son of Vespasian, king of Rome, marched on Aelia, forty years after the ascent of Christ to heaven, where he killed, enslaved and destroyed. Following Nidhar was his son Judarz who reigned for nineteen years. Following Judarz was Narsi son of Nidhar who reigned for forty years. He was followed by his brother Hurmuz son of Nidhar

who reigned for twenty-five years. He was followed by Ardawan son of Hurmuz son of Nidhar who reigned for fifteen years. Ardawan was followed by his son Kisra son of Ardawan for forty years. Kisra was followed by his son Balas for twenty-four years and Balas was followed by his son Ardawan for thirteen years.

562. Al-Mas`udi said: The above is another version of what we had cited earlier. Other views regarding the dating of the regnal years of the independent kings have also been given and it is alleged that their total years were less than what we mentioned. However, what was mentioned earlier is the more accurate and well-known figure that is given for their regnal years though dates differ greatly and are often contradictory. Nevertheless, what we have cited are figures we have taken from Persian scholars who take greater care than others with their own history. This is because the Persians observe and follow what we described in word and deed, whereas other people state this in word but do not observe it in deed, given the divergence among religious communities. In our earlier works we discussed the highlights of the history of the independent kings and their policies. In God is success.

Chapter 23

An account of the genealogies of the Persians and the views of people concerning them

563. There are divergent views among people regarding the Persians and their genealogies. Some hold that Faris is the son of Yasur [Ashur] son of Sam son of Noah, and also that the Nabat are the progeny of Nabit son of Sam son of Noah. This is the view of Hisham ibn Muhammad [al-Kalbi] as transmitted from his father and other Arab scholars, thus making Faris and Nabit brothers and sons of Yasur. Others hold that the Persians are from the progeny of Joseph son of Jacob son of Isaac son of Abraham. Still others assert that they are the progeny of Hidram son of Arfakhshad

son of Sam son of Noah, who begat fourteen sons all of whom were brave knights. So they were called “Persians” [Furs] because of their “knightly qualities” [*furusiyya*]. On this subject there are two lines of verse by Khattab ibn al-Mu`alla the Persian:

Because of us, knights were called by that name;

We are the begetters of noble youth,

As also of old men, their bodies made firm,

By charging and attacking,

When attacking on the day of battle.

564. Others have claimed that the Persians descend from Lot (*Lut*) through his two daughters Rabbatha and Za`irtha. Adherents of the Torah have much to say on this subject. Still others maintain that they descend from Bawwan son of Iran son of Yasur son of Sam son of Noah. Bawwan is the one after whom the watercourse of Bawwan is named. It is a place of great natural beauty where many trees, gushing waters and numerous kinds of birds are found. Poets have mentioned that locality, as for instance in the following verse:

The watercourse of Bawwan and the valley of al-Rahib:

There you find respite from troubles.

565. Still others claim that the Persians are from the progeny of Iran son of Afridun. We mentioned above when speaking of the progeny of Afridun how he divided the earth among his sons and quoted the verse:

To Iran we granted by force the knighthood of the kingdom

And won the greatest blessings.

Thus the Persians acquired that name. The Persians call Iran “Iraj” when they explain his name, and all Persians agree that they are the progeny of Iraj, who is Iran son of Afridun. This genealogy is the one most commonly cited by them, namely that they are the progeny of Iraj. Some people hold that all categories of Persians, including the inhabitants of the

countryside of Ahwaz, are from the progeny of `Ilam and there is unanimity among the above two groups of genealogists that all Persians descend from the progeny of Kayumarth. This is the most common view. Kayumarth came before Iraj son of Afridun, and this Iraj is the one from the progeny of Kayumarth from whom the Persians are descended.

566. Some say that Second Persians, who are the Sasanids, have a different descent from First Persians, being the descendants of Manushihr son of Iraj son of Afridun. Others say that Manushihr is the son of Manshkhurnar son of Manush [Khurnak] son of Wayrak, and that Wayrak is Isaac son of Abraham. They add that Manshkhurnar marched on Persia where a queen was reigning named Kudak daughter of Iraj. He married her and she begat Manushihr the king. His progeny became numerous to the point where they overpowered the earth and other kings were in awe of them because of their valor and chivalry, while First Persians vanished like other ancient nations or like the extinct Arabs.

567. Al-Mas`udi said: Most wise Arabs from Nizar ibn Ma`add accept the accuracy of the above account as regards the beginning of genealogy as do also many Persians. Nizari Arab poets cite this genealogy and use it to boast over Qahtani Arabs from Yemen by claiming that the Persians are descended from Isaac son of Abraham. Thus, the poet Ishaq ibn Suwaid al-`Adawi, from the `Adiyy clan of Quraish composed the following verses:

*If Qahtan were one day to boast of some sovereignty,
Our own boasts would rise higher and be more convincing.
We ruled over them first through our ancestor Isaac,
And they have become our supporters and slaves for ever.
If Tubba`* and his progeny were of their [i.e. Qahtan's] number,
Yet their kings were mere aides to our own.
Binding us, children of Sarah, to glory is an ancestor,*

And we care not thereafter for any who claims superiority.

They gave their kings dominion over east and west,

Then afterwards granted them supreme rule.

568. Regarding the same subject, the poet Jarir* ibn [ʿAtiyya ibn] al-Khatafa al-Tamimi, wrote a long ode boasting against Qahtan that the Persians and Byzantines were the children of Isaac and that the prophets were the children of Jacob son of Isaac, in which he says:

The sons of Isaac are lions once they put on

The sword-tassels of death, and wear their armor.

When boasting they count the sabahbadh [Persian commander] of their number,

As also Chosroes, al-Hurmuzan and Caesar.

To them was granted a sacred book and prophecy,

And they were kings in Istakhr and Tustar.

Of their number is Solomon the prophet who prayed,

And was granted eloquence and a mighty dominion.

Our ancestor is the father of Isaac, and connecting us

Is a father who was a pure and rightly-guided prophet.

He built God's direction of prayer, which offers guidance,

And bequeathed to us glory and lasting dominion.

One ancestor connects us to the noble sons of Persia:

We care not for any ancestor who came after him.

Our ancestor is the friend of God, Abraham, and God is our Lord,

We are content with what God has given and destined for us.

569. On this same subject, the poet Bashshar ibn Burd* says:

The noble sons of Persia, who are Quraish, claim me as one of them,

And my clan is the Quraish of the Persians.

Another Persian poet holds that the Persians are descended from Isaac and that Isaac is the one named Wayrak, as mentioned above, and recited the following verses:

My father is Wayrak and with him I claim highest honor

When some boaster boasts of his descent.

Our father Wayrak was a servant of God and a prophet

Who possessed the honor of noble birth and succored pilgrims.

Who can be my equal when noble men boast,

And when my clan is the central jewel in the necklace?

570. Some Persians claim that Wayrak is the son of Irak son of Burak son of seven women who were begotten without a male until they reach in their ascent to Iraj son of Afridun. This claim is irrational, rejected by the senses, is contrary to natural custom and is in conflict with what can directly be witnessed. The exception is the special favor that God granted to Jesus son of Mary in order to display his miracles and his signs that transcend natural custom and what we have mentioned by way of direct witness.

571. People at this point are in dispute regarding the genealogy of Manushihr and there is confusion as to his relationship to Afridun and how Afridun slept with the daughter of his son Iraj then slept with the daughter's daughters down to the seventh of them. As mentioned above, between the reign of Manushihr and that of Afridun, a long period of time elapsed and also many kings, for the region of Babil witnessed an era of political fragmentation where no strongman was found to unite the kingdom and establish authority and concord. Thus, royal dominion passed from the progeny of Afridun to that of Isaac. If this is in fact what this group of people actually maintain, dating would require that a period of two thousand nine hundred and twenty-two years must have elapsed from Kayumarth to the passing of royal authority to the progeny of Isaac.

This is what I found in the histories of this group of people in the land of Persia and Kirman.

572. Al-Mas`udi said: Some Persians after the year 290 [903] boasted of their ancestor Isaac son of Abraham as against the progeny of Isma`il, claiming that the child [of Abraham] offered as sacrifice was Isaac and not Isma`il, and composed the following verses:

O sons of Hagar, is it not clear to you?

Why then this pride and haughtiness?

Was not your mother in olden times

A slave woman to our beautiful mother Sarah?

Did not kingship and prophecy belong to us?

If you deny this, you are indulging in prejudice.

Isaac was the one to be sacrificed,

As all people agree. Why claim otherwise?

Thus, now that Muhammad has revealed the true religion

And with his light dispersed darkness,

You come and claim descent from Quraish.

But true glory comes from piety, not genealogy,

And even if you are the progeny of Quraish, what then?

These verses come from a long ode which we have not thought necessary to cite in full. This poet was in fact answered by `Abdullah ibn al-Mu`tazz*. The poet in question was a contemporary of `Abdullah and lived beyond the year 300 [912-13]. `Abdullah refuted him line by line in verses from which we extract the following:

I hear a voice but see no one;

Who is this wretch who made his blood licit to be shed?

Far be it from Isaac to be your father,

And even if you are his progeny, so what?

Tell this dog who thinks himself smart,

A lion has opened his mouth to devour him.

573. The Persians do not subscribe to any other view than that which holds that only the progeny of Afridun held royal authority in any age whatsoever, ancient or not. This holds true until royalty finally passed away from them, the exception being some usurper who usurped royal power unjustly. The ancient Persians used to visit the Sacred House [in Mecca] and circumambulate it in honor of their ancestor Abraham, being faithful to his guidance and in order to maintain the purity of their genealogies. The last among them to go on pilgrimage was Sasan son of Babak, grandfather of Ardashir son of Babak, Ardashir being the first of the line of the Sasanid kings. They relate to him just as Marwanid kings relate to Marwan ibn al-Hakam or `Abbasid caliphs relate to Al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib*. None but the progeny of Ardashir ever ruled Second Persians.

574. When the above mentioned Sasan used to visit the Sacred House he would circumambulate it and utter murmuring sounds (*zamzama*) at the well of Isma`il, so the well was called Zamzam because of his murmurs and that of other Persians. This indicates that their visits to that well and their murmurings must have been very frequent. An ancient poet recited:

Persians have murmured at the well of Zamzam

Since ancient times.

Some Persian poets boasted of this after the coming of Islam, and one of them recited the following verses:

We have made the pilgrimage to the Sacred House since ancient days,

Unloading our baggage, secure in that valley.

Sasan son of Babak travelled until

He reached the Ancient House, in order to uphold religion.

He circumambulated the House and murmured at a well

Belonging to Isma`il, a well that quenches the thirsty.

575. The Persians used to offer gifts of money and jewels to the Ka`ba in early times. Sasan son of Babak once presented two golden gazelles, jewels, swords and much gold. All of this was buried in Zamzam. Some writers of history and biography state that these presents were offered to the tribe of Jurhum when Jurhum lived in Mecca. But Jurhum was not a wealthy tribe to which such gifts could be offered, so they may have been offered to other tribes, and God knows best. We will mention in later sections of this work what `Abd al-Muttalib did with these swords and the other objects deposited in Zamzam.

All these genealogies are in dispute as regards their origins and offshoots. We have mentioned some highlights of this subject which a person of discernment will find, when examining them, to suffice him from scrutinizing these genealogies in any great detail.

Chapter 24

An account of Sasanid kings, that is to say Second Persians, their conduct and a brief history of them

576. As already mentioned in the preceding section, the first of the line with whom Sasanid kings were linked was Ardashir son of Babak Shah son of Sasan son of Babak son of Sasan son of Bahafaridun son of Dara son of Sasan son of Bahman son of Isfandiyar son of Bistasif son of Luhrasif, as we have already cited regarding the genealogy of Luhrasif. It is also said that he is Ardashir son of Babak son of Sasan the Younger son of Babak son of Sasan son of Babak son of Mihrmas son of Sasan son of Bahman son of Isfandiyar son of Bistasif son of Luhrasif. There is no disagreement among them that Ardashir is descended from Manushihr.

577. When Ardashir became king, after having killed Ardawan, subjugated the independent kings and placed the crown on his head, the following words from his speech have been memorized: “God be thanked for singling us out with His blessings, for enfolding us with His benefits

and apportionments, for vanquishing the lands for us and for causing the subjects to obey us. We praise Him with the praises of one who recognizes the worth of what He has granted him, and thank Him with the thanks of one who is aware of what He conferred upon him and privileged him. We shall diligently act to establish justice, multiply good works, implement virtuous policies, build up the land, show mercy to the subjects, develop the provinces of the realm, and repair any damages that have befallen them in former days. O people, let your minds be at ease, for I shall dispense justice widely to include both the powerful and the weak, the low-born and the noble. I shall turn justice into a praiseworthy custom and a law to be followed. You shall witness [reading *satarawna*] in our conduct what you will praise us for, and our deeds shall bear out our words. Peace upon you.”

578. Al-Mas`udi said: Ardashir son of Babak was the first to set up classes of courtiers, a practice imitated by later kings and caliphs. He believed that this was a sound policy and one which strengthened the structure of power. His courtiers were divided into three categories. The first were army commanders and sons of kings. They would sit to the right of the king at a distance of ten *dhira`*s. These were the king's intimates, companions and interlocutors from among the noble and wise. The second sat at a distance of ten *dhira`*s from the first. They were the elite among governors and former regional kings who resided at the royal gate as also the *Isbahbadhiyya* who in his own days were given rule over regions. The third, sitting also at a distance of ten *dhira`*s from the second, were the court jesters, the lazy and unemployed, and the humorous. However, this third class included none who had disreputable origins, or were of low esteem, or were missing a bodily part, or were too tall or too short, or were hunchbacked, or were accused of homosexual inclinations, or children of craftsmen who practiced despised crafts like

weavers or blood-letters, even if, for instance, such a person could foretell the future or knew all the sciences.

579. Ardashir used to say: “Nothing is more harmful to the soul of a king or a ruler or one possessed of genuine knowledge than to keep the company of a fool or be intimate with an immoral person. Just as the soul can improve itself by being intimate with an honorable, educated, and noble person, so it can become corrupt if intimate with a vile person, to the point where such intimacy can impair the soul, do away with its virtues, and divert it from its praiseworthy and noble qualities. Just as the wind, when passing by some sweet-smelling object, carries with it a sweet odor which revives the soul and senses, so too when it passes by malodorous objects, for it carries a stench with it that pains the soul and does terrible harm to what is precious in it. Corruption is quicker to damage the soul than virtue to reform it, for to destroy is quicker than to build. A wise person would soon discover that intimacy with a disreputable person for one month can corrupt his mind for ages.”

580. Ardashir used to say: “A king must dispense justice abundantly. Justice is the sum-total of all virtues. It is the most impregnable barrier against the dissolution and corruption of royal authority. The first sign of decay in a kingdom is the absence of justice. When the banners of injustice start to wave in some country, this must be fought by the eagles of justice and be made to retreat. No one who keeps the intimate company of kings is more fit to be possessed, at once, of excellent virtues, superior education, charming tales and remarkable anecdotes than his drinking companion. In fact, to the noble character of a king he must join the humility of a servant; to the asceticism of a hermit he must join the toughness of the man of courage; to the dignity of old men he must join the humorous talk of the young. He needs every one of these qualities in case it is not possible for other qualities to be attainable. He

must have vigor of intellect to the point where he can communicate to his master's mind while drinking with him what he has grasped by experience of the master's character. He must be able to detect from his master's looks and gestures that which helps him to overcome his base desires. He cannot be a fit drinking companion unless he possesses good looks and manliness. Good looks mean his clothes should be clean, he should have a pleasing smell and have an eloquent tongue. Manliness means he should be shy when showing pleasure at some act of kindness, be dignified when seated, and have a cheerful face but without being ridiculous. His manliness is not complete until he finds diversion from pleasures.”

581. Ardashir then arranged the social classes, organizing them into seven categories: first, the viziers; then the *Mubidhan* or chief judge, entrusted with religious affairs. He is the chief of *harabidha*, or priests, throughout the kingdom as also of all judges and others who execute the laws. The *isbahbadhs*, or royal deputies, were four in number: the first in Khurasan, the second in the west, the third in the south and the fourth in the north. These four were entrusted with governing the realm, whereby each was given authority over one part of the kingdom and each ruled over one quarter of the realm. Each of these had his own *marzuban*, who were deputies of the above four. Ardashir arranged these four classes, granting royal authority to each man of power and the right to offer counsel when dealing with the ebb and flow of governmental affairs. He then arranged the classes of singers and entertainers and other musical professions.

582. Other monarchs who came after him maintained this structure until the reign of Bahram Jur. This king preserved the classes of the nobility, the sons of kings, the fire temple priests, the hermits and ascetics, the religious scholars and those who engaged in philosophical pursuits.

However, he changed the classes of singers, elevating those in the middle class to the upper class and those in the lower class to the middle class. He changed their classes according to his own enjoyment of a particular entertainer and perverted Ardashir's ordering of the class of entertainers. Later kings followed his example until the coming of Kisra Anushirwan who restored the class of singers to what it had been in the days of Ardashir.

583. All Persian kings from the days of Ardashir were veiled from their drinking companions. Thus between the king and the first classes was a distance of twenty *dhira`*s since the curtain veiling the king was placed at ten *dhira`*s and the curtain from the first class was also at ten *dhira`*s. The official responsible for each curtain was a son of a Persian knight (*asawira*) and was called *Khuram Bash*. When he died another educated son of a knight would replace him and be called by that name. This is a common title of all who occupy that rank and stand in that place. The title itself means "Be cheerful and merry". When the king sat to receive his drinking companions for a bout of drinking, this *Khuram Bash* would order a man to climb to the highest point in the royal hall, raise his voice and chant in a sharp tone that can be heard by all in the assembly: "O tongue, guard your tip for you are now in the company of the king." He then descends. This was their custom whenever the king sat down to partake of entertainments and pleasures. The drinking companions would then occupy their designated places, speaking softly and displaying no gesture until the person in charge of the curtain rises up and announces: "You there, so-and-so, sing, or you there, so-and-so, play on such an instrument in such a mode," meaning modes of music. The early Umayyads also did not appear in the open before their drinking companions, as also the early Abbasid caliphs.

584. Ardashir created agricultural regions and built cities. He left a Testament (*`Ahd*) which circulates widely among people today. When fourteen years---some say fifteen---had elapsed from his reign, his realm had become well ordered and kings had come to obey him because of his might, he became indifferent to the world. Its defects became obvious to him, such as its vain temptations, its finite character, its short duration, and its swift treachery to those who put their trust, or feel secure, in it. The world then appeared to him to be seductive, full of mischief, duplicitous, transitory and evanescent. If, to a human being, one aspect of it appeared to be delectable and sweet, another aspect would soon become bitter and poisonous. He observed how kings who had come before him had built cities and fortresses, led great armies, were more powerful militarily than him and had tougher and better prepared soldiers, yet were all turned into dust and lay beneath the earth. So he resolved to resign from his throne, abandon it and attach himself to fire temples where in calm solitude he could worship the All-Merciful. So he appointed his son Sabur as his successor and crowned him with his own crown, having recognized him as the most self-restrained, the most learned, the most courageous and most powerful of his sons. Ardashir thereafter lived as an ascetic and in solitude with his god in fire temples for a year, though some say for a month and others say more.

585. Ardashir had spent twelve years fighting the independent kings. With some he made a treaty whereby that king would submit to him for fear of his might. Others resisted him so he would march against them and destroy them. The last of them to be killed near the Sawad region of Iraq was a Nabat king called Baba son of Bardina, master of the Palace of Ibn Hubaira, and also king Ardawan. That day, Ardashir was called *Shahanshah*, meaning king of kings. The mother of the Great Sasan was a slave girl from the Israelites who was the daughter of Sanal. There are

reports about Ardashir at the beginning of his reign having to do with his encounter with an ascetic called Tansar, who was a Platonist in outlook and a follower of Socrates and Plato. We have omitted mention of these reports here, having set them forth in detail in our *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat* along with Ardashir's biography, conquests and death.

586. Ardashir has a book called *Karnamij* which mentions his history, wars, travels on earth and conduct. The following advice has been preserved of Ardashir's testament to his son Sabur when he crowned him in his place: "My son, religion and kingship are brothers. Neither can do without the other. Religion is the foundation of kingship and kingship is its protector. What has no foundation will fall into ruin and what has no protector will be lost."

587. The following has been preserved from a letter addressed by Ardashir to some particular classes of subjects and governors: "From Ardashir Bahman, king of kings, to state secretaries who administer the government, to religious jurists who uphold religion, to the knights who guard us in times of war, to ploughmen who build up the land, Peace be upon you. We are in good health, God be thanked. We have removed taxes from our subjects because of our kindness and mercy. We address the following testament to you so keep it in mind: Do not harbor grudges against one another for the enemy will soon attack you; do not indulge in hoarding for famine will overtake you all; give shelter to passers by and you will receive shelter in the hereafter; marry those close to you in kinship because this draws you closer to compassion and affinity; do not trust this world for it never lasts for anyone; do not let it sadden you for nothing happens except with God's will; and yet do not reject the world since the hereafter can only be gained through it."

588. To some of his governors Ardashir wrote: "It has reached me that you prefer gentleness to ruthlessness, affection to awe, cowardice to

daring. Let your acts begin by being tough and end by being gentle. Let no heart be free from awe of you, but do not empty your heart from affection. What I say here need not be difficult for you to grasp for these two moods are close to one another.”

589. Ardashir was followed by his son Sabur who reigned for thirty-three years. He waged war against many kings of the world, developed agricultural districts, and built cities that bore his name just as districts and cities bore his father’s name. The Arabs call him “Sabur of the Armies”. In his days, Mani appeared and preached about the two gods. Sabur abandoned Magianism and took up the religion of Mani which preached light and abandoned darkness. He later returned to Magianism, and Mani fled to India for reasons that forced him to do so which we have mentioned in our previous works.

590. The king of the Romans wrote to Sabur as follows: “Greetings. News has reached me of your policies with respect to your army, your firm control of your possessions, and the security of your subjects, all of which is the result of your wise management. I wish to follow in your footsteps and pursue your policies.” Sabur wrote back: “I achieved this by following eight courses of action: I never treated lightly any order I gave or any prohibition; I never failed to fulfill a promise or a threat; I waged war to gain power and not as a sport; I won the hearts of people through their trust but not through cruelty, and their fear but without causing hatred. I punished for the sake of a crime committed but not out of anger. I made prosperity general and deducted the surplus.”

591. It is said that Sabur wrote to one of his governors: “If you appoint some one to perform a task for you, be generous in paying him his wages, strengthen him through virtuous helpers, and grant him freedom to act. By being generous you limit his greed; by giving him helpers, you strengthen him against criminals; by granting him freedom of action you

make him fear the consequences. Then reveal to him fully the purpose behind your appointment of him so that he can keep this constantly in view and memorize his assignment. If he succeeds in what you assigned to him your purpose is accomplished and you are bound to increase his reward. If he goes against what you commanded, your argument against him is irrefutable and you are free to punish him. Peace.”

592. The testament of Sabur son of Ardashir to his son Hurmuz and to later kings ran as follows: “Let your sublime virtues match the sublimity of your ambitions, your exalted generosity match your exalted endeavors, and the result of your ventures match the result of your efforts.”

593. It is said that the reign of Sabur lasted thirty-one years and one half year and eighteen days. Following him was his son Hurmuz, surnamed the “Hero”, who reigned for one year; some say twenty-two months. He built the city known as Ram Hurmuz in the Ahwaz countryside. To one of his governors he wrote: “To fortify the frontiers, you must lead armies and manage the affairs of state and of the provinces, for only a man who possesses five qualities is fit to undertake that task: sound judgment which enables him to ascertain the true sources of the news that reach him; prudence that prevents him from plunging heedlessly into any crisis except when the right opportunity clearly presents itself; a courage which is not diminished by misfortunes and repeated calamities; a credible seriousness when issuing a promise or a threat, and one that people can be sure will be implemented; and a generosity which makes it easy for him to collect money lawfully.”

594. Following him was Bahram son of Hurmuz who reigned for three years. He waged war against the kings of the east. It is related that Mani son of Fatak, the disciple of Qardun, came to Bahram and expounded to him the religion of Dualism. Bahram pretended to accept his proposal and tricked him into summoning his missionaries who had dispersed in

various countries calling on people to embrace Dualism. Once assembled, he killed Mani and his chief followers. In the days of this Mani the name *Zanadiqa* [Crypto-Manichean] first appeared from which the term *Zandaqa* was derived. This is so because when Zaradusht son of Isbitman appeared among the Persians, as already related regarding his genealogy, and brought them the book known as *Basta* in the ancient Persian language, he further produced a commentary on it called *Zand*. This in turn was followed by a commentary on the commentary called *Barzand*. All this has already been set forth above. The *Zand* was in fact an interpretation of the earlier revelation. Whoever introduced anything into their revealed law which contradicted the revelation, i.e. the *Basta*, and relied instead on the interpretation, which is the *Zand*, would be described as a *Zandi*. They would describe him as one who followed the interpretation which conflicts with the revelation and who abandoned the literal meaning found in revelation. When the Arabs appeared on the scene, they took that term from the Persians and Arabized it into *Zindiq*. Thus, the Dualists are the *Zanadiqa*. But the term* was also applied to anyone who believed in the pre-eternity of the world and rejected the creation of the world.

595. He was followed by Bahram son of Bahram, who reigned for seventeen years; other dates are also given. From his early days as king he turned wholly towards revelry, pleasure, hunting and picnics, caring nothing for his kingdom or the affairs of his subjects. He distributed agricultural estates as fiefs among his intimates or whoever attached himself to him among his servants and courtiers. The estates fell into ruin and were emptied of those who tended them while the estate holders resided in the prosperous estates. Thus, cultivated land diminished except for the estates granted as fiefs, from whose holders no tax was gathered because they were in collusion with the king's viziers and intimates. The

viziers had been entrusted with the running of the kingdom. So the country declined, cultivated land shrank, the treasuries were depleted, and the strong elements among the military became weak while the weak elements perished.

596. One day he rode out to one of his recreational parks where he hunted. Riding towards al-Mada'in he was overtaken by night. The moon was full. A stray thought occurred to him, so he summoned the *Mubidh*, who was in his entourage. The king began to converse with him and to ask him about the history of his ancestors. As they travelled, they arrived at a ruined site which was once a very famous agricultural estate that had fallen into ruin during his reign. There was no human there and nothing but owls, one screeching and another answering it amidst the ruins. The king said to the *Mubidh*: "Do you suppose that any human being has been granted the knowledge to understand the language of owls screeching in this quiet night?" The *Mubidh* responded: "O king, I have been privileged by God to understand it." The king pressed him for an explanation and the *Mubidh* insisted he spoke the truth. "Tell me, then," said the king, "What is this bird saying and what is the other answering him?" The *Mubidh* said: "One is a male owl and the other is a female. He is saying to her: 'Let me enjoy intimacy with you so that we produce progeny who glorify God and so that we leave behind descendants in this world who will repeatedly call upon God to have mercy on our souls.' The female owl answered him, 'What you ask me to do is the greatest of good fortune and the most bounteous of destinies in this world and the next. However, I must state certain conditions which, if you comply with them, I will respond to your call.' The male asked, 'What are these conditions?' She responded, 'The first of these is that, if I surrender myself to you and respond to your desire, you are to give me as a fief twenty ruined villages from among the ones formerly most prosperous that fell into ruin

in the days of this fortunate king.’ The king said, ‘So what did the male say in response?’ The *Mubidh* answered, ‘The male said: If the reign of this fortunate king lasts any longer, I shall grant you a thousand ruined villages, but what will you do with them?’ She responded, ‘When we come together our progeny will grow and multiply. To each of our children we will give a ruined village as a fief.’ The male said, ‘This is the easiest request you have made to me and the easiest thing you can ask of me. I have already given you my word and am fully ready to implement it, so fulfil your part of the bargain.’”

597. When the king heard this from the *Mubidh*, it affected him deeply. He was roused from his slumber and thought about what had been said to him. At once he dismounted, as did the people with him, and he took the *Mubidh* aside and said to him, “You who guards the religion, gives counsel to the king and reminds him of what he has neglected and ruined of the affairs of his kingdom and his subjects, tell me, what is this speech you have addressed to me? You have agitated in me what once was dormant and made me aware of what I have neglected.” The *Mubidh* answered, “It was by chance that I encountered the king of happy fortune at a moment of good fortune for his subjects and his realm, and was thus able to make of my words a parable and a reminder, through the tongue of the bird, when the king asked me his question.” The king said, “O good counselor, reveal to me the purpose behind this parable and the meaning you intended. What is meant by it and how will it end?” The *Mubidh* answered, “O king of happy fortune, kingship cannot attain greatness except by following the religious law, worshipping God, obeying him and acting in accordance with his commands and prohibitions. Religious law cannot be properly instituted except through kingship. Kingship cannot attain greatness except through men. Men cannot be sustained except through wealth. Wealth cannot be attained

except through prosperity. Prosperity cannot be attained except through justice, and justice is the scales instituted among mankind and placed there by God, who has appointed the king as its guardian.”

598. The king said: “You have spoken the truth. Explain clearly to me what you have in mind and do so unambiguously.” The *Mubidh* answered: “I will do so, O king. You turned to the estates, and expropriated them from their owners and tillers, who are the main taxpayers and from whom wealth is primarily derived. You then distributed them as fiefs to courtiers, royal servants, the idle and others. These people were quick to help themselves to the revenues, seeking fast profit, neglected the upkeep of the land, were heedless as to consequences, and totally ignored the good of the estates. They were exempt from paying taxes because of their closeness to the king. Great harm befell the tax-payers and caretakers of estates who were left behind, so they abandoned their lands and homes and sought refuge with the lords of prosperous estates. Affluence declined, the estates fell into ruin, wealth decreased, soldiers and subjects perished and nearby kings and nations coveted the Persian realm once they realized that the resources which normally support a kingdom had dried up.”

599. When the king heard what the *Mubidhan* had to say, he stayed where he was for three days, summoned his viziers, state secretaries and heads of government bureaus, and ordered the decrees granting fiefs to be presented to him. The estates granted to the elite and courtiers were stripped from them and restored to their original owners who were made responsible for their earlier taxes and were ordered to rebuild the land. The weak among them grew strong again, the land prospered and became fertile, wealth increased in the hands of tax-gatherers, the soldiery grew strong again, the enemy’s designs were frustrated and the frontier posts were reinforced. The king then took it upon himself to attend personally

and at all times to the affairs of state and to be fully apprized of the circumstances of the elite and commoners. Thus, his reign grew in strength and his realm became well ordered to the point where his days were called feast-days because of the prosperity and good deeds that all people experienced, and because of widespread justice.

600. Following him was Bahram son of Bahram son of Bahram, who ruled for four years and four months before he died. Following him was Narsi son of king Bahram son of Bahram the Hero, who reigned for seven years---some say seven and a half. He was followed by Hurmuz son of Narsi son of Bahram, according to the genealogy already cited, who reigned for seven years and five months. Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna related on the authority of `Umar Kisra that all the Sasanid kings we have so far mentioned down to this king, that is, Hurmuz son of Narsi, resided in Jundaisabur, in the territory of Khuzistan. Ya`qub ibn al-Laith al-Saffar* had wanted to reside in Jundaisabur, emulating the ancient Sasanid kings until he died there. Later in this book we shall make mention of the caliph al-Mu`tamid and how he resided in that city and died there.

601. Following Hurmuz son of Narsi was his son Sabur son of Hurmuz, surnamed Sabur “of the Shoulders”. He reigned for seventy-two years until his death. His father had designated him as his successor while still in his mother’s womb. Meanwhile, the Arabs had overwhelmed the Sawad of Iraq and the Persian viziers took over the running of affairs. The most courageous Arab tribe that overpowered Iraq was the progeny of Iyad ibn Nizar ; they were called *Tabaq* because they had overcome (*atbaqa*) that land. Their king at the time was al-Harith ibn al-Agharr al-Iyadi. When Sabur was sixteen years old he mobilized his knights to ride out and entrap the Arabs. The tribe of Iyad used to spend summer in al-Jazira and winter in Iraq. In the army of Sabur there was a man from Iyad

called Laqit who wrote to his tribe to warn them and to inform them of those marching against them, doing so in the following verses:

*Laqit sends peace in this letter
To the tribe of Iyad in al-Jazira.
A lion is about to pounce on you suddenly,
So do not feel secure as you tend your sheep.
Seventy thousand of them are advancing upon you,
Driving forth [reading yajurruna] their battalions, like locusts,
Mounted on horses that shall attack you [reading sata 'tikumu].
Near is the moment when you will be destroyed
Like the destruction of `Ad*.*

602. Iyad took no notice of his letter though their enemy kept raiding Iraq and attacking the Sawad. When finally their enemy was mobilized and ready to attack, Laqit sent another letter telling them that the enemy were now fully mobilized and on the march towards them, expressing himself also in verses, which begin as follows:

*O abode of `Abla, your remembrance fills me with anguish;
You have stirred up in me anxieties, sorrows and pain.
Tell Iyad and spread the news to their leaders:
My view, if I am not disobeyed, is that the matter has become obvious.
God damn you! Do you not fear a people marching upon you [reading mashu]
Like locusts crawling speedily?
If their horde were to smash into
The highest peaks of Mount Thahlan*, these peaks would fracture.
So entrust leadership, may you prosper,
To one who is valorous, and experienced in affairs of war.*

603. Sabur then fell upon them and slaughtered most of them, and only a few of them were able to escape to the land of the Byzantines. He then

dislocated the shoulders of the Arabs and was thus called Sabur of the Shoulders. Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan* had corresponded with the Tamim tribe in Iraq urging them to rebel against `Ali ibn Abi Talib*. When `Ali heard of this, he, and in one of his assemblies where he spoke at length, quoted the following verses:

*A clan that thinks virtue is vice,
Or thinks treachery is a wise policy,
Is on the verge of destruction,
As Sabur destroyed Iyad in the Sawad.*

During his march, Sabur arrived at the land of Bahrain, then inhabited by the Tamim tribe, so he proceeded to slaughter them. The Tamim escaped, their chief at the time being `Amr ibn Tamim ibn Murr, who was then three hundred years old. He used to be hung up in a basket specially made for him on a column of their temple. They wanted to take him away with them but he refused, insisting on their leaving him behind in their land, saying: "I am about to die, today or tomorrow, and not much of a lifespan remains to me. Perhaps God will save you, through me, from the ravages of this king who has been given power over the Arabs." So they left him where he was. The cavalry of Sabur arrived the next morning and found that the population had fled but saw a basket hanging from a tree. `Amr heard the neighing of horses and their trampling, and men muttering, so he cried out in a weak voice. They then seized him and took him to Sabur.

604. When placed before him, Sabur noted the clear signs of old age and decrepitude upon him and said: "Who are you, O mortal old man?" He answered: "My name is `Amr ibn Tamim ibn Murr, and I have reached the age that you can see. The people have fled from you because of your slaughter and cruel punishments, but I have preferred to die by your hands so that the remainder of my people might live. It may be that God,

lord of the heavens and the earth, might bring them relief at your hands and dissuade you from your intention to slaughter them. I shall now, with your permission, ask you a question.” Sabur said: “Speak and we shall listen.” `Amr asked: “What is it that drives you to kill your subjects and the Arab notables?” Sabur responded: “I kill them because of the evil they committed in my country and against the people of my kingdom.” `Amr said: “They did so when you were not yet in charge of your people but when you reached maturity they [Arabs] stopped their evil from awe of you.” Sabur answered: “I kill them because we Persian kings find in our learned traditions and in the histories of our ancestors that the Arabs will in future overcome us and conquer our realm.” `Amr asked: “Is this something you know for certain or just speculation?” “It is indeed something I know for certain and is inevitable,” said Sabur. `Amr said: “If you know this for certain, why then do you act so unjustly towards the Arabs? I swear to God, if you were to spare the lives of all Arabs and be good to them, they would reciprocate your decent behavior by being kind to your people when they overwhelm your state. If your own days were to last until then, they would reward you when they attain power over you by sparing you and your people. If the matter is truly as you say it is, this would be a more prudent policy and be more beneficial in its consequences. If it is false, why this rush to commit evil by slaughtering your subjects?” Sabur answered: “It is all true and power shall pass to you. Your view is the right one. You have been sincere in your speech and counsel.” Sabur then sent out a town crier to proclaim amnesty and security and stop the bloodshed and the killing. It is said that `Amr lived on for eighty more years though some say less. God knows best.

605. Sabur then marched on al-Sham, conquering cities and killing many Byzantines. He was minded to enter Byzantine territory in disguise in order to learn about their affairs and customs, so he donned a disguise

and travelled to Constantinople. There, he found a banquet in progress held by Caesar in which both elite and commoners participated, so he went in among them and sat at a table. Caesar had previously commanded a painter to go to Sabur's camp and paint his picture. When the painter brought back his painting, Caesar ordered it to be carved onto the gold and silver drinking utensils. A person seated at the same table as Sabur picked up a goblet, looked at the image on it as Sabur sat facing him, and was struck by how closely the two images resembled each other. So he went to the king and told him, and the king commanded him to be brought into his presence. When he asked him who he was, Sabur answered: "I am a knight of Sabur who merited punishment for something I committed and this led me to enter your land." They did not believe him and brought him to be executed so he confessed his true identity.

606. Sabur was placed inside the skin of a cow. Caesar then marched with his army until he reached the middle of Iraq, conquering cities, raiding and lopping off the tops of palm trees, until he reached the city of Jundaisabur [Jundishapur]. The Persian notables had fortified themselves in that city. Caesar camped outside it and the Byzantines celebrated one of their feast-days that night, getting ready to conquer the city the following morning. Those guarding Sabur neglected to do so and became drunk. Near Sabur was a group of Persian prisoners, whom he addressed, urging them to untie one another and to pour oil on him from skins found nearby. They did so, the leather in which he was wrapped grew soft and he was able to slip out. He then came to the city on whose walls guards were set in rotation. He spoke to them and they recognized him and pulled him up by ropes to them. He then opened the weapon depots and led them out distributing them along certain dispositions of the [Byzantine] army. Meanwhile the Byzantines were totally oblivious and

felt secure. When the *nawaqis* (hand bells) were sounded, the army was attacked and the Byzantines were defeated. Caesar was then led in as a prisoner. Sabur spared his life and attached him to his other men who had escaped the slaughter. Caesar then planted olive trees in Iraq to compensate for the palms he had earlier destroyed. The olive was not then known in Iraq. He also built the *shadhrawan* of the city of Tustar on its river, the *shadhrawan* being a great dike, and a lock made of stone, iron and lead. He further rebuilt what he had destroyed. All this is told in histories at length, but too long to mention here. Caesar then departed for the land of the Byzantines.

607. It is related in some histories that Sabur cut Caesar up and severed the tendons of his heels or cauterized them, and that the Byzantines do not sever the tendons of their beasts of burden nor wear sandals with heels. Concerning this matter, al-Harith ibn Janada known as al-Hurmuzan wrote the following verses:

*They [Persians] ruled over all peoples everywhere,
They severed the tendons of Hercules* in the Sawad.
They killed Abu Qabus* by force,
And they recaptured the plains from Iyad.*

608. Regarding the actions of Sabur and how he exposed himself to danger by entering the land of his enemy as a spy, an early Persian poet composed the following verses:

*Sabur was the most distinguished of his royal line;
Selected from that line, he came to lose his freedom.
When in the land of the Byzantines he roamed as a spy,
Circling around death [reading *hawm al-maniyyati*], avoiding the guile of
cunning men.
They took him prisoner. It was an odd stumble for him to commit,
A mistake by one who did not make mistakes.*

The Byzantine king now devastated the land of Iraq,

Wreaking terror and havoc.

He [Sabur] jabbered to the Persians at the gates and they rallied to him,

Like lions calling to one another in a thicket.

*With the sword he cut off the Byzantine presence and they were
eradicated,*

How excellent you are among those who exact revenge!

Here they were, planting olive trees to compensate for the palm trees

They had lopped off or cut with a saw.

609. Thereafter, Sabur invaded the lands of al-Jazira, Amid and other Byzantine territories, transferring many of their populations and settling them in the lands of al-Sus, Tustar and other cities in the Ahwaz countryside. There, they multiplied and settled the land. From that time on, the Tustar silk brocade (*dibaj*) and other kinds of silk were manufactured in Tustar while silk fabric was produced in al-Sus and curtains and mattresses were made in the territory of Nisibin, which are still on sale today. Sasanian kings before Sabur and many earlier kings among First Persians used to reside in Ctesiphon, west of al-Mada'in in Iraq. Sabur resided on the eastern side of al-Mada'in and there he built the Monument (*Iwan*) known until today as Iwan Kisra. Abarwiz son of Hurmuz had built certain segments of that Iwan.

610. The caliph Harun al-Rashid was once camped on the banks of the Tigris, near the Iwan. He heard one servant behind his tent saying to another: "The fellow who built this monument is a cursed son of so-and-so. He wanted to climb upon it in order to reach heaven." Al-Rashid ordered a chamberlain to flog him a hundred lashes, saying to those in attendance: "Royalty establishes kinship and thus all kings are brothers. Self-respect impels me to discipline him in order to protect royalty from insult and to emphasize what kings owe to one another." It is related of

the caliph al-Rashid after the downfall of the Barmakids* that he sent a message to Yahya ibn Khalid ibn Barmak, then in jail, asking for his advice as to the tearing down of the Iwan. Yahya sent back a message: “Do not do it.” The caliph said to his courtiers: “Magianism is still in his heart of hearts, as also his sympathy for it and his desire not to destroy its monuments.” So the caliph ordered them to begin its destruction. Soon, however, he found that he needed a vast amount of money to do so, too large to estimate, and ordered the work of destruction to cease. Once again he wrote to Yahya to inform him of what had happened and Yahya answered by advising him to spend whatever monies were needed to tear it down, urging him strongly to do so. Al-Rashid was surprised by this contradictory advice as between his first and second response and sent a message asking him to explain himself. Yahya answered him as follows: “Yes, indeed. My first advice was based on my desire to immortalize the nation of Islam and to exalt its reputation. Thus, whoever comes in later centuries from among diverse nations and sees this vast monument would say to himself that a nation which had conquered another that had built such a monument, erased its vestiges and overpowered its realm must clearly be a great and mighty and invincible nation. My second advice proceeded from the fact that, when informed that the work of destruction had commenced then could no longer be completed, I wanted to avoid ascribing impotence to the nation of Islam so that whoever comes in later times might say that this nation was unable to tear down what the Persians had built.” When al-Rashid heard that explanation he said: “God damn him! I never heard him say anything but the truth.” He then abandoned its destruction.

611. Sabur was the one who built the city of Nisabur [Nishapur] in Khurasan as well as other cities in Persia and Iraq. Reigning after Sabur son of Hurmuz was his brother Ardashir son of Hurmuz, who reigned for

four years before he was deposed. Then came Sabur son of Sabur for five years---plus four months, it is said. He waged many wars against the tribe of Iyad ibn Nizar and other Arabs. A poet from Iyad composed the following verses about him:

*In spite of Sabur son of Sabur, the tents of Iyad
Are now teeming with horses and camels.*

It is also reported that this verse was recited by some individuals who had escaped to Byzantine territory when Sabur of the Shoulders had decimated their tribe, as mentioned above. These individuals later returned to their homeland and joined the tribe of Rabi`a from the progeny of Bakr ibn Wa`il. Rabi`a had come to dominate the Sawad and raided the realm of Sabur son of Sabur, so the Iyad poet recited the verse quoted above when they were part of Rabi`a. Other versions of this narrative exist but God knows the truth.

612. Sabur was followed by Bahram son of Sabur who reigned for ten, some say eleven, years. He was followed by Yazdjird son of Sabur, known as “the Sinner”, who reigned for twenty-one years, five months and eighteen days until his death. Another version has twenty-two years less two months. He was followed by Bahram son of Yazdjird, known as Bahram Jur, who reigned for twenty-three years. He became king at age twenty. He and his horse sank in a pool of mud when out hunting. The Persians were deeply distressed because his justice had spread widely as also his generosity, his mercy towards his subjects and his orderly reign. In his days, Khaqan, king of the Turks, had marched on Sughd and sent out raids into his realm. It is reported that he arrived in the territory of Rayy. Bahram mobilized his army and turned away from the main road with a detachment of his troops until he fell upon Khaqan and his soldiers and killed him, and carried his head with him back to Iraq. The kings of the earth were in awe of him, and Caesar made peace with him and paid

him tribute. Before that, Bahram had entered India in disguise to spy out their state of affairs. He attached himself to Shabrama, an Indian king, and performed exceedingly well in one of that king's wars where he made him overcome his enemy. The king gave him his daughter in marriage under the impression that he was a Persian knight.

613. Bahram had been raised with the Arabs in al-Hira* and could recite Arabic poetry and speak all languages. On his ring was inscribed the phrase "Through great deeds great achievements are won." Stories are told of how he obtained kingship after his father, and how he seized the crown as well as the camel placed between two lions, together with other stories and exploits too numerous to be mentioned here. Thus, tales are told as to why he was called Bahram Jur and what innovations he introduced in his days into archery by studying both the inner and outer parts of the bow. All these stories have been related in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In these two works, we mentioned what Persians and Turks have said about the structure of the bow and the way it is constructed according to the four humors, like those of a human being, and what they related regarding styles of aiming in archery.

614. The following verses are preserved from among what Bahram Jur recited when he captured and killed Khaqan:

I said to him when I scattered his troops:

It is as though you have never heard of the exploits of Bahram.

I am the guardian of the whole Persian realm,

And no realm can prosper without a guardian.

He also recited:

People of all lands have come to know

That they are now my slaves.

I overcame their kings and subjugated those among them

Who were mighty, lordly and obeyed.

*Here are their lions, crouching down in fear,
And lions are terrified of me.
If some king of the earth whispered against me,
I would muster against him battalions and armies.
He would then submit to me or else I would drive him out,
Wailing in chains and shackles.*

He has many poems in Arabic and Persian which we have chosen not to quote here, aiming for brevity and concision.

615. He was succeeded by Yazdajird son of Bahram who reigned for nineteen years—some say eighteen years, four months and eighteen days. He had built a wall of brick and mud in the region of al-Bab wa'l Abwab, as mentioned earlier in this book when speaking about al-Bab wa'l Abwab and the Caucasus Mountain.

616. Yazdajird summoned a wise man of that age who lived in a distant region of his kingdom, seeking to be improved by his moral teachings and to benefit from his advice in order to perfect his rule over his subjects. The king asked him: "O wise man, what is good government?" The man answered: "Kindness to subjects, taking what is due from them without causing them hardship, winning their friendship through acting justly, making the roads safe and protecting the wronged from the wrongdoer." The king asked: "How does a king become good?" "Through his viziers and helpers. If these are upright, he becomes a good king. If corrupt, he becomes corrupt." Yazdajird asked: "People have discussed at length the causes of civil strife. Tell me: what gives rise to it and enflames it, and what pacifies and prevents it?" "It is enflamed by spite and caused by a general state of unruliness. This state is engendered in particular by an atmosphere of disdain, is fortified by tongues expressing freely what is in hearts, an anxiety that overrides all else, expectations that cannot easily be fulfilled, and a happy sleep followed by

waking up to a dispossessed reality. What pacifies civil strife is the readiness to face its dangers before they occur, to prefer serious action to the temptations of levity, and to act decisively both when angry and when contented.”

617. He was succeeded by Hurmuz son of Yazdajird. His brother Fairuz challenged his authority then killed him and took over power; he is Fairuz son of Yazdajird son of Bahram. Fairuz reigned for twenty-seven years until he was killed by Akhshunwaz, king of the Hayatila [Hephthalites] in the city of Marwarrudh, in Khurasan. The Hephthalites are the Sughd who live between Bukhara and Samarqand. Fairuz was succeeded by Balash son of king Fairuz who reigned for four years. He was followed by Qubadh son of Fairuz in whose days there appeared Mazdak the heretic, after whom Mazdakism is named. Stories are told about him and Qubadh and about the laws and tricks he innovated and practiced on the commoners until he was killed by Anushirwan during his reign. Qubadh reigned for forty-three years before he died. He was followed by his son Anushirwan son of Qubadh son of Fairuz who reigned for forty-eight years--- some say forty-seven years and eight months.

618. Qubadh had been deposed and a brother called Jamasb was installed in his place for about two years, due to some incident related to Mazdak and his followers. Anushirwan went to seek the aid of Zarmihr son of Sukhra until Qubadh was restored to the throne. A long story is told about these events. When Anushirwan ascended the throne he executed Mazdak followed by eighty thousand of his followers. This took place between Jazir and al-Nahrawan in the land of Iraq and that day Anushirwan acquired his name which means “a new reign”. He then rallied his subjects to the Magian religion and forbade them to engage in arguments and disputations about religions.

619. He then marched towards al-Bab wa'l Abwab and the Caucasus Mountain because of raids conducted by kings of that region against his realm. He built the wall in the sea on the skins of cows bloated with rocks, iron and lead. As the wall rose, the skins sank until they rested on the sea-bed while the wall itself rose above the water. Men with daggers and knives then dived into the sea and split the skins so the wall was firmly entrenched on the sea-bed and above the earth. That wall is still there today, i.e. in the year 332. The part of the wall in the sea is called "al-Qaid" [barrier] and prevents enemy ships from approaching. He then extended the wall onto the mainland between the Caucasus Mountain and the sea, and placed gates in it facing the infidels, and made the wall to extend further into the mountain, as we already mentioned when we spoke about the Caucasus and the Bab. Reports exist of Anushirwan and his dealings with the Khazar kings until he was able to build the wall. It is said that he did so through instilling fear among the nations in that region until they submitted to him.

620. Anushirwan then headed to Iraq. There, he received ambassadors of various kings with their gifts, and delegations from diverse kingdoms. Among those who came to him was an ambassador of the Byzantine Caesar bearing gifts and presents. The ambassador looked at the Iwan and admired its construction but noticed a warp in its floor area and said: "The courtyard should have been square in shape". He was told: "An old woman had a house where you see a deflection. Anushirwan asked her gently to sell her house, offering her a tempting price, but she refused to sell so he did not force her, and that warp remained as you see it." The Byzantine said: "That warp is actually prettier than a straight line."

621. Anushirwan travelled throughout his land and realm, fortifying construction works, building castles and forts, and mobilizing soldiers. He then deceived Caesar, marched to al-Jazira, conquered its cities and

reached the Euphrates and crossed into al-Sham. There he conquered its cities among which were Aleppo, Qinnasrin, Homs and Apamia, which is between Antioch and Homs. He went on to Antioch, where a nephew of Caesar was residing, and besieged then captured it. He also captured a major city with dense habitations and marvelous construction located on the seashore of Antioch. Its traces and ruins can still be seen to the present day and was called Saluqiya [Seleucia by the Sea]. He proceeded to conquer cities in al-Sham and the Byzantine lands, carrying off precious stones and wealth as booty, shedding blood and sending out military expeditions until Caesar sued for peace and offered him tribute and taxes. Anushirwan agreed, and transported from al-Sham marble and all sorts of mosaics and colored stones. Mosaics are a substance that is cooked from glass and gaily-colored stones which are then used to cover surfaces on the ground and on buildings, appearing like gems. Some of it resembles transparent silver bowls. All this he carried to Iraq where he built a city in the vicinity of al-Mada'in which he called Rumiya, constructing it inside the walls by using the kinds of stones we mentioned, in imitation of Antioch and other cities in al-Sham. That city had a mud wall which now lies in ruin and is still known by the name indicated above.

622. The Khaqan of the Turks gave him his daughter and niece in marriage and the kings of India and Sind, of north and south, and of all kingdoms made peace with him. Gifts were conveyed to him and delegations would visit him fearing his aggression, his numerous troops, his wide realm, his past aggression against kings and the kings he slaughtered, together with his respect for justice. The king of China wrote the following to him: "From Faghfur, king of China, owner of the jeweled palace where two rivers run irrigating aloes and camphor, whose scent can be smelled at a distance of two *farsakhs*; who is served by the

daughters of a thousand kings; whose stables contain a thousand white elephants, to his brother Kisra Anushirwan.” He sent him a present of a mounted knight made of pearls set in order. The eyes of the rider and horse were made of red rubies while his sword’s hilt was made of emerald arrayed with jewels. He also presented him with a gilded silken robe on which was a picture of the king sitting in his royal chamber in all his finery and with the crown on his head. Behind him stood his servants carrying whisks. The picture was embroidered in gold while the hem of the robe was in lapis lazuli. This was placed in a golden basket and carried by a slave woman hidden beneath her long hair and glowing with beauty. Other presents were also offered from among the wondrous products imported from China and such as are given by kings to their peers.

623. The king of India wrote to him: “From the king of India and the greatest of eastern leaders, lord of the golden palace and gates of ruby and pearl, to his brother the king of Persia, lord of crown and banner, Kisra Anushirwan.” He sent him a present of one thousand *mann* of Indian aloes wood which melts in the fire like wax and can be stamped like wax so that the inscription on it can be clearly made out. He also presented him with a bowl made of red carnelian a *shibr* in width and filled with pearls; ten *mann* of camphor the size of pistachio or even bigger; and a slave woman seven *shibrs* tall whose eyelashes reached down to her cheeks and between whose eyelids shone a glow like lightening, so white were her eyeballs. Her skin was pure, her proportions were perfect, her frame was most shapely, her eyebrows were arched and her braids dragged behind her. He also sent him a rug made of snake-skin smoother than silk and prettier than embroidered fabric. The Indian king’s letter was enclosed in the bark of a tree known as *kadhi* and written in red gold. This tree grows in India and China and is a strange

kind of plant, beautiful in color and sweetly scented. Its bark is thinner than Chinese paper and is used for correspondence between the kings of China and India.

624. While in his camp fighting some enemy, Anushirwan received a letter from the king of Tibet that ran as follows: “From Khaqan, king of Tubbatan and eastern lands adjacent to China and India, to his brother of praiseworthy conduct and power, king of the middle kingdom at the center of the seven climes.” He presented him with wondrous gifts such as are brought from Tibet, including one hundred Tibetan cuirasses, one hundred pieces of metal caparisons, one hundred golden Tibetan shields and four thousand *mann* of musk from his own treasuries and in the musk bags of its gazelles.

625. Anushirwan had marched beyond the Balkh river, ending up in Khuttalan where he killed Akhshunwaz, king of the Hephthalites, in revenge for his grandfather Fairuz. He overran his kingdom and added it to his realm. From India he had received the book called *Kalila wa Dimna**, the game of chess and the black dye known as Indian dye. This is the dye whose black color glows in the visible roots of hair when dyed with it, and does not fade at all. It is reported that Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik* used that dye.

626. Anushirwan had a huge table made of gold and studded with jewels. On its sides was written: “May the food be wholesome to one who eats lawfully and who gives the needy what remains of the food. What you eat when craving for it you have eaten well; what you eat when you do not crave it has eaten you.” He had four rings: one for the land tax whose stone was carnelian on which was inscribed the word “Justice”; one ring for the royal estates whose stone was turquoise and inscribed “Prosperity”; one for military aid whose stone was dark ruby and

inscribed “Caution”; and one for the postal service whose stone was a fiery red ruby inscribed “Loyalty”.

627. Anushirwan instituted the land-tax system in Iraq, imposing on each *jarib** of wheat and barley in the Sawad* one *dirham*, on rice half and two-thirds, on every four Persian palm trees one *dirham*, on every six *daqal* palm trees one *dirham*, on every six olive stumps one *dirham*, on vineyards eight *dirhams*, and on every green field seven *dirhams*. These are seven kinds of agricultural produce; the rest he left untaxed, since they were common to both humans and beasts. Anushirwan used to be called “Kisra the Beneficent” and poets have mentioned him in their verse. Thus `Adiyy ibn Zayd al-`Ibadi composed the following lines:

*Where now is Anushirwan, best of kings,
And where before him is Sabur?
Death was not in awe of him,
So kingship left him and his gate is abandoned.
When they departed they became like dry leaves
Scattered by the east and west winds.*

628. One day Anushirwan sat and received wise men to benefit from their wisdom. When seated in their proper order in his assembly, he asked them: “Give me some wise advice of benefit to me personally and to my subjects.” Each sage then delivered his ready-to-hand opinion while Anushirwan bent his head in thought as each of them spoke. It was finally the turn of Buzurjmihir son of al-Bakhtakan who said: “O king, I will summarize my advice under twelve headings.” The king said: “Let’s hear them.” Buzurjmihir said: “First is fear of God in moments of craving, desire, fear, anger and caprice, so when any of these states occur, direct them towards God and not towards people; second is truthfulness in word, and fulfillment of promises, conditions, covenants and pacts; third is consulting with scholars in affairs of state; fourth is honoring scholars,

the nobility, frontier guards, army commanders, secretaries of state and dependents, according to their ranks; fifth is to investigate the judiciary and the governors and to hold them to a fair accounting by rewarding the virtuous and punishing the culprits; sixth is to investigate the conditions of people in prison by reviewing their cases from time to time so that the criminals are kept in chains and the innocent are released; seventh, the upkeep of highways and people's markets, prices and trading practices; eighth, disciplining the subjects properly for offenses committed and executing punishments; ninth, keeping weapons and all other implements of war in a state of readiness; tenth, honoring family, children and kin and finding out what is to their benefit; eleventh, placing spies on frontier posts to know what needs to be feared and take the necessary steps before aggression occurs; twelfth, investigating viziers and other officials and replacing those who are dishonest or infirm." Anushirwan ordered these words to be written down in gold and said: "These words summarize all royal policies."

629. Among the wise words of Anushirwan that have been preserved are the following. He was once asked: "What is the greatest of all treasures in value and the most useful in times of need?" He responded: "A good deed done to a free man and a knowledge transmitted to posterity."

Anushirwan was asked: "Who among people is longest lived?" He answered: "He whose knowledge is great and those who come after him are educated by that knowledge, or else one who does virtuous deeds so that his progeny feels honored by him." It was Anushirwan who said: "Doing favors is fecund, and rendering thanks is a thing that multiplies. He who does a favor causes the man who thanks him to render him proper thanks." He also said: "Do not count misers among the trustworthy nor the deceitful among the free." To Buzurjmihir he once said: "Whichever of my children is fit to be king you must support his

candidature and clearly specify him.” Buzurjmihir answered: “I do not know your children but I will describe to you those who are fit to be kings: those who rise highest in achievement; those who most seek to be educated; those who feel most sympathy for their subjects; those who are most merciful to them; those who are kindest to kin, and those who are furthest from injustice. He who possesses these qualities is most fit to be king.”

630. Al-Mas`udi said: In my book called *al-Zulaf*, I listed the qualities which entitle one to assume kingship, together with what old Persian sages and Greek philosophers have said about this subject, such as Plato and what he mentioned in his book *al-Siyasa al-Madaniyya* [The Political Regime] as also the views of thinkers who came after him. It is reported that Buzurjmihir said: “I once observed in Anushirwan two contradictory qualities the like of which I never saw in him before. One day he sat to receive the people and a close kinsman of his approached. His vizier waved him away so Anushirwan ordered the vizier removed from office and not be admitted to his presence for one whole year. This is because he had overstepped the rank assigned to him and elevated himself above others in the assembly. On another occasion, we were closeted with him discussing some secret affair of state. Behind his throne stood his servants chatting to one another. Their voices then rose to the point where we could no longer pursue our discussion. I raised with him the contrast between the two occasions and he said: ‘This is no cause for surprise. We are kings over our subjects and our servants are kings over our lives. When we are all alone, they have power over us and we have no way of protecting ourselves from them.’”

631. Anushirwan used to say: “Kingship thrives through soldiers, soldiers through wealth, wealth through the land-tax, the land-tax through prosperity, prosperity through justice, justice through good state officials,

and good state officials through good viziers. But the most important thing of all is for the king to control his personal inclinations and be able to discipline his soul in order to govern it and not allow it to govern him.” He used to say: “The welfare of the subjects is more cause for victory than numerous soldiers, and the justice of a king is of greater benefit than general prosperity.” He also said: “The days of joy pass like the blink of an eye; the days of sorrow last for what seems like months.” Al-Mas`udi said: Many commendable reports and anecdotes are told about Anushirwan which we have related in our previous works, as also his conduct during his extensive travels, the cities and forts he built, and his stationing of warriors on frontier posts.

632. His son, Hurmuz son of Anushirwan son of Qubadh, succeeded him. His mother, Faqum, was daughter of Khaqan, king of the Turks, though others claim that she was the daughter of a Khazar king who lived beyond al-Bab wa'l Abwab. He reigned for twelve years. He was prejudiced against the elite and inclined towards the commoners, whom he brought close to him, preferring the company of the urban rabble (*rubaidiyya*) and the lowest classes of commoners and urging them to harass the nobility. It is claimed that during his reign he killed thirteen thousand well-known members of the Persian elite. When eleven years of his reign had elapsed, his royal authority began to crumble and its foundations to collapse. His enemies advanced against him and rebellions increased. He had abolished the laws of the *Mubidhan*, thereby transgressing religion and customary practice and had changed the laws and abolished taxes. Among those marching against him was Shabah son of Shab, a great Turkish monarch leading four hundred thousand troops, who camped in the vicinity of Herat, Badghis and Bushanj, in the land of Khurasan.

633. From the borders of his realm there marched against him leaders (*tarakhina*)* of the Khazar in a great army. They conducted cavalry raids

in territories near that region while their kings in the Caucasus region made peace with one another and forgave their mutual blood-feuds. A Byzantine general [*batriq*, i.e. patricius] leading eighty thousand troops marched into lands neighboring al-Jazira, while a mighty Arab army from the tribes of Qahtan and Ma`add from the vicinity of Yemen marched against him, led by al-`Abbas, known as the “Squint-eyed”, and `Amr known as the “Broad-mouthed”. Hurmuz was deeply dismayed and summoned the chief *Mubidhan* and other wise counselors whom he had disregarded, and consulted them. They came to the conclusion that the best course of action was to make peace with three of the enemies and to mollify them, but to face Shabah son of Shab. To fight him, Hurmuz appointed Bahram Jubin, governor of al-Rayy.* Bahram was a descendant of Jubin son of Milad, from the progeny of Anush known as the Archer (*al-Ram*). He led an army of twelve thousand while Shabah had four hundred thousand. Many battles and a lot of correspondence took place between them, where promises, threats and war stratagems were practiced, until Bahram managed to kill him, slaughter his army and capture his treasuries and wealth, sending Shaba’s head to Hurmuz. Shaba’s son, Barmuda, had taken refuge from Bahram in a fortress, where Bahram now besieged him. Barmuda then agreed to accept the verdict of Hurmuz and went to him while Bahram carried away a vast booty. This included what he had captured from Shabah and what Shabah had plundered from other kings, such as the treasuries of money and jewels belonging to Farasiyab, which he in turn had plundered from Siyawakhsh; as also what the Turks held in their hands of the treasures left behind by Luhrasf, the Turkish king, which he in turn had plundered from the treasuries of Bustasf in the city of Balkh, together with the treasuries of earlier Turkish kings.

634. When all these treasures described above of money and jewels and other booty were brought back by Bahram, a vizier of Hurmuz, called Arikhsis the Khuzi, grew envious of Bahram when he observed how pleased Hurmuz was with all the treasures Bahram had brought him. He said: "How great is this horse which has stumbled in this manner!" He falsely accused Bahram to the king of having kept to himself most of the money, jewels and booty, and incited him against Bahram. Bahram denied the charge against him. He then clandestinely minted *dirhams* on which was inscribed the name of Kisra Arawiz and secretly sent tradesmen to spend them at the gate of Hurmuz. People began to use these dirhams and they circulated widely. When Hurmuz heard of it, he had no doubt that his son Arawiz was behind the minting and was seeking to usurp kingship, so he was about to move against him, being certain it was his doing and unaware that this was a trick practiced by Bahram.

635. When Arawiz noted that his father's attitude to him had changed, he fled to Adharbaijan, Armenia, al-Ran and Bailaqan. Hurmuz imprisoned the two maternal uncles of Arawiz, Bistam and Bindawayh. They used trickery to escape from prison and a great part of the army joined them. They then entered upon Hurmuz and blinded him. When Arawiz heard of this, he returned to his father and informed him that he was innocent of the charge of minting the coins but that he had fled fearing for his life. Hurmuz proceeded to hand the monarchy to him. When Bahram Jubin heard of this, he led his army toward the royal gate and the capital city, but Arawiz marched out to face him and they met at the river bank near Nahrawan, with the river between them. The two armies faced each other and there was a long interval of shooting arrows and exchanging insults followed by a battle in which Arawiz was defeated when his followers abandoned him, preferring Bahram. Beneath

Abrawiz was his famous horse called Shabdaz. This is the horse depicted on a mountain in the territory of Qarmasin in the district of Dinawar in Mah al-Kufa, where there are also pictures of Abrawiz and others. This locality is one of the wonders of the world and its marvelous images are carved into the rock. Persians and Arabs both mention the horse Shabdaz in their poetry. Abrawiz was one day riding on Shabdaz when its bridle broke. He summoned the man in charge of his saddles and reins and was about to cut his head off because he had not taken proper care of the bridle. The man said: "O king, if you kill me nothing will remain to secure and fasten the king of mankind and the king of horses." Abrawiz forgave and rewarded him.

636. During the battle, and when that horse became exhausted and fell behind, Abrawiz asked al-Nu`man to give him his horse called al-Yahmum, but al-Nu`man refused and fled on that horse himself. When Hassan ibn Hanzala ibn Hayya al-Ta'i saw Abrawiz treacherously abandoned by his men and near death, he gave him his own horse called al-Dubaib saying to him: "O king, escape on my horse, for your life is of greater value to people than mine." Abrawiz gave him his horse Shabdaz and Hassan escaped upon it with the others. Abrawiz then rode to his father who rewarded Hassan and recognized the favor he had done.

Regarding this incident Hassan ibn Hanzala al-Ta'i recited the following verses:

I gave Kisra what he wanted and was not about

To leave him stumbling on foot among the horses.

I granted him Dubaib as a mount just as

Caparisoned horses of Turks and Kabul appeared on the scene.

637. When Abrawiz in defeat rode to his father Hurmuz, the latter advised him to seek refuge with Caesar and call on him for help, saying that when kings are called upon for help in similar situations they

respond. All this is recorded at length in conversations between father and son. Arawiz, together with his two uncles Bistam and Bindawayh and some intimates, headed towards Caesar. He crossed the Tigris and destroyed the bridge fearing Bahram's cavalry. Observing as he marched that his two uncles had fallen behind, he grew suspicious about them and the party with him who had joined them. When he asked them about this, they said: "We cannot be sure that Bahram will not enter upon Hurmuz your father and place the crown of royalty on his head even though blind, thus becoming *Framdhar*—which means Commander of Commanders; The Byzantines call this rank *Domestikos*---- Bahram would then write to Caesar as if from Hurmuz your father as follows: 'My son Arawiz with a band who joined him have rebelled against me and blinded me, so imprison them and send them back to me.' Caesar would then send us back and Bahram would kill us. Hence we must return and kill your father." He pleaded with them not to do so, and it is said that he absolved himself from their intended crime.

638. The two uncles then hurried back at once with those who had hastily joined them to al-Mada'in, arriving within a few miles of it. They entered upon Hurmuz, choked him to death and rejoined Arawiz. Bahram's cavalry pursued them and there were skirmishes between them at certain localities. But they managed to escape the cavalry and Arawiz resumed his journey. Regarding Hurmuz, Waraqa ibn Nawfal* recited the following verses:

None of his treasures were of any use to Hurmuz:

`Ad had sought eternity but failed to achieve it.

Nor did Solomon achieve it,

He who commanded the winds, the jinn and humans

With post-horses running between them.

639. When Bahram Jubin heard about the murder of Hurmuz, he hastened to al-Mada'in and assumed the throne. Arawiz meanwhile had reached al-Raha where he camped and wrote to Maurice, the Byzantine king, sending ahead his uncle Bistam and a band with him as messenger, and asking him for aid against his enemy. He sent him assurances about the wealth he was ready to grant him, assured him that he would treat Byzantine soldiers well, and that he was ready to pay blood-money to any of his soldiers who were killed, and gave him other assurances. He also sent him numerous gifts, including one hundred youths, children of Turkish grandees, of great beauty and perfect form, with earrings of gold studded with pearls and rubies. He also sent him a table made of amber, three *dhira`s* in width, and resting on three legs of gold studded with diverse jewels. One leg was in the form of an arm and paw of a lion, the other the leg of a mountain goat with its hoof, the third the leg of a falcon with its claws. In the center of the table was a bowl of superb Yemeni onyx, a *shibr* in width, filled with red rubies, and a gold basket with one hundred pearls, each weighing a *mithqal*, of the finest quality.

640. Maurice, the Byzantine king, then sent him two thousand dinars and one hundred thousand horsemen. With this, he sent one thousand garments of embroidered silk from the royal treasury, stitched in red gold and other colors. He also sent one hundred and twenty slave women, daughters of the kings of Burjan, Galicians, Slavs and Washkansh* and other nations near the Byzantine realm. On their heads they carried garlands of jewels. He also married Arawiz to his daughter Maria and sent her along with her brother Tidos. The Byzantine king then imposed a number of conditions on Arawiz, including his abandonment of al-Sham and Egypt, territories once conquered by Anushirwan, and a promise not to invade them, and Arawiz accepted all these conditions.

641. The kings of Persia would marry into all neighboring nations but did not give their daughters in marriage because they considered themselves free and valiant. The Persians have much to say on this subject, just like Quraish who abandoned normal practice and declared themselves to be exceedingly pious (*hums*). They would stand at Muzdalifa on the great day of the pilgrimage and say: “We are the *hums*.” The Prophet once said to the Ansar: “I am a man exceedingly pious (*ahmasi*).”

642. When Arawiz had obtained all the treasures mentioned above, he headed to Adharbaijan where the army there rallied to him as also many other troops and nations. When Bahram Jubin heard about his intentions, he marched against him with the troops that were with him and the two armies clashed. Bahram was defeated and fled with a few followers to the frontiers of Khurasan from where he corresponded with Khaqan, king of the Turks. Khaqan granted him safe-conduct so Bahram headed towards his realm with a few followers and his sister Kurdiyya. She was Bahram’s equal in courage and horsemanship and he often relied on her in his wars.

643. Meanwhile Kisra Arawiz headed for his capital and ordered that money, mounts and garments be given to the Byzantine soldiers, rewarding them for their assistance to him. He then sent Maurice two million dinars, coupling this with numerous gifts and a great wealth of gold and silver items. He fulfilled all his promises to him and all the conditions he had imposed on himself. Arawiz then plotted to kill Bahram in Turkish territory and he was assassinated there by guile. It is said that his head was, through trickery, removed by a Persian merchant from the sarcophagus in which the Turkish king had buried him and carried to Arawiz. The head was then placed on the gate of Arawiz in the central square of his palace. Meanwhile, Kurdiyya left the land of the Turks with the remainder of Bahram’s followers and stories exist about her and the son of Khaqan on her journey. Arawiz wrote to her asking

her to kill his uncle Bistam, governor of Dailam and Khurasan, and she did so. He had killed his other uncle in revenge for the killing of his father Hurmuz. Kurdiyya then came to Arawiz and he married her.

644. The Persians have a book devoted to the history of Bahram Jubin which records his wily schemes when he arrived in the land of the Turks, and how he saved the life of the daughter of the Turkish king from an animal called the *Sim`*, which is like a huge goat. While she was out on a stroll in the open air, that animal had snatched her from amidst her slave girls and carried her upwards. The book also tells the story of Bahram's life from its beginning until his assassination, and records his genealogy.

645. The vizier of Arawiz who had most influence over him and managed his affairs was a Persian sage called Buzurjmihir son of al-Bakhtakan. When thirteen years had elapsed of his reign, Arawiz accused Buzurjmihir of partiality towards some heretics among the Dualists and ordered him to be imprisoned, writing to him as follows: "The fruits of your learning and the conclusions of your reason renders you liable to execution and subject to punishment." Buzurjmihir answered: "When I enjoyed good fortune, I benefited from the fruits of my reason. But now when I no longer enjoy good fortune, I might benefit from the fruits of patience. Though I have lost much good, I am relieved of much evil." Arawiz was swayed against Buzurjmihir, so he summoned him to his presence and ordered his nose and mouth to be broken. Buzurjmihir said: "I deserve a punishment far worse than this." Arawiz said: "Why do you say this, you deviant enemy of God?" Buzurjmihir responded: "Because I used to describe you to both elite and commoners, ascribing qualities to you that you do not possess, striving to endear you to their hearts, and praising your good actions in a manner you do not deserve. Listen to me, you worst of kings in his soul, most devious in deed, and most repellent in company: do you intend to kill me

on mere suspicion, to which you resort in order to deny the certain knowledge you have of me as an upholder of religious law? Who can possibly expect justice from you, or trust your word and feel secure from you?" Arawiz was enraged and ordered his head cut off. There are many stories that circulate widely among people regarding Buzurjmihir's judgments, wise words, sermons and ascetic homilies.

646. Arawiz later regretted his execution and sorrowed for him. He then summoned Khabraris, the second vizier, who was lower in rank than Buzurjmihir. When he saw the dead body of Buzurjmihir, he expressed his sorrow and realized that he himself would not escape. So he spoke harshly to Arawiz who ordered him killed, and he was drowned in the Tigris. When Arawiz lost these two men of ability and skill in managing the affairs of state, he began to disregard the principles of justice and the clear path of truth, turning instead to injustice and violence against the elite and the commoners in a manner they had never been accustomed to before, and committed evil deeds they had never experienced.

647. A Byzantine *patricius* called Fukas [Phocas] then rebelled with his followers against Maurice, king of the Byzantines, who was father-in-law of Arawiz and his supporter. The rebels killed Maurice and crowned Fukas king. When the news reached Arawiz, he was enraged at his father-in-law's murder and sent armies against the Byzantines. There follows a history too long to relate here. Arawiz then ordered Shahrbaraz, governor of the west, to join the war against the Byzantines. Shahrbaraz reached Antioch and there ensued many events and letters exchanged between him, the Byzantine king and Arawiz, and many war stratagems were practiced. Eventually, the Byzantine king came out to fight Shahrbaraz and sent his treasuries ahead in a thousand ships. A storm drove these treasures to the coast of Antioch and they were captured by Shahrbaraz who sent them on to Arawiz. These were called

the “storm treasures”. Eventually relations worsened between Abrawiz and Shahrbaraz, who began to draw close to the Byzantine king. Shahrbaraz then sent the Byzantine king to Iraq where he ended up in al-Nahrawan. Abrawiz managed through trickery to send the Byzantine king certain messages delivered by Christian bishops who lived under his protection, and he was induced to return to Constantinople. He further succeeded in undermining relations between the Byzantines and Shahrbaraz. All these events and more we have recorded in our book *al-Awsat*.

648. It was during the reign of Abrawiz that the battle of Dhi Qar* took place. This was the battle of which our Prophet said: “This is the first battle in which the Arabs gained the upper hand against the Persians and their victory was due to me.” The battle took place forty years after the birth of the Prophet, and while he was still in Mecca though after his ministry had begun. Some say the battle took place after his emigration to Medina while others claim it took place four months after the Battle of Badr*, when the Prophet was then in Medina. The battle of Dhi Qar took place between the tribe of Bakr ibn Wa’il and the *Hurmuzan*, a courtier of Abrawiz. We have already related all these events clearly and in detail in our book *al-Awsat*, so there is no need to repeat them here.

649. During the reign of Abrawiz, certain events and omens took place which prefigured the appearance of Muhammad’s prophetic ministry and the announcement of his revelation. Abrawiz sent `Abd al-Masih ibn Buqaila the Ghassanid to the soothsayer Satih and told him about the dream of the *Mubidhan*, the trembling of the Iwan and other events, as also what happened to Lake Sawa.

650. Abrawiz had nine rings that had to do with royal government. The first was one whose stone was red ruby on which was inscribed the image of the king and around it were written his royal attributes. The ring itself

was made of diamond. With this ring were stamped letters and registers. The second had a stone made of carnelian inscribed with the words “Khurasan Kharah,” whose ring was made of gold. With it were stamped official memoranda. The third ring had an onyx stone on which was carved a galloping horseman. The ring itself was made of gold and inscribed with the word “Speed,” and was used to stamp postal replies. The fourth ring had a stone of reddish ruby inscribed with the words “With wealth happiness is gained”. The ring itself was golden and was used to stamp acts of forgiveness and letters containing royal pardons granted to rebels and criminals. The fifth ring had a stone of *bahraman* ruby, of the prettiest, purest and most expensive red, inscribed with the words *khurra* and *khurram*, meaning joy and happiness. The ring itself was made of both pearls and diamonds, and was used to stamp the treasury of jewels, the royal money treasury and the vaults containing ornaments. The sixth ring had a carved eagle and was used to stamp letters addressed to foreign kings. Its stone was made of Chinese iron. The seventh ring had a carving of flies and was used to stamp food, medications and perfumes. Its stone was made of *bazahr* [bezoar stone]. The eighth ring had a stone of silver beads on which was carved a hog’s head and was used to stamp the necks of those ordered to be executed and letters that had to do with the shedding of blood. The ninth was an iron ring which the king wore when entering the bath or *abzan* [toilet?].

651. In his stables were found fifty thousand mounts, with golden saddles studded with jewels and pearls for some of his own horses. Also in his stables were a thousand elephants, some of which were of a white color and whiter than snow. Some were twelve *dhira`* in height, a rare height for war elephants, since most elephants are nine to ten *dhira`* in height. Indian kings pay excessively high prices for great and tall elephants. Some wild elephants in the land of the Zanj may be much taller, and by

several *dhira`*s, than what we described, judging by their horns, called tusks, which are imported. Some of these tusks weigh one hundred and fifty to two hundred *manns*. A *mann* equals two Baghdadi *ratls*.* The size of the tusk is proportional to the size of the elephant.

652. Arawiz once rode out on a feast-day where his armies and their equipment and weapons were paraded before him, including a parade of one thousand elephants. Surrounding the king were fifty thousand horsemen, not including infantry. When the elephants saw him, they bowed down and only raised their heads again and spread their trunks when pulled out by crosiers and when their minders spoke to them in an Indian tongue. When Arawiz saw this, he regretted the fact that Indians were specially possessed of the advantage of managing elephants, saying: "If only the elephant had been Persian rather than Indian! Look at these elephants and compare them to other animals and how superior to them they are in understanding and conduct!" The Indians pride themselves on their elephants, their great size, their understanding, their obedience, their aptitude for being trained, their grasp of orders and their distinguishing between kings and others, whereas other beasts of burden understand nothing of all this and cannot distinguish between two objects. In later sections of this work some chapters will be devoted to elephants and to what Indians and others have said about them, and how they prefer them to all other beasts of burden.

653. The reign of Arawiz lasted thirty-eight years before he was deposed, blinded and killed. He had a wife called Shirin, a woman celebrated for her beauty. His son Qubadh, known as Shirawaih, succeeded him. He had arrested his father, acted criminally against him and killed him. The Persians call this monarch "The Unjust". In his days a plague broke out in Iraq and other districts of Babylon in which hundreds of thousands perished. The highest estimate claims that half the

population perished and the lowest estimate says one third. Shirawaih reigned for a year and a half---some say less. Kisra Abrawiz and his son Shirawaih have a strange history and there exists a correspondence between them related in our earlier works.

654. After Shirawaih came a son of his called Ardashir who assumed kingship when seven years old. From Antioch in al-Sham there marched against him the above-mentioned Shahrbaraz, governor of the west, who had played a role with Abrawiz and the Byzantines, and who then killed the child king. He had reigned for five months. Shahrbaraz took over the crown for about twenty days---some say two months and others give other figures. A daughter of Kisra Abrawiz, called Azarmidukht, assassinated him. Succeeding him was Kisra son of Qubadh son of Abrawiz who had been residing in a Turkish region. He journeyed towards the capital but was killed on his way: his reign is counted as lasting three months. Succeeding him was Buran, daughter of Kisra Abrawiz, who reigned for a year and a half. She was succeeded by a member of the royal house from the progeny of Sabur son of Yazdajird “the Sinner” and called Firuz Jushnanda, who reigned for two months.

655. He was followed by a daughter of Kisra Abrawiz called Azarmidukht who reigned for a year and four months, followed by Farrukhzad Khusru son of Kisra Abrawiz, a child, who reigned for a month—some say a few months. He was followed by Yazdajird son of Shahriar son of Kisra Abrawiz son of Hurmuz son of Anushirwan son of Qubadh son of Firuz son of Bahram son of Yazdajird son of Sabur son of Hurmuz son of Sabur son of Ardashir son of Babik son of Sasan. He was the last Sasanid king. His reign, until he was killed at Marw in Khurasan, lasted twenty years. This took place when seven and a half years had elapsed of the caliphate of `Uthman ibn `Affan, namely the year 31[651-

2] after the Hijrah. But other versions are also given about the length of his reign and his murder.

656. Most experts on Persian history and affairs assert that the total number of kings of the Sasanid line, from Ardashir son of Babik to Yazdajird son of Shahriar, both men and women, was thirty: two women and twenty-eight men. I found in some work of history that the total number of Sasanid kings was thirty-two and that the number of early kings, who are First Persians, from Kayumarth to Darius son of Darius, was nineteen, among whom there was one woman, Humaya daughter of Bahman, Farasiyab the Turk, and seventeen other kings. The number of kings of independent principalities (*Muluk al-Tawa'if*), mentioned above, who reigned from the killing of Darius son of Darius until the coming of Ardashir son of Babik, was eleven. These were the kings of al-Shiz and al-Ran, and for their sake all the kings of separate principalities were called Ashghan. Hence, the total number of kings from Kayumarth son of Adam, the first Adamic king according to the Persians, until Yazdajird son of Shahriar son of Kisra, is sixty, including three women. The total number of years of their reigns is four thousand, four hundred and fifty years.

657. It is said that the total number of kings from Kayumarth to Yazdajird is eighty. I have also found that some historians and other writers concerned with histories and biographies claim that Persian history until the Hijra lasted three thousand, six hundred and ninety years, divided as follows:

From Kayumarth to the passing of the kingdom to Manushihr: 1922 years.

From Manushihr to Zaradisht: 583 years.

From Zaradisht to Alexander: 258 years.

Alexander ruled for six years.

From Alexander to Ardashir: 517 years.

From Ardashir to the Hijra: 404 years.

658. Later in this book we will give a brief account of the history of the world, and of its prophets and kings, in a separate chapter devoted to this theme and in its appropriate place in this work. However, we will not include a narrative about the Hijra, the caliphate of Abu Bakr and later caliphs and kings of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, because we have devoted a separate chapter in this work to that subject, i.e. a chapter which follows the end of Umayyad and Abbasid history, which we have called the “second historical narrative.”

659. The Persians, until God revealed the religion of Islam, and from the beginning of time were of four kinds. The first are called Khudakhan, i.e. the masters, as in such phrases as “master of the goods” or “master of the house.” These stretch from Kayumarth to Afridun. These are followed by the Kiyān which last down to Darius son of Darius. Then come the Ashghan, the kings of independent principalities, which appear after Alexander, as already mentioned in the chapter on the kings of independent principalities. Finally came the Sasanids, who are Second Persians.

660. In his book on Persian history which he related from `Umar Kisra, Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna states that the Persians, early and late, are of four classes. The first is from Kayumarth to Kursasb or Kursasf; the second from Kiqawus son of Kaiqubad to Alexander, the last of whom was Darius; the third were the Ashghan or kings of independent principalities; the fourth which he called the kings of unity were the Sasanids. These last he lists in order as follows: the first was Ardashir son of Babik, then Sabur son of Ardashir, Hurmuz son of Sabur, Bahram son of Sabur, Bahram son of Bahram, Narsi son of Sabur, Hurmuz son of Narsi son of Sabur, Sabur son of Hurmuz, Ardashir son of Hurmuz, Sabur

son of Ardashir, Sabur son of Sabur, Bahram son of Sabur, Yazdajird son of Bahram, Bahram son of Yazdajird, Firuz son of Yazdajird, Balash son of Yazdajird, Qubadh son of Firuz, Anushirwan, Hurmuz, Abrawiz, Shirwaih, Ardashir, Shahrbaraz, Buran, Kisra son of Qubadh, Firuz, Jushnanda, Azarmidukht, Farrukhzad Khusru and Yazdajird.

We cited their names though we have already mentioned them earlier because of divergences and contradictions in the versions and histories regarding their number and names, so we listed the different accounts given by historians.

661. In our previous works, we dealt at length with the histories of Persian kings and their conduct, covenants, correspondence, testimonials, and speeches from the throne, as also their epistles and all other major events of their times, together with their agricultural schemes, the cities they built and other such topics. In this work, we simply mention summaries of their histories and lists of their kings, with a few reports about some of them. In our work *Akhbar al-Zaman* we related the speeches of the four classes of kings, what each king had dug by way of canals and what cities each had individually built, the views and judgments of kings and many of their verdicts regarding elites and commoners. We also mentioned the genealogies of the royal knights and who commanded the cavalry of each king in wartime, together with the genealogies of their wise men and ascetics who were renowned in their times, as also the genealogies of the *marzubans*. We also mentioned the progeny of the four classes mentioned above, the branches of their genealogies and the dispersal of their descendants.

662. In that work, we also described the three families honored by Kisra above all others in the Sawad of Iraq. They are well known in the Sawad until today. We further mentioned the nobility of the Sawad below the first three, known as *Shaharija* whom Iraj had elevated and made into the

Sawad's nobility. The next class after the *Shaharija* are the *dihqans*, who are the progeny of Wahkart son of Farwak son of Siamuk son of Narsi son of Kayumarth the king. Wahkart's son had ten sons and the progeny of these ten are the *dihqans*, Wahkart having been the first to assume the dignity of *dihqan*. The *dihqans* are divided into five classes and their garments differed in accordance with their rank. Yazdajird, the last of the Sasanid kings, was killed at age thirty-five, as already mentioned, leaving behind him two males, Bahram and Firuz, and three females, Adrak, Shahrbanu and Mardawand. Most of his descendants live in Marw and most descendants of royal princes and of the four classes reside until today in the Sawad of Iraq, where they study their genealogies and preserve their lines of descent just like the Arabs of Qahtan and Nizar. Scholars do not dispute any of the information given above.

663. Al-Mas`udi said: Now that we have narrated a summary history of the Persians and their classes, let us turn to the kings of the Greeks to give a summary of their history and the disputes that have arisen regarding the origins of their genealogies, to be narrated in summary form. God grants success.

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Mas`udi Vol.2

Chapter 25

An account of Greek kings, with a brief history, and what people have asserted regarding their early genealogy

664. There is disagreement among people as to where the Greeks [*Yunaniyyun*] are descended from in their genealogy. Some assert that they are to be joined to the Romans, and descend from the progeny of Isaac. Others say that Yunan was the son of Yafith son of Noah. Still others claim that they are the progeny of Arash son of Yawan son of Yafith son of Noah, and some assert that they are a tribe belonging to very ancient times. Those who maintain that the Greeks are to be joined to the Romans in genealogy and go back to their ancestor Abraham are indulging in fantasy, basing this view on the fact that their lands were common and their habitats and places of settlement were adjacent. The two nations had the same natural dispositions and beliefs. This however led genealogists into error by assuming that they had the same ancestor. This is the correct path to pursue for investigators and researchers. The Romans imitated the Greeks in their language and in their literary works but never reached their level of eloquence and articulate expressions. The language of the Romans is inferior to Greek and weaker in its linguistic structure, upon which is based their modes of expression and rules of rhetoric.

665. Some experts in ancient history state that Yunan was the brother of Qahtan and that he is descended from `Abir son of Shalakh, and that the fact that he removed himself from his brother's homelands was the reason for doubting a common genealogy. They claim that he departed from Yemen with a group consisting of his children, wife and others who joined them until they reached the furthest extremity of the west

[*Maghrib*], where they settled and multiplied in that land. Their language became foreign in order to adapt itself to the foreign tongues of the Franks and Romans. So his line of descent was severed and forgotten in the Yemen and became unknown to Yemeni genealogists. Yunan was a man of great might, good looks and large of body, combined with a sound intellect, lucid reason and great energy, and was greatly respected.

666. Ya`qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi used to support the view mentioned above that Yunan was the brother of Qahtan, and would cite reports regarding the origins of genealogies based upon single and individual lines of transmission rather than lines transmitted widely and by the many. In a long poem, Abu'l `Abbas `Abdallah ibn Muhammad al-Nashi'* refuted Kindi's view and mentioned how he had mixed up the descent of Yunan with that of Qahtan as we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Nashi' recited the following verses:

*O Abu Yusuf [i.e. Kindi] I have investigated the matter
But found, upon examination, that your view was incorrect,
And without substance.
You are considered a wise man by a group which, if someone
Were closely to examine, will not find among them any to oppose you.
Do you mix atheism with Muhammad's religion?
O man of Kinda, you have advanced a truly abominable view!
You mix up Yunan with Qahtan? A grievous error, I swear!
The distance between them is truly far. [reading *ba`adat* and *hadda*]*

667. When the children of Yunan grew up and multiplied, he departed and travelled the earth seeking a place in which to settle. He ended in a western locality at a city called Athens [*Athina*], known since ancient times as the city of philosophers in the lands of the west. He and his children resided there and multiplied. In that city, he built that great

structure and then died. In his will he delegated power to his eldest son, named Kharbius*, saying to him: “My son, I have come to the end of my life and am near my inevitable death. I shall depart leaving you and your brothers and family behind. I ordered your affairs well. I was your cave of refuge in times of trouble, helped you to withstand calamities and shielded you against the ravages of time. Be generous, for this is the basis of kingship, the key to all policies and the gate of sovereignty. Be careful in choosing your men and in your liberality towards them, and you will become a rightly guided master. Do not ever deviate from the exemplary path dictated by reason: he who forsakes the judgment of the heart and the fruit of the mind will plunge into calamities and fall into the clutches of destruction.”

668. Yunan then died and his son took over his father’s place, joining to him his family and progeny. They grew in importance and the son followed the father’s commands, their numbers multiplied and they overcame the lands of the west, that is, the lands of the Franks, Nawkubard* and the various Slav and other nations. The first of their kings as mentioned by Ptolemy in his book was Philip [*Filibus*], meaning lover of horses. It is also said that his name was Filfus or else Filifus. His reign lasted seven years.

669. It is related that when Nebuchadnezzar [*Albukhtnasir*] marched from the east towards al-Sham, Egypt and the west, shedding blood everywhere, the Greeks submitted in obedience to him and paid him tribute, their tribute being in the form of golden eggs of a specific number, weight and limit. When Alexander [*al-Iskandar*] son of Philip, the ancient king and first in the line of Greek kings according to Ptolemy, had appeared and demonstrated great energy, Darius the Persian king, who is Darius son of Darius, sent a message demanding the normal tribute. Alexander responded as follows: “I have slaughtered

the hen that used to hatch the golden eggs and eaten it.” The wars that ensued between them led Alexander to march to al-Sham and Iraq, extirpating their kings, then killed the Persian king Darius son of Darius. In our book *al-Awsat* we recounted his killing and the later killing of other Indian and eastern kings.

670. Some have cited the genealogy of Alexander as follows: Alexander son of Filibus son of Misrayim son of Hirmis son of Hardush son of Manzur son of Rumi son of Nuwait son of Nufil son of Rumi son of Labat son of Yunan son of Yafith son of Noah. Others recount his descent as being from the progeny of al-`Is son of Isaac son of Abraham while still others maintain he is Alexander son of Barqa son of Sarhun son of Rumi son of Barbat son of Nufil son of Rumi son of al-Asfar son of Alifaz son of al-`Is son of Isaac son of Abraham.

671. People have disputed about him. Some say he is the same as the “Two-Horned” while others deny it. They also dispute about the “Two-Horned”: some say he was called thus because he reached the two ends of the earth and that the angel in charge of Mount Qaf called him by that name; others say he is an angel, an opinion attributed to `Umar ibn al-Khattab*. The first view, that he was called thus by an angel, is that of Ibn `Abbas*. Others say he had two golden locks dangling from his forehead, a view attributed to `Ali ibn Abi Talib. Yet other views exist; here, we only cite the disputes that took place within religious communities from among the People of the Book.*

672. A *tubba`* mentioned Alexander in some verse in which he boasted that Alexander was from Qahtan. It is said that some *tubba`*s invaded the city of Rome and settled it with Yemenis and that the “Two-Horned”, who is Alexander, is one of those Arabs left behind in Rome, but God knows best.

673. Once Alexander had overthrown the Persian kingdom and occupied its realm, married the daughter of its king Darius son of Darius and killed him, he marched on Sind and India, crushing their kings and receiving their gifts and tribute. Purusha, the greatest of Indian kings, fought him in several wars but eventually Alexander killed him in single combat. Alexander then marched on China and Tibet and their kings submitted to him and offered him gifts and tribute. He then marched through the deserts of the Turks heading for Khurasan having humiliated their kings, and stationed soldiers and commanders in conquered regions, and stationed some of his men in Tibet and in China. In Khurasan, he formed agricultural districts, and built towns wherever he went.

674. His teacher was Aristotle, the philosopher of the Greeks and author of the *Logic* and *Metaphysics*. He was a student of Plato, who was a student of Socrates. All these philosophers were preoccupied with recording the sciences, physical and spiritual, as also other philosophical sciences, and their connection with divine sciences. They explored various subjects, offered proofs for their truth and made them plain to those who found it difficult to understand them.

675. Alexander then headed back westwards. Arriving at the city of Shahrazur, his illness grew worse. Some say this occurred in the district of Nisibin in the region of Diyar Rabi`a, while others say in Iraq. He then delegated Ptolemy as commander in chief and successor. When he died, his body was surrounded by wise Greek, Persian and Indian men and scholars of other nations, whom he used to summon and to whose advice he listened, taking no action without consulting them. His body was placed in a golden casket studded with jewels, after having been coated with a substance that preserved the body members.

676. The chief among these sages and their leader said: "Let each of you say some words which condole the elite and admonish the commoners." He then rose, placed his hand on the casket and said: "He who used to imprison is now himself a prisoner." A second sage rose and said: "Here is Alexander who used to store gold but now is stored in gold." The third sage said: "How indifferent are people to this body and how keen they are to possess the casket!" The fourth sage said: "It is a true marvel that the strong man has been overcome while the weak are unconcerned and deluded!" The fifth sage said: "O you who think your end is pre-determined and place your hope before your eyes, have you postponed your end in order to attain some of what you hoped for? Or have you achieved some of what you hoped for by protecting yourself against the time [reading *waqt*] of your death?" The sixth sage said: "O you who strove and rose high, you gathered that which let you down when you needed it. Its burden of sin has been left upon you and its time has passed from you. So the profit has devolved upon others while the evil devolved upon you." The seventh said: "You used to admonish us but no admonition is more eloquent than your death. Whoever has reason, let him exercise it, and whoever is willing to learn a lesson, let him do so." The eighth sage said: "Many were those who were in awe of you and dared not speak behind your back but who are now in your presence and have no fear of you!" The ninth said: "How many desired your silence when you used to speak who now desire you to speak when you cannot!" The tenth said: "How much has this soul striven not to die but is now dead!" The eleventh, who was keeper of the library of books of wisdom, said: "You used to order me not to draw far from you but today I cannot draw near to you." The twelfth said: "This is a day rich in lessons. Its evil, having departed, has arrived and its good, having arrived, has departed. Whoso weeps for one whose

reign has ended let him weep for you.” The thirteenth said: “O man of great power, your power has vanished like the shadows of a cloud, and the traces of your kingdom have been erased like the traces of white clouds.” The fourteenth said: “He to whom the whole earth in its length and width was narrow, I wonder, how do you cope with the earth surrounding you?” The fifteenth said: “How amazing was the lifespan of such a man! How greedy he was to collect perishable things and inanimate chaff!” The sixteenth said: “O assembly of the virtuous gathered here, desire not that whose joy does not last and whose pleasure comes to an end. Virtue and right guidance have become perfectly clear to you and have been distinguished from sin and corruption.” The seventeenth said: “Look upon the dream of the sleeper and how it has vanished, and at the shadows of clouds and how they have faded!” The eighteenth, an Indian sage, said: “O you whose anger brought about death, why don’t you become angry with death?” The nineteenth said: “O assembly, you have seen this king who has departed. Let the present king learn his lesson from this fact.” The twentieth said: “Here is one who travelled much and is now resting for a long time.” The twenty-first said: “He to whom ears used to listen is now silent, so let each silent person now speak.” The twenty-second said: “Your funeral will be followed by those joyful at your death just as you followed those whose death made you joyful.” The twenty-third said: “Why do you not raise [*tuqillu*] one of your body members when you used to find rule over the earth of little account [*tastaqillu*]? Indeed, why does your soul not disdain the narrowness of space in which you find yourself when once your soul used to disdain the length and breadth of the earth?” The twenty-fourth, an Indian ascetic and sage, said: “A world which ends like this should properly begin with asceticism.” The twenty-fifth, Alexander’s master of the table, said:

“The cushions have been spread out, the mattresses have been laid, the banquets are ready but I do not see the chief of the assembly.” The twenty-sixth who was in charge of the treasury of monies said: “You used to command me to collect and save. To whom shall I convey your savings?” The twenty-seventh, one of his treasurers, said: “Here are the keys of your treasuries. Who shall take them from me before I am accused of taking what I have not taken from them?” The twenty-eighth sage said: “You have been enclosed in seven *shibrs* of this long and wide earth. Had you been certain of this, you would not have exerted yourself in seeking to rule it.” The twenty-ninth was what was said by his wife, Rushank, daughter of Darius son of Darius, king of Persia: “I never thought the conqueror of king Darius would be conquered. Though the words I heard from all of you contain a certain malicious joy, he has left behind the cup from which all of you shall drink.” The thirtieth statement was reportedly made by his mother when she received news of his death: “Though I have lost my son in the flesh his memory will not be erased from my heart.”

677. Alexander died aged thirty-six. He had reigned for nine years before his killing of Darius and for six years after killing him and overcoming all the other kingdoms. He became king at age twenty-one in Macedonia, which is a city. He had delegated to his heir Ptolemy son of Arnab [Lagus=rabbit] the task of conveying his casket to his mother in Alexandria, and further charged him to write to her when she received news of his death to organize a banquet and to send out messages that everyone in the kingdom was invited. However, none should accept the invitation if they had lost a beloved or a friend, so that the banquet would be a joyful celebration of Alexander’s death rather than the normal sorrowful mourning.

678. When news of his death reached her and the coffin was placed in her presence, she, as urged, sent a message throughout her kingdom but none answered her invitation or responded to her appeal. She asked her courtiers: “Why is it that none have answered my invitation?” They answered: “You prevented them from doing so.” “How so?”, she asked. “You commanded that none should answer your invitation who has lost a loved one or a friend or a beloved. There is none among them who has not been touched by such loss.” When she heard this, her eyes were opened and she understood the means by which she had been comforted, then said: “O Alexander, how similar your end is to your beginning!”

679. His mother ordered his body to be placed in a marble sarcophagus. His body was coated with substances that preserved it, and she removed him from his golden casket since she knew that later kings who followed her would not leave him in that golden casket. The marble sarcophagus was placed on blocks of layered stones and boulders raised and made of marble, all in a row. This monument of marble still exists in the district of Alexandria in the land of Egypt and is known as Alexander’s tomb until the present day, which is the year 332. In later sections of this work we shall narrate in summary form the history and wonders of Alexandria and the history of Egypt and its Nile in their appropriate place in this book, God willing. From God comes succor and aid.

Chapter 26

A brief account of historical reports concerning Alexander and his exploits in India

680. Al-Mas`udi said: When Alexander killed Fur, an Indian king who ruled the city of Mankir, and all Indian kings submitted to him, as recounted above, by sending him money and tribute, he heard of a king

in the furthest reaches of India who possessed wisdom, sound policy, religious piety and was just to his subjects. He was said to be hundreds of years old and that he had no equal in India among their philosophers and sages. His name was Kand and he severely disciplined his soul, doing away with his appetitive and angry nature, and forcing it to act in a noble and excessively well-bred manner.

681. So Alexander wrote to him as follows: “Greetings. When my message reaches you and, if it finds you standing, do not sit down. If it finds you walking, do not turn away. Otherwise I will tear your kingdom to shreds and make you follow the example of other Indian kings.”

When he received Alexander’s message he sent him an exceedingly polite answer, addressing him as “king of kings” and informing him that he possessed a number of objects the like of which were not found anywhere else, writing as follows: “Among these is a slave girl upon whom the sun never shone on one more beautiful; a philosopher who informs you of what you want before you ask him, so sharp is he in mind, so perspicacious, so moderate in body and so wide in knowledge; a physician for whom no disease need cause any fear nor any other symptom of illness except for the death and dissolution that befalls this human frame and the untying of the knot tied by the creator of this palpable body. For the make-up and frame of a human being has been set up in this world to be subject to disease, death and calamity. The third item is a cup I have which, if I fill, can be drunk by all your army without any diminution, and whoever drinks from it can only increase it in fullness. I am sending all these things to the king and am coming to him myself.”

682. When Alexander read and understood that letter, he said: “To possess all these four items and to spare this wise man from my violence is more dear to me than that they should not be possessed by

me and that he should die.” So Alexander sent him a group of wise Greeks and Romans with an armed escort and instructed them as follows: “If he is telling the truth, send all these things to me and leave the man alone. If you find the matter to be other than it is and that he gave a wrong account of these items, he can no longer be considered wise, so send him to me.” The group departed. Reaching his kingdom, he received them very well and lodged them in the best of lodgings. On the third day, he held an assembly to which only the sages among them were invited, not the warriors. The sages said to one another: “If he is telling us the truth about the first of the four items he will be truthful about the rest that he mentioned.” So they sat down in their proper places and the assembly commenced.

683. The Indian king then turned to them and began to discuss subjects related to the principles of philosophy, the natural sciences and theological questions beyond these. To his left sat his own wise men and philosophers. There were lengthy discussions concerning the first originator, and the assembly freely and frankly argued and debated scientific subjects and the classifications established by wise men. The discussion resulted in conclusions that their minds had aimed at regarding these sublime issues. The king then ordered the slave girl to be brought out. When they saw her they gazed at her, and no eye that fell upon any part of her visible body could pass on to regard any other part. Each person was fully preoccupied in contemplating the beauty of that part, the loveliness of her form and the perfection of her looks. The people were afraid of losing their minds as they looked upon her. Then each recovered his composure and restrained the power of his lust and the impulses of his nature. He then showed them the other items he had previously promised and dismissed them, sending with them the

philosopher, the slave girl, the physician and the cup, and walked with them a certain distance in his land to bid them farewell.

684. When they reached Alexander, he ordered the physician and philosopher to be lodged, then looked at the slave girl and was startled, and his mind was dazzled. He ordered the female keeper of his slave women to look after her. He then turned his attention to the philosopher to see what knowledge he as well as the physician possessed, and what the physician's degree of learning was in the craft of medicine and the preservation of health. The wise men recounted to Alexander what had passed in their discussions with the Indian king and his attendant philosophers and sages. Alexander was impressed and examined the principles of those people, their intentions and the conclusions at which they had arrived, then investigated the means by which Indians could be challenged in the matter of causes and consequences, and what the Greeks had to say about these causes and what they corrected using their own logic and in accordance with their previous research.

685. He then wished to test the philosopher, given what he had been told about him. He first secluded himself and thought hard. Then an idea occurred to him as to how to test him. He ordered that a cup be filled to the brim with fat, so that no addition to it was possible, gave it to a messenger and instructed him to take the cup to the philosopher and tell him nothing. When the messenger arrived with the cup, the philosopher, with his shrewd understanding and his perspicacious grasp of complex matters, said to himself: "There must be some reason why the king sent me this cup filled with fat." He thought long and considered the intention behind this gesture, then called for a thousand needles, inserted their tips in the fat and sent it back to Alexander. In turn, Alexander ordered the needles to be rolled into an exactly rounded ball and ordered it sent back to the philosopher. When the philosopher

contemplated what Alexander had done, he ordered the ball flattened in his presence and turned into a mirror, which he polished to the point where it became a highly burnished surface reflecting images because it was so pure and free of dirt, then ordered it sent back to Alexander. When Alexander saw it and gazed at his own image in it and how well it was reflected, he ordered that a bowl be brought, placed the mirror in it and ordered water to be poured over it until it sank, then ordered all this to be taken back to the philosopher. When the philosopher saw this, he ordered the mirror to be made into something like a lattice-work window or treadmill (*tarjihara*), and placed it in the bowl where it floated on the surface of the water, then ordered it returned to Alexander. When Alexander saw it, he ordered some fine dust to be sprinkled upon it and, once filled with dust, ordered it returned to the philosopher.

686. When the philosopher saw it, his color changed, he panicked and became terrified, his composure changed and tears rolled down his cheeks. That whole day, he kept sighing, moaning and groaning, and was unable to do anything useful. He then came to himself, reprimanded himself and addressed his soul in a scolding tone, saying: “Woe to you, O soul! What is it that made you plunge into this darkness, brought you to such sorrow and bound you to this gloom? Were you not roaming in the light, floating merrily on high, gazing at that genuine brightness and wandering all over the world of illumination? Were you then made to descend into a world of injustice, wrong-headedness, oppression and mutual corruption, harried here and there by diverse distractions and driven this way and that by storms? Are you not deprived of all knowledge of invisible matters and of existence in this cherished world? Have you not been assailed by severe calamities and been denied all that you desire? Where are your pure

origins and your deep calmness? You inherited in bodies and became subject to change and corruption. O soul, you settled among murderous beasts, deadly serpents, waters that flood, fires that burn and winds that devastate. Age carries you forward in the depths of a body and you encounter no one but the gullible and the ignorant, a generation that has abandoned the good and chosen to avoid moral actions.” He then looked upwards to the sky, saw the stars twinkling and said in a loud voice: “O moving stars with twinkling bodies that belong to a noble universe, you have now appeared and you have been placed there for a purpose. You belong to a precious universe in which souls were at rest in its heights and resided in its folds but now, O soul, you have left it.”

687. The Indian philosopher then turned to Alexander’s messenger and said: “Take this as is and give it back to the king”, meaning the dust, “and do not disturb it in any way”. The messenger went back and told Alexander all he had seen and heard. Alexander was amazed and understood the philosopher’s purpose and intentions as regards the fate of souls when descending from those elevated worlds down to this. The following morning, Alexander held a special meeting to which he summoned the philosopher.

688. Alexander had not seen the philosopher before. When he approached him, Alexander closely observed his stature and form, and found him to be tall in body, with a broad forehead and medium build, and said to himself: “This is the frame of a body that is not suited for wisdom. However, if good looks and sharp understanding are combined, he would be a unique man of his age. I doubt not but that this person combines the two qualities. If he has grasped my intentions in the things I sent him and he answered me without any conversation taking place between us or any agreement or discussion, there can be none that equals him in wisdom or learning.” The philosopher looked at

Alexander, bent his index finger round his face and placed it on the tip of his nose, then rushed forward towards Alexander as he sat on his royal throne and greeted him with the greeting of kings. Alexander indicated to him to sit and he sat where he was ordered.

689. Alexander said to him: “Tell me why, when you looked at me, did you bend your finger round your face and place it on the tip of your nose?” He replied: “When I contemplated you, O king, with the illumination of my mind and the purity of my temperament I detected what you were thinking about me when you were gazing at my outward appearance, and concluded that this is rarely conjoined with wisdom. But if that is so then its possessor is unique among the people of his time. So I bent my finger indicating agreement with your thoughts and gave you a clear example that just as a face has only one nose, so also there is no one in the land of India but me and none is my equal in wisdom.”

690. Alexander said: “How well you have explained yourself in what you have mentioned and how correctly you have surmised what you describe! But let us move on and let me ask you this. When I sent you a cup filled with fat, why did you stick needles into it and return it to me?” The philosopher answered: “I realized, O king, that you wanted to say that your heart was full and your knowledge has been perfected just as this cup is full of fat so that no wise man can add anything to it. I informed the king that my knowledge is superior to his and pierces it just as the needles pierced that cup of fat.”

691. Alexander said: “Tell me then why, when the needles were made into a ball and sent to you, you made it into a mirror and sent it back burnished to me?” He answered: “I knew, O king, that you meant that your heart had become as hard as that ball through bloodshed and preoccupation with worldly matters, to the point where your heart does

not accept knowledge nor wishes to understand the ultimate conclusions of the sciences and of wisdom. So I answered you by using my flattening of the ball as an example and arranging it to become a burnished mirror which reflects bodies facing it because it is so unblemished.”

692. Alexander said: “You have spoken the truth and answered what I had in mind. Tell me, O philosopher, why, when I placed the mirror in the bowl and it sank, why did you then perforate it and made it float upon the water then returned it to me?” The philosopher answered: “I realized that you intended to say that time has become short and that death is near, and that not much knowledge can be acquired when time is short. I answered the king by informing him through an example that I shall contrive things in such a way as to bring into his heart much knowledge in a short span of time, and bring all this near to his understanding, just as I contrived for the mirror to float once it had sunk.”

693. Alexander said: “You have spoken the truth. Why, when I filled the bowl with dust, did you return it to me undisturbed, unlike what you had done previously?” He answered: “I knew you meant to say that death is at hand and is inevitable. This means that this human frame will be joined to that cold, dry and heavy substance which is the earth. That frame would then disintegrate and scatter, and be parted from the pure, noble and fine rational soul which once inhered in a mortal body.”

Alexander said: “You have spoken the truth and, for your sake, I shall deal kindly with India.”

694. He then ordered him to be richly rewarded and granted him wide fiefs. The philosopher said: “Had I loved wealth, I would not have pursued knowledge. I shall not corrupt my learning with anything that negates or contravenes it. Know, O king, that possessions imply

servitude, and that he who serves another and practices what is not to his own good can be neither free nor rational. What improves the soul is philosophy: it burnishes the soul and nourishes it. Partaking of animal pleasures and similar things is the opposite of philosophy. Wisdom is the path to the sublime and a ladder to it, and whoso lacks this lacks nearness to his Lord. Know, O king, that this whole world, down to its minutest parts, is built on justice and cannot survive on injustice. Justice is the scales set up by the Creator, and his wisdom likewise is free from all blemish or error. The human act that is closest to the act of the Creator is being kind and good to people. O wise king, you have come to rule the physical bodies of your subjects with the sword, with your royal power, your good fortune and your sound policies. Do your best now to win their hearts by being charitable towards them and acting fairly and justly. This is the true treasure of your reign since, if you are able to speak, you are also able to act, so be careful what you say and you will be safe from the consequences of action. A happy king is one whose reign lasts long and an unhappy king is one who loses his royal authority. Whoso follows justice in his acts, his heart will be illumined by the sweetness of purity.”

695. Mas`udi said: Alexander set the philosopher free because he refused to stay with him and returned to his homeland. There exist many accounts of discussions between Alexander and this philosopher regarding the various sciences as also a lot of correspondence between Alexander and Kand, the Indian king. We recounted in detail all these matters, their highlights and choicest portions in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

696. As for the cup, Alexander tested it by filling it to the brim with water and invited people to drink but it did not diminish at all when they drank from it. It was constructed through some particular Indian

powers, spiritual abilities, perfected natures and illusion as well as other arcane knowledge claimed by the Indians. It is said that the cup belonged to Adam, father of mankind, in the land of Sarandib, in India, and was specially blessed for him. The cup was then passed down and handed from king to king until it ended with King Kand, because of the greatness of his realm and his wisdom. Other versions exist which we have mentioned in our earlier works.

697. Charming and strange tales are also told about the physician and Alexander and their discussions regarding the principles of knowledge and the craft of medicine, and how he led Alexander by degrees to the foundations of that craft in the physical sciences and in others. We have decided to omit mention of these topics in order not to draw out this topic and to seek brevity in this work, for the subject here has to do with illusion which the Indians claim as part of their practice of medicine and other crafts.

698. There are numerous accounts of Alexander, of his travels across kingdoms and regions, of his encounters with diverse nations and wise men, though they lived in far-flung lands, spoke diverse languages and had curious appearances and disparate customs and habits. There are in addition many accounts dealing with his wars, military stratagems, various ways of personal conduct and also of his building activities. We have covered all these topics in detail in our previously mentioned books together with other topics that we have not mentioned. Here, we simply allude in summary form to his history in order that this book of ours may not be found lacking in such information though we have covered his travels through the earth and his death. From God we seek help.

Chapter 27

An account of Greek kings after Alexander

699. Alexander was followed by his designated successor Ptolemy [Batlimus], a wise, learned, and able ruler and administrator. He reigned for forty years, though some say twenty. This king, who followed Alexander as king, waged several wars against the Israelites and other kings of al-Sham.

700. Some reputable historians of the kings of the earth claim that Ptolemy was the first to own, sport with, and tame falcons. It is said that he rode out one day in a happy mood to one of his recreation grounds and saw a falcon in flight. He observed how when he wanted to rise he flapped his wings but tucked them while descending and spread them when gliding. He followed him with his eyes and saw him diving into a tree with numerous branches and thorns. As he gazed at the falcon, he admired the clarity and yellow color of his eyes and his outward shape and perfect form. He said: "This is an admirable bird. He possesses a weapon, and kings should make use of it as adornment in their assemblies." So he ordered a number of them to be captured and displayed to adorn his assembly. One day a falcon saw an *aym*, which is a male serpent, and sprang upon it and killed it. The king commented: "He grows angry at things which anger kings." A few days later, the falcon came across a domesticated fox and sprang upon it and the fox barely escaped with his life. The king said: "This is a mighty king who does not tolerate disgrace." Another bird flew past and the falcon sprang upon him and ate him. The king said: "This is a king who guards his realm and fails not to feed himself." So he sported with falconry.

701. Later kings of nations like the Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Persians and others also sported with falconry. Later Roman kings further sported with *shahins*, or Indian falcons, and hunted with them. It is said that the Vandals [*Ladhariqa*] or Spanish kings of al-Andalus, were the first to sport and hunt with Indian falcons, and that the Greeks were the

first to sport and hunt with eagles, though Roman kings are also mentioned as the first in this regard. Al-Mas`udi said: We have already mentioned in earlier parts of this work when speaking about the Caucasus Mountain and al-Bab wa'l Abwab, a summary of accounts about these birds and those who sported with them.

702. Ancient Greek sages say that the birds of prey are a species created and reared by God and arrayed in particular grades and degrees, and that they are four in species and thirteen in outward appearance. The four species are falcons, Indian falcons, hawks and eagles. In our book *al-Awsat* we made mention of these species and their outward shapes, arranging them in ranks among birds of prey and how to identify them, as also the views of people about this subject.

703. Ptolemy was followed as king by Philadelphus [*Hiflus*] who was a tyrannical king. In his days, talismans were made and there also appeared the worship of statues and effigies. This resulted from some confusion of thought that affected them, making them think of these images as intermediaries between them and their Creator, and capable of making them draw near to him. He reigned for thirty-eight years--- some say forty. It is also said that the king who reigned after Alexander's successor was Ptolemy the Second, "Lover of his Brother" [Philadelphus] who invaded the Israelites in the land of Palestine and Aelia [*Iliya*] in the land of al-Sham. He enslaved them, killed many of them and was a seeker after knowledge. He then restored the Israelites to Palestine and sent with them jewels and monies and gold and silver vessels for the temple of Jerusalem.

704. The king of al-Sham at that time was Antiochos [*Antikhus*] who built the city of Antioch and which became his capital. Its wall was one of the wonders of the world in its construction, spanning plain and mountain for a distance of twelve miles. On it he built 136 towers, with

twenty-four thousand cornices. Each tower was entrusted to a Patricius with men and horses, and each was constructed in levels rising upwards. The ground level was the horse stables, the fighters were placed on the various levels and the Patricius occupied the top level. Each tower was like a fort with iron gates, and these gates can still be seen till the present day, i.e. the year 332. He then constructed water fountains in it which could not be cut from the outside, and built a network of canals to carry running water into all city streets and houses.

705. I myself saw in these water courses, made of terracotta, water that had calcified because of the continuous sediment which blocks the flow of water, to the point where even iron implements cannot break it. In our book entitled *Kitab al-Qadaya wa'l Tajarib* (Book of Problems and Experiences) we recorded what we actually saw or heard regarding the effect of Antioch's water on the bodies and stomachs of speaking animals and what it creates by way of cold black winds and dense colic. The caliph al-Rashid wanted to make this city his residence but some of what we mentioned above regarding its natural characteristics was mentioned to him, as also the way that swords rusted in it and how perfumes of all kinds changed their odors, so he changed his mind about residing in it.

706. After Hiflus, the king of the Greeks was Ptolemy "the Constructor" [Euergetes] who reigned for twenty-six years. He was succeeded by Ptolemy known as "Lover of his father" [Philopator] who reigned for seventeen years. He waged war against the kings of al-Sham and Alexandros, ruler of Antioch; this latter had built the city of Apamea [Afamia] between Homs and Antioch. He was followed by Ptolemy, the great authority on astronomy and author of Almagest [*Al-Majisti*] and other works. He reigned for twenty-four years. He was succeeded by Ptolemy "Lover of his Mother" [Philometor] who reigned for thirty-five

years. He was followed by Ptolemy II “the Constructor” who reigned for twenty-seven years. He was followed by Ptolemy known as “Chickpeas” [Lathyros] who reigned for seventeen years. He was succeeded by Ptolemy the Alexandrine who reigned for twelve years. He was followed by Ptolemy “the New” [Neos] who reigned for eight years. He was followed by Ptolemy “the Guardian” who reigned for eight years and waged many wars. He was followed by Ptolemy “the New”, who reigned for thirty years.

707. He was followed by his daughter Qalabatra [Cleopatra] who reigned for twenty-two years. She was a wise person and had philosophical inclinations, and cultivated the company of scholars whom she greatly esteemed. She was the author of several books on specialized topics in medicine, magic spells and other subjects related to wisdom, all of which carry her name as author and are well known among practitioners of medicine. She was the last of the Greek kings whose kingdom thereafter vanished with all its traces and sciences, except for what is found of these sciences in the hands of their scholars. A strange story is told about that queen’s death by suicide. She had a husband called Antunius [i.e. Mark Antony] who was her partner in rule in the realm of Macedonia which is the land of Egypt that includes Alexandria and other regions. The second king of Rome, Augustus [*Aghustus*] marched against them---he was the first to be called “Caesar” and all later kings were thus called.

708. We will revert to the history of Augustus when we come later on to the Roman kings. He then waged many wars in al-Sham and Egypt against Cleopatra and Antony until he killed Antony. Cleopatra could find no way to prevent Augustus the Roman king from occupying Egypt, while Augustus wanted to capture her by trickery because he knew of her wisdom and wanted to learn from her, she being the last of

the Greek philosophers. He then planned to torture and kill her. When he corresponded with her, she soon realized his true intentions towards her, for he had caused the grievous death of her husband and destruction of her army.

709. Cleopatra sent for a snake which is found in the lands between Hijaz, Egypt and al-Sham. It is a species of snake which observes a human being closely. If it sees an exposed body member, it leaps a distance of several *dhira`*s like the wind, and does not miss that particular member, on which it spits its poison and kills the person at once. The presence of the snake is not discovered because the poisoned person is immediately immobilized, and people imagine he died suddenly and naturally. I myself have seen a species of these snakes in the land of Khuzistan in the countryside of al-Ahwaz, on the road to Persia from Basra. It is a locality known as Khan Mardawaih, between the city of Dawraq and the territories of Basian and Fandam. The snakes were in the water. They are a *shibr* in length and in that region are called *fitriyya*. They have two heads and are found in sand or deep in the ground. When they sense the presence of a human or an animal, they leap from their place a distance of many *dhira`*s and strike with one of their heads any part of that animal, which promptly dies.

710. Cleopatra sent for one of these snakes and a snake of the above description to be found on the Hijaz borders was brought to her. When the day came in which she learnt that Augustus was to visit her in her royal palace, she commanded one of her slave women whom she loved and wished her to die before her in order to escape torture after her own death, to touch the snake in the bowl, and the slave woman was instantly immobilized. She then sat on her throne with the crown on her head and wearing her royal robes and finery. She spread out all kinds of aromatic plants, flowers, fruits and fragrances to be found among other

wondrous Egyptian plants already mentioned. These were laid out before her in the royal hall and before her throne. She then commanded her servants to carry out what needed to be done and dismissed her courtiers from around her. They became preoccupied with themselves and with the enemy who had invaded their capital, and so failed to attend closely to their queen. Then she put her hand inside the glass bowl and close to its brim where the snake was placed, and the snake spat on her and immobilized her where she sat. The snake slid out of the bowl and, finding no hole in the ground or anywhere it could go---so well built was that hall of marble and paints---it slid in among these plants.

711. Augustus entered the palace and reached the royal hall. He looked at her seated with the crown on her head and had no doubt she could speak, but drawing near he found that she was dead. He was impressed by all the plants and stretched his hand to touch and smell each kind, expressing his admiration of each to his attendants. He did not know why she died and was sorry to have missed what she had to offer him.

712. As he wandered around picking up or smelling these fragrant plants, the snake leapt up and spurted its poison at him. The right side of his body was at once paralyzed, as also his right eye and ear.

Augustus was amazed at Cleopatra's action and her suicide, and her preferring death to humiliation, as also at her tricking him by getting the snake to hide inside the plants. He composed a poem in the Roman language about this incident, describing what happened to him and to Cleopatra. He remained as he was for one more day then died. If the snake had not emptied most of its poison on the slave woman and on Queen Cleopatra, Augustus would have died instantly and would not have lasted that long. The poem itself remains until today well known among the Romans and they recite it when they mourn their kings or

their dead. They also use it occasionally in their songs and it is famous among them.

713. In our earlier works, we recounted the life histories of these kings, their wars, their travels through the lands, information about their wise men, the views and theories these sages and philosophers advanced, and their arcane sciences and marvels. The most reliable view as regards the number of their kings, as agreed upon by those with expert knowledge of their history, is that they were fourteen kings in total, the last being Queen Cleopatra, and that the total number of years of the reigns of their kings and their length of days and the expansion of their dominion was three hundred and one years.

714. Every Greek king after Alexander son of Philip was called Ptolemy. This is the most common designation of their kings just as Persian kings are called Kisra, Byzantine kings are called Caesar, Yemeni kings are called Tubba`, Abyssinian kings are called Najashi, and Zanj kings are called Waflemi. Earlier in this work we mentioned in brief the ranks of the world's kings, their characteristics and their most common designations. In what follows, and in its appropriate place in this work, we shall deal again and in brief with this subject when we discuss kings and kingdoms, God willing. God grants success.

Chapter 28

An account of the Romans and what people have asserted regarding their genealogies, the number of their kings and their dates

715. People disagree about the Romans and why they were called by this name. Some say they were called Romans with reference to the city of Rome [*Rumiya*]. This city is called "Romas" in Greek and the name was Arabized. The inhabitants were called Romans. Likewise, the Byzantines in their own language call themselves "Romanis", the name

also used for them by people of the frontiers. Others believe the name refers to their ancestor Rum son of Samahliq son of Harian son of `Aifa' son of al-`Is son of Isaac son of Abraham, the friend of God. Still others claim that they were called after their ancestor Rum son of Labat son of Yunan son of Yafith son of Thuna son of Sarhun son of Rumiya son of Barbat son of Tufil son of Ruman son of al-Asfar son of Alifaz son of al-`Is son of Isaac. Still other lines of descent are mentioned. Earlier in this work and in our discussion of the Greeks we made mention of the genealogy of Alexander and how he is connected to this line of descent according to some people. God knows best.

716. Al-`Is had thirty male issue. The last Romans are the descendants of al-Asfar son of Alifaz son of al-`Is son of Isaac son of Abraham.

Some early pre-Islamic Arab poets mention this because that genealogy was well known among them. Thus, `Adiyy ibn Zaid al-`Ibadi says:

And the noble progeny of al-Asfar, kings of the Romans:

None of them remains or is remembered.

Al-`Is son of Isaac, who is Esau, had married into the Canaanites and had many children from them. It is said that the Amalikites [*`Amaliq*] who are the extinct Arabs who inhabited al-Sham, are descended from Alifaz son of Esau and from Ra`wa'il son of Esau. But Arab scholars reject this theory except where it concerns the Romans to the exclusion of the above mentioned Amalikites and others. These genealogies all come from the Torah and other books of the Hebrews.

717. Al-Mas`udi said: The Romans overcame the Greeks, the history of which is too long to narrate and too complicated to explain in this work. The first Roman king was Wamasatukhas, who is Gaius [Ja'ius] the Younger son of Rum son of Samahliq, who reigned for twenty-two years. It is also said that the first Roman king was Caesar [*Qaisar*] whose name was Gaius Julius [*Ghaius Yulius*] who reigned for eighteen

years. Another version states that the first Roman king after the Greeks who ruled Rome was Julius [*Yulis*] for seven and a half years. The city of Rome had been built four hundred years before the Romans. After him came Augustus Caesar who reigned for fifty-six years. He was the first Roman king to be called Caesar and is the second in the line of their kings. The word “Caesar” means “delivered through incision”. This was because his mother died while pregnant with him so her stomach was slit. That king used to boast that he was not born of women. Later Roman kings from among his descendants also boasted of this event that had happened to their ancestor. Accordingly, the term came to designate later Roman kings, but God knows best about this.

718. King Augustus invaded al-Sham, Egypt and Alexandria, and put an end to the remaining kings of Alexandria and Macedonia, i.e. Egypt. We stated above that all kings who ruled Macedonia and Alexandria were called Ptolemy. That king, that is, Augustus, captured the treasuries of the kings of Alexandria and Macedonia and carried them back to Rome. He waged many wars throughout the earth which are recounted in our earlier works. He worshipped idols and built cities and agricultural districts in the land of the Romans which are known by his name such as Caesarea and the city of Caesarea on the coast of Palestine in al-Sham.

719. The Messiah `Isa son of Mary, who is the Nazarene Jesus [*Aishu`*] was born, as stated earlier, in the forty second year of the reign of the above mentioned Caesar Augustus. Thus, from the reign of Alexander to the birth of the Messiah there was an interval of three hundred and ninety-nine years. The Nazarene Jesus was born when twenty-one years had elapsed of the reign of Herod [*Hirudus*], king of the Israelites at that time who resided in Iliya in the land of Palestine, Iliya being Urshalim in Hebrew. Thus, from the descent of Adam to the birth of the

Messiah, and according to the books of the legal communities from among the People of the Book, there was an interval of five thousand and five hundred years.

720. Augustus reigned for fourteen years after the birth of the Messiah. In total, he reigned in Rome over the Romans and, if his travels are included, for fifty-six years, as mentioned above. His death has been mentioned above and how he was stung by the snake in Macedonia, and how he was paralyzed on one side of his body and lost his sight and hearing. This was mentioned in the chapter before this one when we dealt with Cleopatra and what she did to herself.

721. He was followed by Tiberius [*Tibaris*] who reigned for twenty-two years. Three years before his reign ended the Messiah was carried up to heaven. When that king died, the Romans broke up into factions and continued in these divisions and antagonisms regarding supreme power for a period of two hundred and ninety-eight years. It was a time of disorder where no king could unite them. When this interval ended they set up a descendant of Tiberius called Gaius in the city of Rome, and he reigned for four years. Meanwhile the Romans knew nothing but the worship of idols and images.

722. After him came Claudius [*Qaludius*] who reigned for fourteen years in Rome. He was the first Roman king to initiate the execution of the Christians and followers of the Messiah. It is said that in his days Peter [*Butrus*], known in Syriac as Shim`un and to the Arabs as Sim`an, was crucified along with Paul [*Bulus*] and hung upside down. There are also accounts of their encounter in Rome with Sima the magician [i.e. Simon Magus]. These two were the ones who had gone to Antioch and the Almighty told their story in the chapter called *Yasin* in the Qur'an. Later on, when Christianity triumphed in Rome, they acquired immense importance and their bodies were placed in crystal sarcophagi. They are

still found in this state in a church in the city of Rome until now, as already mentioned earlier in this book. Scholars who concern themselves with the history of the world and the life histories of kings and their dates, claim that these two were executed in Rome during the reign of the fifth Roman king.

723. The disciples of Jesus of Nazareth then dispersed throughout the earth. Mari went to the near region of Iraq and died in the town of Dair Qunna and al-Safiya, which is on the bank of the Tigris between Baghdad and Wasit. This is the hometown of `Ali ibn `Isa ibn Dawud ibn al-Jarrah* and Muhammad ibn Dawud ibn al-Jarrah as well as other state secretaries. Mari's tomb is in a church there until the present day, i.e. the year 332, and is held in great reverence by the Christians.

Thomas [*Tuma*], one of the twelve disciples, went to India to preach the religion of the Messiah, and died there. Another disciple headed to Khurasan and died there. His tomb is well known and greatly honored by the Christians. Some say he died in the land of Daquqa, Khanijar and Karkh Juddan, on the borders of Iraq, a well known location.

724. Mark [*Marqush*] died in Alexandria in Egypt and his tomb is there. He is one of the four disciples who composed the Gospel [*Injil*]. A curious tale is told about Mark and the Egyptians and the way he was killed. We mentioned the cause behind this in our book *al-Awsat*, which immediately precedes this book, where we recounted his story with the Egyptians and what he enjoined upon them before he set off to the west. He had said to them: "You are to kill him whoever comes to you in my shape and image. Some people coming after me will assume my physical appearance, so be quick to kill them and do not accept the message they bear to you." He then departed. Having been absent for some time and having failed to reach the place he wanted, he returned to them. When they were about to kill him he said: "Woe to you! I am

Mark!” They answered: “No. Our father Mark told us and enjoined upon us to kill whomsoever resembles him.” He said: “But I am Mark!” They answered: “There is no way we can release you and we must kill you.” So they killed him. Prior to killing him, they had asked him first to produce proofs to support his claim and to effect some miracles. One of them said to him: “If you are truthful in your claims, ascend up to heaven right before our eyes.” He removed his clothes and put on a woolen shirt in preparation for his ascent to heaven but some of his disciples held him back saying: “If you depart now, who can we have after you are gone since you are our father?” Thereafter, his tale proceeded as related above.

725. The disciples of the Messiah are seventy-two in number, plus twelve who do not belong to the seventy-two. Of those who transmitted the Gospel, that is, Luke [*Luqa*], Mark, John [*Yuhanna*] and Matthew [*Matta*], two, namely Luke and Matthew, belonged to the seventy-two. Matthew might also be considered one of the twelve but I do not know what they mean by this. The two who belong to the twelve are John son of Zebedee [*Zabada*] and Mark of Alexandria. The third apostle who came to Antioch, having been preceded thither by Peter and Thomas, was Paul, who is the third person referred to in the Qur’an as {so we backed them with a third}. Among all Christian monks none eat meat except the monks of Egypt because Mark allowed them to eat it.

726. The next Roman king was Nero [*Nirun*]. His reign was stable and he wished to adopt worship of icons and statues. It is said that during his reign he killed Peter and Paul in Rome, as mentioned above. The Christian religion began to spread among the Romans and its missionaries increased in number. That king executed a large number of Christians. He reigned for fourteen years and some months. After him came Titus and Vespasian [*Isfasiyanus*] who ruled jointly for thirteen

years. This was in the city of Rome. One year into the reign of these two kings, they marched to al-Sham where they fought major battles against the Israelites in which some three hundred thousand Israelites were killed and Jerusalem was destroyed. The temple was burnt down and its site was ploughed over using bulls, and all its traces were erased. The two kings were idol worshippers. I found in some history books that the Almighty punished the Romans from the day Jerusalem was destroyed by causing some Romans to be enslaved each day. This was done by nations that lived on their frontiers so that no day passes without some Romans being enslaved, be they many or few.

727. The next Roman king after these two was Domitian [*Dumitianus*] who reigned for fifteen years. He was a fervent idol worshipper. Nine years into his reign the disciple John [*Yuhanna*], one of the four writers of the Gospel, was exiled by Domitian to some island in the sea but he later recalled him. He was followed by Nerva [*Nirawus*] for one year then by Trajan [*Traianus*] for nineteen years, who also worshipped idols. Nine years into his reign the disciple John died. He was followed by Hadrian [*Adrianus*] for eleven years, who worshipped idols. He destroyed the remaining possessions of the Israelites in al-Sham.

728. Then came Antoninus who ruled Rome for twenty-three years. It was he who built Bait al-Maqdis, calling it Iliya, the first to call the city by this name. He was followed by Markus [i.e. Marcus Aurelius] who reigned for nineteen years and was an idol worshipper. Then came Commodus [*Qumudus*], an idol worshipper, for thirteen years. Then came Severus [*Sawirus*] for eighteen years. A son of his, called Antuninus, succeeded who worshipped idols and reigned for seven years. He was succeeded by Antuninus the Second who reigned for four years and was an idol worshipper. Towards the end of that king's reign Galen [*Jalinus*] the wise died.

729. Following him was Alexander Mamias* [i.e. Alexander Severus] and “Mamias” means impotent. He worshipped idols and reigned for thirteen years. Then came Maximus [*Maqsimus*] who worshipped idols and reigned for three years. He was followed by Gordian [*Ghurdianus*] who was an idol worshipper and reigned for three years. He was followed by Decius [*Daqius*], an idol worshipper, for two years. He actively killed and persecuted the Christians, and it was from this king that the People of the Cave fled.

730. There is a dispute among people regarding the People of the Cave and al-Raqim*. Some claim that the People of the Cave are themselves the People of al-Raqim and that al-Raqim refers to the names of the People of the Cave as inscribed (*ruqqima*) on a stone tablet at the entrance to the cave, while others say that the People of the Cave are different from the People of al-Raqim. We have mentioned the two localities in the land of the Byzantines. Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib ibn Marwan al-Sarakhsi, the student of Ya`qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi, relates on the authority of Muhammad ibn Musa the astrologer* that when he was sent by the caliph al-Wathiq from Samarra to the land of the Byzantines, he came upon the People of al-Raqim, a place known as Jarma in Byzantine territory. In our book *al-Awsat* we related the story of the People of the Cave, their locale in Byzantine territory, and their condition up to the present day. We also related the story of the People of al-Raqim and what Muhammad ibn Musa the astrologer recounted about them, and how the man put in charge of them wanted to poison him and his Muslim companions, and also related the story of the dam built by the Two-Horned to keep out Gog and Magog.

731. Al-Mas`udi said: I found in a book about the image of the earth and the great buildings and temples built on it that the width of that dam between two mountains, excluding its length and height, was pictured

as occupying nine and a half degrees of the celestial sphere. This is the equivalent of a distance of a hundred and fifty *farsakhs* between the two mountains. Some investigators and researchers consider this impossible. Thus, Muhammad ibn Kathir al-Farghani* the astronomer rejected the figures cited above, discussed them at length and proved them to be wrong. Likewise, Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib [al-Sarakhsi] who was executed by the caliph al-Mu`tadid, wrote several essays devoted to the People of the Cave and al-Raqim. In our book *al-Awsat* we related all that was said about this subject.

732. Then came Gallienus [*Jalinus*] who reigned for three years. He was followed by Probus [*Burubus*] for about twenty years though some say fifteen. He was succeeded by a son of his called Carus [*Qarus*] for about two years. Then came Diocletian [*Duqlitianus*] who reigned for ten years and was followed by Constantine [*Qustantin*].

733. Al-Mas`udi said: I found that most books of history agree that the total number of Roman kings who ruled in the city of Rome and whom we have discussed in this chapter were forty nine; that the total number of their regnal years counting from the first king to rule over them, though taking into consideration the disputes about this matter outlined at the start of this chapter, and down to the reign of the above mentioned Constantine son of Helen, was four hundred and thirty-seven years, seven months and six days. The various versions to be found in history books about this matter are not consistent as regards the names of their kings and length of their reigns, and most of them are written in Greek. So we narrated what we were able to establish. The histories and conduct of these kings and their regnal dates are to be found in the books of Melkite Christians and we have summarized their contents and conclusions in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, and mentioned therein the

buildings they constructed and their journeys across the world. Only God is everlasting and His reign does not pass away.

Chapter 29

An account of Christian Roman kings, that is, the kings of Constantinople, and a brief history of their times

734. When Diocletian, an idol worshipper, died in Rome, Constantine succeeded. He was the first Roman king to move away from Rome to Byzantium [*Buzantia*], which is the city of Constantinople. It was he who built it and gave it his name, a name it preserves to the present day. There is a charming story associated with his construction of the city involving some kings of Burjan and a fear he had of some Sasanid monarchs. His leaving Rome and his adoption of Christianity took place one year after the beginning of his reign. Seven years into his reign, his mother Helen travelled to al-Sham where she built churches, then went on to Bait al-Maqdis where she searched for the cross on which, according to them, Christ was crucified. When she found the cross, she embellished it with gold and silver and declared that day to be a feast-day, known as the Feast of the Cross. This day falls on the fourteenth day of the month of September [*Aylul*]. It is a day when canals and waterways are opened in Egypt as will be explained when we come to the history of Egypt in this book.

735. It was Helen who built the church in Homs on four pillars, an architectural wonder of the world. She dug for hidden treasure in al-Sham and Egypt and used the wealth recovered to build churches and strengthen the Christian religion. Every church in al-Sham, Egypt and Byzantine lands was built by this queen, Helen mother of Constantine. Her name was adjoined to the cross which was set up in every church. The Byzantines do not have the letter H in their alphabet. There are five letters in the name “Hilani”. The first letter is an *imala**which, in the

calculation according to letters (*Hisab al-Jummal*), has a value of 5. The second letter is an L, which has a value of 30. The third letter is another *imala* and has a value of 5. The fourth letter, an N, is 50 and the fifth is a Ya' which is a 10. This comes to a total of 100, as related. Here is the image which totals 100 as it appears in Greek [‘Ελενη].

736. Nineteen years into the reign of Constantine son of Helen three hundred and eighteen bishops gathered together in the city of Nicea [*Niqia*] in Byzantine territory, where they laid the foundations of the Christian religion. This was the first of six councils that the Byzantines mention in their prayers and which they call the cannons. In Greek these councils are known as *Sunudusat* [synods], singular *sunudus*. The first of their number took place in Nicea as mentioned above. There they agreed about Arius. This council resulted in a consensus among all Christian communities, Melkites and Easterners, these latter being the *Ibad* (worshippers) whom the Melkites and most others call the Nestorians. The Jacobites also agreed to abide by that council. The second was the council of Constantinople which dealt with Macedonius [*Maqadunus*] and included one hundred and fifty bishops. The third council was at Ephesus and included two hundred men. The fourth was at Chalcedon [*Khalqadunia*] and included six hundred and sixty men. The fifth was at Constantinople with one hundred and sixty men while the sixth was in the capital city and numbered two hundred and eighty-nine men. Later on, as we list the Byzantine kings, we shall mention these councils, the triumph of Christianity and the disappearance of the worship of idols and images.

737. The reason why Constantine son of Helen embraced Christianity is that he once marched out to battle against the Burjan or some other nation and the wars between them lasted one year and had its victories and its defeats. One day he was defeated, and a large number of his men

were killed to the point where he feared for his own life. In his sleep, he saw spears descending from heaven with thongs and pennants and on their tips crosses of gold, silver, iron, bronze and jewels. A voice said to him: "Take these spears and fight your enemy and you shall be victorious." So he began, while still asleep, to fight with these spears and saw that he had triumphed over his enemy who fled before him. He woke up, called for the spears and attached to them what was mentioned above, then raised them up in his army and marched upon his enemy, who turned tail and were put to the sword. Returning to Nicea, Constantine asked men of experience about these crosses and whether they knew of any religions or sects that concern themselves with them. He was told that there was an assembly of this sect in Bait al-Maqdis in al-Sham and was informed of how earlier kings had massacred Christians. So he sent word to Bait al-Maqdis and al-Sham summoning three hundred and eighteen bishops to Nicea where he was residing. He told them what had happened to him and they explained Christianity to him. This was the first synod or council as mentioned above. It is said that his mother Helen had embraced Christianity but kept this a secret from him before he had his vision.

738. Constantine reigned for thirty-one years before he died. Other historical accounts mention twenty-five years. In our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, we narrated his history and wars and how he rode out one day to explore the site of Constantinople and arrived at that gulf which issues from the Azov and Black seas. The gulf in question flows rapidly from that sea and proceeds to pour into the Mediterranean. This gulf runs for a distance of 350 miles, though some say less. At the spot where it issues from the Sea of Azov it is ten miles wide, where are found buildings and a Byzantine city called Musannat which repels the attacks of the Rus ships and others coming from that

direction. That gulf then grows narrow near Constantinople where its width shrinks to about four miles at the crossing point between the eastern and western shores on which lies Constantinople. On this gulf are built up areas. The gulf ends at a well known place called Abydos [*Abidus*] where there are mountains and a celebrated gushing spring, known as the spring of Maslama ibn `Abd al-Malik. It was at this place that he camped when he besieged Constantinople and where he was joined by Muslim ships. The mouth of this gulf on the side of the Mediterranean and where it finally flows is a strait where there is a tower whose soldiers prevent approaching Muslim ships that is, at the time when Muslims had ships which could sail against the Byzantines. Nowadays, however, it is Byzantine ships that invade Muslim lands. To God belongs power, in the past and in future.

739. I was told by Abu `Umair `Adiyy ibn Ahmad ibn `Abd al-Baqi al-Adani, the most prominent leader of the frontier garrisons of al-Sham and a man of learning, that when he crossed over to Constantinople in that gulf, on a mission to arrange a truce and a prisoner ransom, he closely observed the flow of water and its agitation from the side of the Sea of Azov. He would then observe the waters from the Mediterranean side and find them calm, which indicated to him that the two seas were connected. He also told me that he had entered that gulf from the Mediterranean. I was informed by several people who took part in the raid on Seleucia [*Saluqia*] with Ghulam Zarafa and were men of understanding that they had entered the gulf of Constantinople and travelled a long distance in it, and that they found the waters in that gulf diminished at certain times of day or night, like the action of the tides. On that gulf are found cities and built-up areas. When they felt that the waters were ebbing they quickly left that gulf and came out into the Mediterranean. They also told me that at the mouth of the gulf from the

side of the Mediterranean there is a city near that mouth, and that the gulf surrounds Constantinople from two sides, the east and the north while the land is on its western side.

740. On that gulf is found a gate plated with gold on bronze panels consisting of several walls on the western side. Inside it is a palace. The western walls reach up to a height of thirty *dhira`*s, though some say they are lower than this and that the lowest part of the wall is ten *dhira`*s. The highest part of the wall is the one facing south but there is only one wall facing the gulf. In it is a palace, look-outs, and many towers and gates that face land and sea, and round about are many churches. It is said that the city has thirty gates while others say it has one hundred small and large gates. It is a putrid city affected by diverse winds and causes moisture in the body because it is located among the seas that we have described.

741. Al-Mas`udi said: Philosophy continued to thrive in the era of the Greeks and part of the era of the Romans. Scholars and philosophers were highly esteemed. They propounded theories in the physical sciences and concerning the mind, the soul and the four subjects [quadrivium], i.e., arithmetic (*arithmatiqi*) which is the science of numbers, geometry (*jumatriqa*) which is the science of planes and mechanics, astronomy (*astarnumia*) the science of astrology, and music (*musiqqa*) the science of composing tunes. These sciences continued to be much in demand, highly esteemed in their various parts, strongly grounded in their basic principles, firmly established and noble in structure until Christianity triumphed among the Romans. The Christians then erased the philosophical sciences, obliterated its traces, wiped out its methods, demolished what the Greeks had made clear and distorted what ancient thinkers had elucidated.*

742. Among the noble sciences left behind was the science of music for it nurtures the soul, delights it and diverts it. The soul is filled with joy when it hears it and longs for the harmony of its modes. Philosophers have extolled its excellence and pointed to its precious status. Thus, Alexander said: “He who appreciates musical tunes has no need of any other pleasure.” Philosophers have stated that tunes and songs constitute a noble virtue which became too difficult to put into words and could not be controlled. Thus, as no words could be uttered, the soul brought them out in the form of tunes. When it did so, the soul was delighted and fell in love with music and found its joy in listening to it.

Philosophers arranged the four strings to correspond to the four humors of the body. Thus, the *zir* [treble] was placed opposite yellow bile, the *muthanna* [doubled] opposite blood, the *muthallath* [tripled] opposite phlegm and the *bamm* [bass] opposite black bile.

743. We have discussed music at great length as also the various kinds of musical instruments, rhythms, types of dance, musical entertainments, harmonies and harmonic scales and what each nation adopted by way of musical entertainment such as the Greeks, Romans, Suriyan, Nabat, Sind, Hind, Persians and others. We also discussed the correspondence between the melody and the strings, and the intermingling between the soul and the tunes, how joy in listening to music is generated, how pleasure is produced, how grief is dissipated and sorrows cease, together with the natural and psychic causes of all these states and all other aspects related to these matters. All these subjects we covered in our book called *Kitab al-Zulaf* [Book of Stages]. In our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, we narrated some pleasant stories having to do with musical entertainments and the instruments of these nations which makes it unnecessary for us to repeat that information here, for this book is merely the briefest of summaries.

If an idea occurs to our mind we shall allude in brief to these lengthy accounts in later sections of this book. However, if this proves difficult, we have already referred to our earlier books for a fuller and more detailed treatment.

744. The next Roman king after Constantine son of Helen was a Christian king, Constantine his son. He reigned for twenty-four years. He built many churches and strengthened the Christian religion. He was succeeded by the nephew of the first Constantine, Julian [*Yulianus/Lilianus*] who abandoned Christianity and reverted to idol worship. This is Julian known as the *Hanifi* [religion-changer]. The Christians hate him so much for abandoning Christianity and changing its regulations that they call him the Apostate [*Albuztat*]. Julian had invaded Iraq during the reign of Sabur son of Ardashir son of Babik. He was hit by a stray arrow and killed. He had marched on Iraq leading a huge army, and Sabur could find no way to withstand him because the invasion was sudden. Thus, Sabur instead of meeting him directly resorted to a ruse and this was how the stray arrow hit its mark. Julian reigned for one year before he died, though some say more. He is the third king after the triumph of Christianity.

745. When Julian was killed the kings and generals with him panicked and resorted to a general highly regarded among them called Jovian [*Yubianus*]. Some say he was the secretary of the preceding king. He refused to become king unless they reverted back to Christianity and they agreed. Sabur harassed the Romans and surrounded their army. Jovian exchanged letters with Sabur and a truce took place between them as well as conversations and friendship. They then parted and Jovian departed with his Christian troops, at peace with Sabur. He compensated him for what he had destroyed of his lands by offering him monies and precious Roman gifts. He then fortified the Christian

religion and restored it to its former status, forbidding idol worship and executing those who did so.

746. He was followed by Valens [*Awalans*] who was a Christian but who abandoned Christianity, then died in one of his wars. He reigned for fourteen years. It is said that it was in his days that the People of the Cave woke up from their slumber. According to what God the All-Praiseworthy informs us, they sent one of them with a silver coin to a city, this locality being in the northern regions of the Byzantine realm. Much has been said by people with astronomical knowledge about the manner in which the sun veered away from their cave as it rose and set because of where they were in northern lands. God in His book informs us of this as follows {And you would have seen the sun, as it arose, veering away from their cave} to the end of that verse. They were from the city of Ephesus in Byzantine territory.

747. After Valens came Gratian [*Gharatianus*] who reigned for fifteen years. One year into his reign there took place a meeting of Christians, which was one of their councils. At that council, they finalized their teachings about the Holy Spirit and excommunicated Macedonius [*Maqadunus*] the patriarch of Constantinople. This was their second synod. Gratian was followed by Theodosius I [*Tudusis the Elder*]. His name means “gift of God”. He upheld the Christian religion, strengthened it greatly and built churches. He was not a member of the royal house nor a Roman but a Spaniard [*Ashban*] which is an ancient nation that once ruled over al-Sham, Egypt, the west and al-Andalus. There is a dispute among people regarding them. In his book on the conquest of lands al-Waqidi* states that they were in origin the people of Isfahan [*Isbahan*] and that they were transported from there. This would necessarily mean that they antedated First Persians. `Ubaidullah ibn Khurradadbeh has a similar account, supported by a number of

other biographers and historians. The most widely known account of their origin is that they were the progeny of Yafith son of Noah. They are the kings of al-Andalus known as Ladhariqa, singular Ludhariq [Roderick]. Their religion is also a matter of dispute. Some say they were Magians, others that they were Sabeans and some say they were idol worshippers. We have already stated that the most common account of their genealogy is that they were descended from Yafith son of Noah.

748. Theodosius reigned for seventeen years before he died. Following him was Arcadius [*Arqadius*] who reigned for fourteen years and was a Christian. Then came his son Theodosius II [*Tudusis the Younger*] who, summoned two hundred bishops to the city of Ephesus. This was the third of the councils mentioned earlier. At that council Nestorius [*Nasturus*], Patriarch of Constantinople, was condemned. In our major work, *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we narrated the trick practiced on Nestorius by the occupant of the bishopric of Alexandria, how Nestorius banished John Chrysostom, and how Eudoxia [*Yaduqia*], wife of the king, reacted, until Nestorius himself was banished from Constantinople, first to Antioch and later to Upper Egypt.

749. Eastern Christians are called Nestorians because they followed his teachings. In fact, the Melkites called them thus in order to humiliate and dishonor them. The eastern Christians in al-Hira and elsewhere used to be called *al-`Ibad* [worshippers] and all eastern Christians reject this appellation and hate to be called Nestorians. Barsawma, bishop of Nisibis, supported the view of the easterners as regards the Trinity, which is the theology of the three hypostases (*aqanim*) and the single substance, and how the eternal divine nature was united to the created human nature.

750. Theodosius the Younger reigned for forty-two years before he died. Then came Marcian [*Marqianus*] and his wife Pulcheria [*Bulkharia*], who was herself a queen. In their days occurred the affair of the Jacobite Christians and their disputes concerning the Trinity. Marcian and his wife reigned for seven years. Most Jacobites are found in Iraq, the land of Takrit, Mosul, al-Jazira and among the Copts of Egypt except for a minority who are Melkite. The Nubians and Armenians are Jacobite and the bishop of the Jacobites is in Takrit, between Mosul and Baghdad. They formerly had a bishop near Ra's `Ain but he died. Their chief today is in the neighborhood of Aleppo, in the territory of Qinnasrin and al-`Awasim. Their bishopric is supposed to be in Antioch, but they also have a bishopric in Egypt. I know of no other bishopric that belongs to them except these two, namely, Egypt and Antioch.

751. Then came Leo [*Aliun*] the Elder son of Leo, who reigned for sixteen years. In his days Dioscorus [*Diusquru*] the Jacobite, patriarch of Alexandria, was anathematized. Leo summoned 630 bishops, although the history of the Byzantines mention 660. This took place in Chalcedon and is the fourth synod recognized by the Melkites, though the Jacobites do not recognize it. There is an unusual story connected with the patriarch Severus and his story with his pupil Jacob Baradaeus [*al-Baradi`i*] who preached the doctrine of Severus. The Jacobites derive their name from their adherence to the views of this Jacob and from whom they acquire their name. He was from the people of Antioch and worked in saddle-cloths (*baradi`*).

752. Then came Leo the Younger, son of Leo, who was a Melkite. He was followed by Zeno [*Zinun*] who was from the land of Yarmian [Little Armenia]* and was a Jacobite in sympathy. He reigned for seventeen years. He waged wars against rebels who had risen against

him in his capital and defeated them. He was succeeded by Anastasius [*Nistas*] who was also a Jacobite. He built the city of Amorium [*`Ammuriyya*] and managed to dig up much treasure and hidden wealth. He reigned for twenty-nine years before he died and was succeeded by Justin [*Yustinus*] who reigned for nine years.

753. Then came Justinian [*Yustanianus*] who reigned for thirty-nine, some say forty years. He built many churches and strengthened the Christian religion. He made the sect of the Melkites dominant and built the church of Edessa [*al-Ruha*] which is one of the world's wonders and one of its celebrated temples. In this church there was a cloth held in great honor by the Christians. This was because when Jesus of Nazareth emerged from the water of his baptism he used it to dry himself. That cloth kept changing hands until it ended in the church of Edessa. When the Byzantines grew in power against the Muslims and besieged the city of Edessa this year, which is the year 332 [943-4], this cloth was given to the Byzantines, who then agreed to a truce. When the Byzantines took possession of that cloth they were overjoyed.*

754. Next came Justin II [*Yustinus*], nephew of Justinian, who reigned for thirteen years and was a Melkite. He was followed by Tiberius for four years. During his reign he put on display all kinds of robes, appliances, vessels of gold and silver and other royal paraphernalia. Following him was Maurice [*Muriqis*] who reigned for twenty years. It was Maurice who supported Kisra Abrawiz against Bahram Jubin and was then assassinated. Furious about that assassination, Kisra sent an army to fight the Byzantines and several wars ensued between the two sides, as already mentioned. Phocas [*Fuqas*] succeeded, reigning for eight years, and was then killed. Following him came Heraclius [*Hiraql*]. He had been a general in some islands. He rebuilt Bait al-Maqdis after the Persians had been driven out of al-Sham and he built

some churches. Seven years into his reign the emigration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina took place, a city honored by God.

Chapter 30

An account of Roman kings after the coming of Islam

755. Al-Mas`udi said: I found that history books give conflicting dates for the birth of the Prophet and in which reign of a Roman king this event occurred. Some endorse the account we gave above as to his birth and emigration; others assert that his birth took place in the reign of Justin I who reigned for twenty-nine years. He was then followed by Justin II who reigned for twenty years. Then came Heraclius son of Justin who minted the Heraclian dinars and dirhams and reigned for fifteen years. Then came Muriq [?] son of Heraclius. What is found in astronomical almanacs, which chroniclers over time have used to date the reigns of Roman kings, is that Heraclius was the Roman king at the time when Islam asserted its power and during the caliphates of Abu Bakr and `Umar. This however is not the order of events as found in other history books and among historians and biographers, except among a few of them. In histories and biographies we find that the Prophet emigrated during the reign of Caesar, son of Phocas.

756. He was followed by Caesar son of Caesar which was during the caliphate of Abu Bakr. The next Roman king was Heraclius son of Caesar, whose reign occurred during the caliphate of `Umar ibn al-Khattab. It was this king who was fought by Muslim generals who conquered al-Sham such as Abu `Ubaida ibn al-Jarrah, Khalid ibn al-Walid, Yazid ibn Abi Sufian and other Muslim commanders. They succeeded in driving him out of al-Sham, while the king during the caliphate of `Uthman ibn `Affan was Muriq[?] son of Heraclius. In

the caliphate of `Ali ibn Abi Talib and into the days of Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufian the king was Phocas son of Muriq. He was followed by Pogonatos [“the beared”=Constans II] son of Phocas for the remainder of the days of Mu`awiya. Between these two figures several letters were exchanged and several truces concluded. The person who carried their messages back and forth was Yanaq the Byzantine, a slave of Mu`awiya. Mu`awiya had concluded a truce with the father of Pogonatos, Phocas son of Muriq, when he marched out against `Ali ibn Abi Talib. Pogonatos had also brought Mu`awiya the good news that he would become a king, that the Muslims would unite in agreeing to kill `Uthman, Mu`awiya’s kinsman, and that Mu`awiya would then become king. At the time, Muawiyah was governor of al-Sham for `Uthman. A lengthy tale is told about these events which we have narrated in our book *al-Awsat*. It is said that these prognostications are part of a science that Roman kings inherit from their predecessors. The reign of Pogonatos son of Phocas coincided with the last days of Mu`awiya and the days of Yazid ibn Mu`awiya, Mu`awiya ibn Yazid, Marwan ibn al-Hakam and into the beginning of the days of `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan.

757. The next king was Leo son of Pogonatos. This was in the days of `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. He was followed by Bardanes [*Bardan*] son of Leo which coincided with the caliphates of Al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik, Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik and `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz. The Byzantine kingdom then fell into disorder resulting from Muslim raids by land and sea led by Maslama ibn `Abd al-Malik. The Byzantines chose for king a man from Mar`ash who did not belong to the royal house called Jirjis* who reigned for

nineteen years. The Byzantine realm continued to experience troubles until Constantine son of Leo ascended the throne which happened during the caliphate of Abu'l `Abbas al-Saffah and his brother Abu Ja`far al-Mansur. He was followed by Leo son of Constantine whose reign coincided with the caliphates of al-Mahdi and al-Hadi. He was followed by Constantine son of Leo whose mother, Irene [*Irin*], was his partner in rule because of his young age. He lasted until the caliphate of Harun al-Rashid then died. Later, his mother was blinded but it would take too long to narrate that whole episode.

758. The next king was Nikephoros [*Niqfur*] son of Staurakios [*Istabraq*]. He and Harun al-Rashid exchanged letters. Harun then invaded the Byzantine kingdom and Nikephoros, following an act of treachery in some of their correspondence, gave Harun the power to seek retaliation on him personally, so Harun left him and departed. Nikephoros broke his word regarding retaliation but the news was kept from al-Rashid who was sick in the city of al-Raqqa. The poet Abu'l `Atahiya* composed the following verses concerning Nikephoros, the power of retaliation he had granted to Harun, the monies and gifts he had sent to him and the tribute he had promised to pay him:

O Imam of right guidance, you have become preoccupied with religion:

To all who pray for rain you have given water in plenty.

Two names you have, derived from prudence and right guidance:

It is you who is called prudent and rightly guided.

If you're displeased with anything, it becomes an object of displeasure,

*And if content with anything, all people are content with it.
You stretched forth for us in east and west the hand of victory,
Going far eastwards and far westwards.
The earth you embroidered with generosity and liberality,
So the face of the earth is covered with your bounty.
And you, Commander of the Believers, are a champion of piety,
You have unraveled of benevolence what once was rolled up.
God has decreed that the kingdom of Harun would be free of blemish
And God's decree is ever final among His creatures.
The world willingly submitted to Harun,
And Nikephoros is now a dhimmi* of Harun.*

759. When Harun recovered from his illness, some poets entered into his presence but people were afraid to tell him about the treachery of Nikephoros. So one of them recited the following verses:

*Nikephoros has reneged on his word and calamities will turn round
and strike him.*

Commander of the Believers, be of good cheer:

*The victory that God brought you is great,
A victory greater than all others, a triumph heralded for us by your
victorious pennant.*

*Your subjects rejoiced when a messenger brought the news
That he had acted treacherously.*

*Your covenant urged you to quickly raid him,
A raid such as relieves souls and whose calamities will resound.*

*O Nikephoros, you must be stupid and deluded if you believe
That the caliph will ignore you if you betray him.*

Did you really believe when you committed your treachery that you will escape?

May your mother be bereaved of you! Your belief is mere fantasy.

The caliph is able to overpower you,

Whether you live near or far.

Though we may be oblivious, the caliph is never oblivious

Regarding his firm management of affairs of state.

He is a king who has gone out to perform jihad in person,

And so his enemy will always be defeated.

O you who seek the pleasure of God, through virtuous acts,

No intention is ever hidden from God.

No counsel is of any use to one who betrays his caliph,

And good counsel is appreciated by those who are counseled.

To counsel the caliph is a religious duty imposed on mankind,

And for those who give counsel, it is expiation for sin and a purification

*[reading *tuhur*].*

These verses come from a longer poem.

760. When the poem was recited, al-Rashid said: “Did he really do it?”

He knew that his viziers had played a trick on him. So he prepared an army and invaded Nikephoros. He camped at Heraclea in the year 190 [805-6]. Abu `Umair `Adiyy ibn Ahmad ibn `Abd al-Baqi al-Adani told me that when al-Rashid wanted to besiege the fortress of Heraclea, he had with him the two leaders of the frontier posts of al-Sham, Makhlad ibn al-Husain and Abu Ishaq al-Fazari, author of the book on the conduct of war. Al-Rashid took Makhlad aside and asked him: “What say you about besieging this fortress?” Makhlad responded: “This is the first of the Byzantines fortresses that you encounter. It is impregnable and extremely strong. If you besiege it and God facilitates its capture,

you will not find any difficulty capturing any other fortress afterwards.” Al-Rashid ordered him to retire.

761. He then summoned Abu Ishaq al-Fazari and asked him the same question he had asked Makhlad and Abu Ishaq responded: “O Commander of the Believers, this is a fortress the Byzantines have built at the point where roads commence and made it into a frontier post for them. It is not densely inhabited. If you capture it, there will not be much booty in it for the Muslims and if you fail to capture it, this will be counted as a failure of judgment. My advice is that the Commander of the Believers should proceed to a major Byzantine city which, if captured, will supply booty to all the Muslims. If this proves impossible, there is a ready excuse.” Al-Rashid inclined to the first view, that of Makhlad, besieged Heraclea for seventeen days and surrounded it with the instruments of war. Many Muslims were injured, their supplies and fodder ran short and al-Rashid became impatient.

762. He summoned Abu Ishaq al-Fazari once more and said: “O Ibrahim, you see what has befallen the Muslims. What do you advise now?” He responded: “O Commander of the Believers, this is what I feared and I already stated my view beforehand. I advised that vigorous war should be waged elsewhere than on this fortress. Now, however, there is no way we can leave once we have begun our siege. This would impugn the dignity of kingship, weaken religion and embolden other fortresses to resist the Muslims and persevere against them. My advice, O Commander of the Believers, is to announce to the army that the Commander of the Believers is determined to besiege this fortress until God causes it to be captured by the Muslims. You would then order stones and timber to be collected and a city to be built facing this fortress until God causes it to be captured. This piece of news is to reach the army only when assembled to depart for the Prophet says:

‘War is trickery’ and this is a war of trickery and not of the sword.” Al-Rashid immediately ordered that announcement to be made. The stones were transported and the trees were cut and people began to build. When the people in the fortress saw this they escaped stealthily by night or else lowered themselves by ropes.

763. Abu `Umayr supplies additional details including the story of the girl in the fortress enslaved by al-Rashid. She was the daughter of the commander of the fortress, and was comely and beautiful. When the division of booty took place, al-Rashid’s agent paid a high price for her and bought her for him. The girl won his heart and he built for her a fortress near al-Rafiqa on the road to Balis and on the Tigris which he called Heraclea, in imitation of the Byzantine Heraclea. The story is long and we narrated it in full in our book *al-Awsat*. This fortress still exists today where there is a ruin known as Heraclea.

764. I was informed by Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Duraid on the authority of Abu’l `Aina’ who said, “I was told the following by Shibl the interpreter: ‘When al-Rashid besieged Heraclea and captured it, I saw at its gate a stone with an inscription in Greek. I began to translate it while al-Rashid was looking on, though I was unaware of this. The translation was as follows: “In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate. O son of Adam, seize the opportunity whenever possible, and delegate your affairs to those who are experts; do not be too joyful when you commit a sin and do not assume the burden of grief for a day that has yet to come for, if it is not the day of your death or the end of your days, God will provide you on that day with your means of livelihood. Do not be like those deluded by amassing wealth. How many have we seen who amassed wealth which ended up with the husband of his widow or was stingy regarding his own person while provisioning the treasury of others!”’” The date of that inscription on that

day was more than two thousand years old. The gate of Heraclea overlooks a valley and a moat that surrounds the fortress.

765. Some people of experience among the people of the frontiers relate the following story. When the siege grew severe upon the inhabitants of Heraclea and the fighting began to cause them great harm with flying stones, fires and arrows, the gate was opened and the Muslims observed this closely. A man from the fortress appeared, as handsome as any man and in full armor, who called out: "O Arabs, you have been besieging us for a long time. Let a man among you, let ten, let twenty, come out to fight me in single combat." No one came out to fight him, for they awaited permission from al-Rashid. Al-Rashid was asleep at the time, so the Byzantine warrior returned to the fortress. When al-Rashid woke up he was told about this incident. He was sorry and blamed his servants for not waking him. He was told: "O Commander of the Believers, the fact that no one came out to meet him today will make him more determined, more ruthless and more bold to come out tomorrow to seek single combat and repeat what he said." The night grew long for al-Rashid and he was like someone awaiting the morning. Suddenly, the gate was opened and the knight emerged and repeated his earlier words. Al-Rashid said: "Who will deal with him?" His senior commanders came forward and he was about to send one of them out when the people of the frontiers and the volunteers began a clamor outside the gate of his tent. He admitted some of them into his presence. With him were Makhlad ibn al-Husain and Ibrahim al-Fazari. So they entered and said: "O Commander of the Believers, your commanders are well known for their valor, courage, fame and military skill. If one of them goes out and kills that lout of a foreigner, this would not count for much whereas if he is killed by the lout, this would be a great disgrace to the whole army and a blow that cannot be ignored. We are

mere commoners and none of us enjoy any fame. Let the Commander of the Believers choose one of our number to oppose him.” Al-Rashid approved of this suggestion, and Makhlad and Ibrahim said to him: “O Commander of the Believers, they have spoken the truth.”

766. They pointed to a man among them called Ibn al-Jazari who was well known on the frontiers and famed for his valor. Al-Rashid said to him: “Are you willing to fight him?” He responded: “Yes, Commander of the Believers, and I shall call upon God to help me against him.” Al-Rashid said: “Give him a horse, a spear, a sword and a shield.” The man responded: “O Commander of the Believers, I feel more confident on my own horse and more effective wielding my own spear but I accept the sword and shield.” He put on his armor and al-Rashid made him approach to bid him farewell and pray for him as he departed. With him rode out twenty volunteers. When Ibn al-Jazari descended into the valley, the lout began to count them one by one and said: “I stipulated twenty opponents but you have increased them by one. But nevertheless I have no objection.” They called back to him: “Only one of us will come out to meet you.” When Ibn al-Jazari left them and rode out, the lout observed him closely as most of the Byzantines looked down on their champion from the fortress. The Byzantine then asked Ibn al-Jazari: “Will you answer my question truthfully?” “Yes”, said Ibn al-Jazari. “By God, are you Ibn al-Jazari?” “By God I am, and I am your match.” “Yes, indeed,” said the Byzantine.

767. The two then began their combat and exchanged spear thrusts. The combat grew long and their horses were about to halt from fatigue though neither had so much as scratched his opponent. They then cast their spears away, one in the direction of his fortress and the other in that of his friends, and drew their swords. The heat was intense and the two horses collapsed. Ibn al-Jazari would aim a blow at the Byzantine,

thinking it had reached its target and the Byzantine would ward it off with his metal shield which produced an unpleasant sound. The Byzantine would strike and his sword would be embedded in Ibn al-Jazari's shield which was a Tibetan leather shield. The lout was afraid that his sword would stick into the shield and he would be killed. When each despaired of the other, Ibn al-Jazari retreated. Al-Rashid and the Muslims were never more downhearted than at that sight while the polytheists shrieked with glee from their fortress. It was in fact a trick on the part of Ibn al-Jazari. When the lout followed him and stood above him, Ibn al-Jazari was able to lasso him and throw him off his horse then quickly swung around and cut off his head as soon as his body hit the ground. The Muslims shouted *Allahu Akbar* and the polytheists were dismayed. They then quickly turned to close the gate of the fortress. When al-Rashid heard this he ordered his commanders to attach fire to the stones of their mangonels and the Byzantines were no longer able to resist. So the Muslims rapidly attacked the gate and entered the fortress with drawn swords. One account states that the fortress asked to surrender peacefully and were granted safe-conduct. However, the story that it was conquered by force is the more prevalent version than the one that it surrendered peacefully.

768. Regarding this event, the poet Abu Nuwas al-Hakami wrote the following verses:

Heraclea fell when it witnessed a wonder:

Birds falling upon it bearing naphtha and tar.

As though our fires from the side of their fortress

Were like torches blazing on the washing lines of a fuller.

These are rather silly verses but were highly regarded because of their significance at that time, and the poet received a substantial reward for them. Ibn al-Jazari received a vast amount of money, was made a

commander and given splendid garments. However, he declined all these honors and asked to be left where he was. Regarding Heraclea, the poet Abu'l`Atahiya composed the following verses:

*Did not Heraclea proclaim its destruction,
At the hands of a king, rightly guided and successful?
Harun thunders death and hurls forth lightning,
Bringing slaughter that lacerates,
And pennants fluttering with victory,
Passing like a procession of clouds.
O Commander of the Believers, you have won victory,
Safe and sound may you be!
Rejoice for the booty won and your safe return!*

769. Many stories are told about al-Rashid and Nikephoros which we narrated in detail in our book *al-Awsat* and how, for example, he sent Yahya ibn al-Shikhkhir whom he commanded to feign deafness in the presence of Nikephoros, and how the latter told his commanders that al-Rashid had sent him someone feigning deafness, and what Ibn al-Shikhkhir asked for when the treasures were shown to him at a value of one dinar or one dirham bearing the image of the Byzantine king, and how finally Nikephoros submitted to al-Rashid and stipulated that he should send him, wherever he might be, water from `Ain al-`Ashira, also known as the `Ain of Badandun, which is of the purest and clearest kind. Other stories are also told which we have omitted to mention for brevity's sake.

770. Following Nikephoros came Staurakios son of Nikephoros son of Staurakios. This was in the days of the caliphate of Muhammad al-Amin. He continued to reign until kingship was usurped by Constantine son of Pogonatos whose reign coincided with the caliphate of al-Ma'mun. He was succeeded by Theophilos [*Tawfil*]. This was now the

caliphate of al-Mu`tasim. It was Theophilos who conquered Zapetra [Zibatra]. Al-Mu`tasim then invaded his domains and conquered Amorium, an incident we shall revert to when we come to the reign of al-Mu`tasim in this work, God willing. He was succeeded by Michael [Mikha'il] son of Theophilos, which coincided with the caliphates of al-Wathiq, al-Mutawakkil, al-Muntasir and al-Musta`in. A struggle for supreme power then ensued among the Byzantines and ended with their enthroning Theophilos son of Michael son of Theophilos. The throne was then usurped by Basil al-Saqlabi [the Slav], who was not from the royal house. His reign coincided with the caliphates of al-Mu`tazz, al-Muhtadi and part of the caliphate of al-Mu`tamid. When he died, they proclaimed his son, Alexander, king but were not satisfied with him so enthroned his brother Leo son of Basil. His reign coincided with the remaining days of al-Mu`tamid and those of al-Mu`tadid, al-Muktafi and the beginning of the days of al-Muqtadir. When he died, he left behind a young son called Constantine. He was forced to share power with his naval commander Romanos [Armanus] who led his military expeditions and was in charge of war. He made the young Constantine marry his daughter and his reign took place in the remaining days of al-Muqtadir and the days of al-Qahir, al-Radi and al-Muttaqi, which brings us down to the present, i.e. the year 332, in the caliphate of Abu Ishaq al-Muttaqi Lillah, son of al-Muqtadir.

771. At the date of writing this book, the Byzantines have three kings: the most senior and the one in charge of affairs is Romanos the usurper. The second is Constantine son of Leo son of Basil, while the third is a son of Romanos, called Stephen [Istfanus] who is addressed as king. Romanos also appointed another son as occupant of the seat of Constantinople, that is to say the Grand Patriarch, to whom they refer for their religious teachings. He had previously had him castrated and

brought him into the church. So the affairs of the Byzantines currently revolve around the three above-mentioned kings.

772. Al-Mas`udi said: Here ends the historical account of Byzantine kings as stated above, and God alone knows what their history will be in future. The total number of years of Christian Byzantine kings that have elapsed from Constantine son of Helen, the champion of Christianity, until the present day is five hundred and seven years. The consensus is that the number of their kings from Constantine till the present, the date of composition of this work, is forty-one kings. The son of Romanos is not included in this number but it does include Constantine and Romanos who are the current kings. If we include the son of Romanos, the number, beginning with Constantine son of Helen, becomes forty-two across that span of years. Some writers who specialize in world history state that from the descent of Adam to the present day, i.e. the year dated 332, six thousand two hundred and fifty-nine years have elapsed. In what follows of this work we shall, God willing, relate briefly the history of the world, its prophets and its kings in a separate chapter devoted to this topic.

Chapter 31

An account of Egypt, its history, its Nile, its wonders, reports about its kings and other matters relevant to this chapter

773. Al-Mas`udi said: God, great is His praise, mentioned Egypt in several places in His Book, in such verses as {The man who bought him from Egypt}, {Enter into Egypt, if God wills, safe and secure}, {We revealed to Moses and his brother: Take homes for your people in Egypt}, {Then go and inhabit Egypt and your wish will be granted}, {Some women in the city said: ‘The governor’s wife is attempting to seduce her youthful servant’}, the city referred to being Egypt.

774. Some wise men have described Egypt as follows: “For three months it is a white pearl; for three months it is black musk; for three months it is a green emerald; for three months it is a red gold ingot.” The white pearl refers to the fact that Egypt during the months of Abib, or July, Masri, or August, and Tut, or September, is flooded with water. The earth is seen to be white with its villages perched on hilltops like the planets and the waters surrounding them on all sides, to the point where one can only travel from one locality to another by boat. The black musk refers to the fact that in the months of Babih, or October, Hatur, or November, and Kaihak, or December, the waters recede and seep into the ground so the earth turns black and is ready for planting. From that earth comes forth an odor resembling musk. The green emerald refers to the months of Tubah, or January, Amshir, or February, and Barmahat, or March, when the earth glows because of its plentiful grass and plants and looks like a green emerald. As for the red ingot, this is because during the months of Barmuda, or April, Bashans, or May, and Bawnah, or June, the plants grow white and the grass turns rose-colored, so the land looks like a gold ingot in appearance and in value. Later in this book we shall mention the names of these months in Syriac, Arabic and Persian, though we have already dealt with this topic in detail in our *al-Awsat*.

775. Another person described Egypt as follows: “Its Nile is a marvel, its earth is gold, it submits to a conqueror, its king is any usurper, its wealth is bountiful, its goods are worthy to be imported, its people are somewhat boisterous, they obey out of fear, in peacetime they grow restless, and their war is truly warlike.” Egypt’s Nile is a lord among rivers and a noble watercourse because, according to the report in our religion, the Nile and the Ceyhan [*Saihan*] originate in Paradise.

Ceyhan is the river of Adana, the port town of al-Sham, and flows into

the Mediterranean. It originates at a place which is a three-day journey from Malatya and flows through Byzantine territory. The Muslims have no other city on that river except for Adana which lies between Tarsus and Mopsuestia [*al-Massisa*]. The other river is Jaihan which originates in springs called the springs of Jaihan at a distance of three miles from the town of Mar`ash and flows into the Mediterranean. The Muslims possess only two towns on this river, Mopsueatia and Kafarbayya, and it flows between them and the Tigris. We already mentioned that river in this work, as well as the Nile, and detailed their places of origin, the length of their course on the face of the earth and their outlets. These rivers issue from Paradise as does the Tigris and other major and famous rivers.

776. The Arabs say regarding the Nile that when it increases, canals, springs and wells dwindle and when it dwindles they increase, so that their increase is caused by the Nile's dwindling and their dwindling is caused by its increase. Al-Basri composed the following line of verse:
It floods if rivers, wide and plentiful, increase on earth.

The Indians say that its increase and decrease happen through torrents and that they know this from the recurrence of storms, the abundance of rainfall and the stillness of clouds. The Byzantines assert that the Nile has never increased or decreased and that its increase occurs only in the north when its waters increase and come together, thus blocking its flow and causing it to flood over the face of the earth. The Copts claim that its increase and decrease occur due to springs along its bank and are visible to all who travel and reach its heights. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, and in chapter 2, we mentioned in explicit detail the disputes concerning the Nile and its increase among ancients and moderns, and also concerning other major rivers, seas and smaller lakes, so it would be redundant to repeat all this here.

777. Misr is a leading city and a major capital. God the Almighty proclaimed, when talking about the Pharaoh {Do I not hold kingship in Egypt? And what of these rivers flowing beneath my feet? Can you not see?} On Joseph, the Almighty says {Appoint me to oversee the treasures of the land} the land being Egypt. No river on earth is called a “sea” or “open sea” except the Nile of Egypt because of its great size and penetration. We have already discussed in this work reports about the Mountain of the Moon where the Nile originates and the effect of the moon on it during its increase and decrease, such as the moon’s light and darkness, its fullness and its total invisibility. It is related from Zaid ibn Aslam that he interpreted the Qur’anic verse {if not a downpour falls on it, then a mere shower} to be a reference to Egypt, adding that if a downpour does not fall on it, it blooms whereas if a downpour falls it grows weak. A poet describing Egypt and its Nile recited:

*As for Egypt, Egypt is a wonder,
And its Nile is carried by the south wind.*

Its name, “Misr” (city) resembles its meaning, and all cities (*amsar*) carry its name. According to the philologists of Basra, the common noun, “city”, was derived from the proper noun “Misr”. `Amr ibn Ma`di Karib recited:

*The Nile has swollen and spread forth,
The east wind ran to it and the Nile ran after.*

778. Al-Mas`udi said: The Nile begins to heave and increase during the remainder of the months of Bawna, or June, Abib, or July, and Masri, or August. If its waters are excessive, it can increase throughout the whole month of Tut, or September, and right to its end. If the increase reaches a level of sixteen *dhira`*s the government’s land-tax is due in full, the people prosper but elevated land is generally thirsty, and this is harmful

to domestic animals because pasture and grasslands are lacking. The most perfect of all increases and the most beneficial to the whole country is an increase of seventeen *dhira`*s. This satisfies and irrigates all its lands. If the water level exceeds seventeen *dhira`*s, reaching eighteen and spreading far into the land, about one quarter of Egypt's land is flooded, which brings harm to some villages as a result of the flooding and of other factors, as explained earlier. If eighteen *dhira`*s is reached, one consequence of the Nile's receding would be the outbreak of plague in Egypt. The biggest increase is eighteen *dhira`*s though it once reached nineteen which occurred in the year 99 [717], during the caliphate of `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz. The length of a *dhira`* until it reaches twelve *dhira`s* is twenty-eight *isba`s*. Above twelve *dhira`s* each *dhira`* measures twenty-four *isba`s*. The lowest level remaining in the bottom of the Nilometer is three *dhira`s* and that year the water is scanty. The two *dhira`s* where prayers for rain are offered are called Munkar and Nakir*, and these two are the thirteenth and fourteenth levels. If the waters recede from these two levels and half a *dhira`* from the fifteenth level, the people of Egypt offer prayers for rain and the harm to the country is total, unless God permits an increase of water. If fifteen *dhira`s* are reached and begin to attain sixteen, some people benefit but no prayers are offered and the government's land-tax falls short.

779. There are four major canals in Egypt. They are called the *tur`as* of Dhunb al-Timsah, Balqina, Khalij Saradus and Khalij Dhat al-Sahil. These are opened, if the waters are excessive, on the Feast of the Cross which falls on the fourteenth day of Tut, or September. We have already mentioned the reason why this feast day is called thus. The date wine known as Shubrawi is made in Egypt from the water of the month of Tuba, or January, after the Feast of Epiphany [*Ghutas*]. This falls on

the tenth day of Tuba, when the Nile is at its purest, and the people of Egypt boast about its purity at that time. In that month too, the people of Tinnis, Dimyat, Tuna and all villages of the Buhaira stock up on drinking water.

780. The eve of Epiphany has very great importance to the people of Egypt. People do not go to sleep that night. It is the night of the eleventh day of Tuba, corresponding to January 6. In the year 330 [941-2], I witnessed the Eve of Epiphany in Egypt, its ruler being al-Ikhshid Muhammad ibn Tughj*. The ruler was in his palace known as al-Mukhtara on an island in the midst of the Nile, with the Nile surrounding it. He commanded that two thousand torches be lit from the side of the island and of Fustat*, not counting the torches and candles lit by the Egyptians. Hundreds of thousands of people, both Muslims and Christians, came to the Nile, some in boats, some from houses overlooking the Nile and some on its banks. They display no hostility about their common attendance and show off all they possess of foodstuffs, drinks, fine clothes, gold and silver ornaments, jewels, entertainments, music and revelry. It is the most pleasant night and the most thoroughly joyful in Egypt. The city's alleyways are left open and most people immerse themselves in the Nile in the belief that this protects them against disease and is an amulet against sickness.

781. Al-Mas`udi said: As for the various measuring devices put in place in Egypt to ascertain the increase or decrease of the Nile, I heard some people of knowledge state that the prophet Joseph, having built the Pyramids, adopted a measure to determine the Nile's increase and decrease and that this was in Memphis [*Manf*] since there was no Fustat at that time. They also state that Daluka, the old queen, placed one device in the furthest region of the Sa`id and another in Akhmim. These were all devices that existed before the coming of Islam. When Islam

appeared and Egypt was conquered, they at first determined increase and decrease according to the measuring devices mentioned above. This lasted until the governorship of `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Marwan. He set up a device at Hulwan with a short *dhira`*. Hulwan is above Fustat. Then Usama ibn Zaid al-Tanukhi placed a device in the island known as al-Sina`a, an island between Fustat and Giza. One crosses over to that island from Fustat on a bridge, then onto another bridge to reach Giza, which is on the western bank since Fustat lies on the eastern bank. This device placed by Usama has the greatest number of *dhira`s*, and this took place in the caliphate of Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik. This is the device in use today, which is the year 332, in Fustat. In the past, people used the device in Memphis but then abandoned it and currently use the device of al-Jazira put in place in the caliphate of Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik. In that island there is another measuring device put in place for Ahmad ibn Tulun*. This is used when the waters rise high, the winds blow repeatedly and from different directions, and the waves grow strong.

782. The whole land of Egypt, both settled and wasteland, used to be irrigated from a level of sixteen *dhira`s*, so well had they built its bridges and arches and so clean were its canals. Egypt in the past had seven canals: those of Alexandria, Sakha, Damietta, Memphis, Fayyum, Saradus and Munha. In the past, and as reported by men of experience, Egypt was a land most plentiful in orchards, with these orchards stretching on the banks of the Nile from beginning to end, that is, from Hulwan to Rashid. When the water level used to reach nine *dhira`s* it would flow into the canals of Munha, Fayyum, Saradus and Sakha. The person who dug the canal of Saradus for Pharaoh was Haman, the enemy of God. When the digging began, the villagers came to ask him to make the canal run below their villages, in return for which they

would give him any money he wanted. He did so and amassed great wealth which he carried and placed before Pharaoh. When asked about that wealth Haman told Pharaoh what he had done and Pharaoh said: “A lord must be merciful to his slaves and must make his bounty flow upon them and must not covet their possessions. We are by right the lord most worthy to do this to his slaves, so return to the villagers what you have taken from them.” Haman did so, returning to each village what he had taken from it. Among all the canals of Egypt, none is more generous or has more bends than the canal of Saradus.

783. As regards the two canals of al-Fayyum and al-Munha, the person who dug them was Joseph son of Jacob. This was because the King of Egypt, al-Rayyan ibn al-Walid, having seen in his dream the vision of the cows and the ears of corn which Joseph then interpreted for him, made him governor over what he ruled in the land of Egypt. The Almighty informed us of this when relating the story of his prophet Joseph, and has Joseph say: {Appoint me to oversee the treasures of the land for I am a careful guardian and well qualified}. Al-Mas`udi said: The people of our religious community disagree as to how the believers should behave towards sinners. Some think that the king was a believer for otherwise Joseph would not have aided unbelievers and responded to their commands and prohibitions. Others maintain that this is acceptable when necessitated by circumstances and immediate welfare. We have set forth the views of both groups in our book entitled *Al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat*.

784. As for Arsinoe [*al-Fayyum*] and its canals in the Sa`id of Egypt and its elevated lands, lowlands and deepest lowlands---the Egyptians use the word *matati* to refer to these latter---and how Joseph acted to revive the land after it had become a depression into which flowed the waters of the Sa`id, turning it into an island surrounded by water, we

have dealt with this topic in our book *al-Awsat* thus making it unnecessary to repeat it here. The same holds true for why al-Fayyum was called by this name and that it means a thousand days, and also the story of Joseph and the viziers and their envy of him.

785. According to people of experience and expert knowledge of the affairs of this world, Egypt was once a land covered by the Nile which spread over the Sa`id, all the way from the end of its territory up to where Fustat is located today. It began at a place called Janadil, between Aswan and Abyssinia. I have indicated the location of this place earlier on in this book. Then certain obstacles began to form, such as a change in the flow of water and what it carries by way of silt and mud from place to place. Eventually, the waters receded from certain localities in Egypt, as we explained above when quoting the opinion of the author of the *Logic* [Aristotle] regarding the prosperity and ruin of lands in earlier sections of this work. People then began to settle in Egypt and the waters slowly and by degrees receded until Egypt was filled with cities and built-up areas. They then built canals to ferry water and constructed dikes. All these facts however are unknown to its inhabitants because the passage of time did away with knowledge of their early settlements and how these took place.

786. In this work we have not mentioned the necessary cause for why rainfall is scanty in Egypt, nor many reports about Alexandria, the way it was built, the nations who succeeded one another in ruling it, and the kings, Arab or otherwise, who resided in it. All this was set forth in our book *al-Awsat*. In what follows, we shall briefly mention its history and reports about its construction, as also the story of Alexander and that city.

787. Al-Mas`udi said: When Ahmad ibn Tulun was ruling Egypt, it reached him in the year two hundred and sixty or so [873-4] that there

was a man living in Upper Egypt, in the Sa'id, a Copt, who was a hundred and thirty years old. He was a man noted from his youth for his learning, rationality and comprehensive knowledge of all views and doctrines to do with philosophers and other religious thought. He was described as the most knowledgeable person regarding Egypt, its land and sea, and its history and the history of its kings. He was said to have travelled very widely over the earth, visiting kingdom and nations, both white and black. He was also an expert on astronomy and astrology. Ahmad ibn Tulun dispatched a commander of his with a troop of soldiers who brought the man unwillingly by way of the Nile. The man had secluded himself from people in a structure he built and lived at its top. He had lived to see fourteen of his great-grand children. When he appeared in the presence of Ibn Tulun, he saw a man on whom the signs of old age and the passage of the years were quite apparent, though all his senses were sound, his judgment was sharp and his reason was rigorous. He fully understood what was said to him and could easily express himself and answer questions addressed to him. Ibn Tulun put him up in one of his luxurious apartments, made him very comfortable and served him the most delicious food and drink. The man refused to lie down on any bed or to eat anything except his own food which he had carried with him consisting of dried biscuit and such. He said: "This, my frame, is nourished by this food and these clothes that you see. If you are planning to change my habits, and if I were to accept what you bring me of food, drink and garments this would cause the dissolution of that frame and the disintegration of my form." So he was left to his accustomed habits. Then Ahmad ibn Tulun summoned knowledgeable scholars to attend to the man and he himself was very keen to see him on his own and devoted many days and nights to hear his discourse, his views and his answers to the questions put to him.

788. Among the questions he was asked was what he knew of Lake Tinnis and Damietta. He answered: “This was a land unequalled in Egypt for its level surface, its fertility and prosperity. It had orchards, palm trees, vineyards, farms and trees. It had villages above ground level and others below. None had ever seen a land more beautiful, or more uninterrupted in its orchards and vineyards. No agricultural district in the whole of Egypt resembled it except for al-Fayyum alone. In fact, it was more bounteous than al-Fayyum, more fertile and produced more fruit and more fragrant plants of wonderful kinds. Water would flow into it without cease, in both summer and winter, and they would irrigate their orchards and plantations whenever they wished. The remaining waters would flow into the sea from the other gulfs at a place known as al-Ushtum. Between the sea and that region was a one-day’s journey. Between al-`Arish and the island of Cyprus there was a land crossing that beasts of burden could pass over when dry. Thus from al-`Arish to Cyprus there was a land corridor through the water but today it is a long journey by sea from al-`Arish to Cyprus, as also between al-`Arish and Byzantine territory.

789. “Between al-Andalus and the place called al-Khadra’ which is near Fez in the Maghrib and on to Tangier, there was once a bridge built of stone and bricks over which passed camels and beasts of burden from the coast of the Maghrib to al-Andalus, and vice versa. Beneath that bridge the sea itself was divided into small gulfs with water flowing under its arches, the arches built on hard boulders and spanning from one boulder to the next. This was the place where the Mediterranean began which flowed from the Ocean, which is the great surrounding sea. But the seawaters continued to rise and to submerge one land after the other across the passage of years, its increase being noted by people of successive generations and clearly apparent to the people of each era,

until the waters submerged the roadway between al-`Arish and Cyprus. They also submerged the bridge between al-Andalus and the land of Tangier. What I have described regarding that bridge is fully evident to the people of al-Andalus and of Fez in the coast of the Maghrib. It may happen that this place is visible underwater to sailors who say, 'Here is the bridge.' The bridge was about twelve miles long, was wide and very high.

790. "When two hundred and fifty-one years had elapsed from the reign of Diocletian, the seawaters submerged the region known today as Lake Tannis, increasing each year until the entire region was under water. The villages in its lowlands drowned, while of the villages on higher ground only Tuna, Samannud and some others survived to the present day, surrounded by water. The villagers in that lake used to transport their dead to Tannis where they would bury them one on top of the other, and these are the three mounds today called Abu'l Kum. That region was now entirely covered by water when two hundred and fifty-one years had elapsed from the reign of Diocletian but a hundred years before the conquest of Egypt." He went on: "A king of a nation whose capital was al-Farama* waged several wars against a chieftain of al-Balyana* and surrounding territory. Thus, many ditches and canals were dug from the Nile to the sea to prevent one side from reaching the other, and this in turn led to the breaching of Nile waters and the submersion of that region."

791. He was asked about Abyssinian kings and their kingdoms along the Nile and answered: "I have met sixty of their kings who ruled diverse kingdoms, each king fighting his neighbor. Their land is hot and dry and, as a result, blackened. Because the element of fire is predominant, silver has been turned into gold by the sun baking it with its heat, dryness and fieriness. Pure gold extracted from mines can be

baked in basins with salt, vitriol and brick, and pure white silver is produced. No one can deny this fact unless it is one who has no knowledge of this subject and no experience of what we have mentioned.” He was asked: “Where does the Nile originate on its heights?” He answered: “In a lake whose length and width cannot be measured. It lies in a territory like the one where night and day are equal throughout the ages. It lies under the place the astronomers call the ‘straight celestial sphere’ (*al-falak al-mustaqim*). What I assert here is a well-known and undeniable fact.”

792. He was asked about the building of the Pyramids and answered: “They are tombs of kings. When a king died they used to place his body in a stone urn [sarcophagus] which in Egypt and al-Sham is called a *jurn*. This is then closed. Then a pyramid is built as high from its base as they wished. The sarcophagus is then carried and placed in the middle of the pyramid. A structure is vaulted above it in the form of a tent-like dome which is raised up to the height that you see. The gate of the pyramid is placed beneath the pyramid. A path is then dug underground and is vaulted where the vault beneath the ground is a hundred *dhira`* or more in length. Each pyramid has a gate whose entrance is as I have described it.” He was asked: “But how were these pyramids with their smooth and slippery surfaces built? On what did they climb? And how were these vast blocks of stone carried which the people of our own days can barely move a single one of them?” He responded: “They used to build it in ramps with steps like a stairway. When finished with it, they would carve it from top to bottom. This was the trick they used. In addition, they possessed strength, patience and an obedience to their kings which was religious in nature.”

793. He was asked: “Why is it that these writings on the Pyramids and temples are unreadable?” He answered: “The sages and people of that

age, whose alphabet that was, have all passed away, and Egypt was then ruled by many nations in succession. Eventually, the Greek alphabet and letters predominated. The Copts read it according to what they recognize of it and by mixing Greek letters with their own, and according to the alphabet they devised, which is composed of Greek and early Coptic. So the writings of their ancestors are no longer known among them.” He was asked: “Who were the first people to settle in Egypt?” He answered: “The first to settle in this land was Misr son of Baysar son of Ham son of Noah.” He then outlined the genealogy of the three sons of Noah and their dispersal over the earth.

794. He was asked: “Are there any marble quarries in Egypt?” He answered: “Yes. There is a large mountain of marble on the eastern side of the Sa`id from which the ancients used to quarry marble for columns and such. After quarrying it, they would polish it with sand. As for the columns, bases and crowns which the Egyptians call *Aswaniyya*, and which include millstones, these were quarried hundreds of years after the coming of Christianity. They include the columns in Alexandria and the great column there that has no equal anywhere in the world. I have seen in the mountain of Aswan a column that resembles it which was carved out but not removed from the mountain, and what appears of it is not polished. They were merely waiting for it to be removed from the mountain to be polished and carried to wherever they intended.”

795. He was asked about the “City of the Hawk” [Hierakonpolis] and answered: “It lies to the west of the pyramids of Busir and Giza, and is a five day-and-night journey for a diligent rider. The road to it has sunk away and the path to it has been effaced.” He then mentioned what that city contained of marvelous buildings, precious stones and wealth, and why it was called “City of the Hawk.” He also described another city to the west of Akhmim in the Sa`id of wondrous construction built by

ancient kings and destroyed by the passage of time, and related the marvels of this other city, claiming that it lies at a six-days journey from Akhmim.

796. He was asked about the land of Nubia and answered: “They are owners of Bactrian camels, dromedaries, oxen and sheep. Their king owns noble horses but most commoners ride on mules. Their archers use odd bows and the Arabs call them ‘those who hit the mark’. They have palm trees, vineyards, corn, bananas and wheat, and their land appears as though it was part of Yemen. Nubia has a type of citron larger than anywhere else in the lands of Islam. Their kings claim descent from Himyar and their king rules over Muqarra, Nubia and `Alwa. Beyond `Alwa is a great nation of blacks known as Kunna, who go about naked like the Zanj. Their land produces gold. At the capital of this nation the Nile splits and a great branch issues from it. Having split from the Nile, that branch turns green in color and most of it flows down to Nubia but the Nile itself does not change. At certain times, most of the water in that branch splits off and most of it turns white while the smaller portion turns green. That branch then traverses valleys, gulfs and inhabited lowlands until it issues in the delta of the south which is on the coast of the Zanj, and which flows into their sea.”

797. He was asked about al-Fayyum, al-Munha and the Lahun stone, and he spoke at length about al-Fayyum and told how a Greek girl, her mother and her son arrived in al-Fayyum. They began by developing its land. Water used to come to al-Fayyum from al-Munha when the Nile ran high and the stone of Lahun was not yet built. The place where the waters flowed in was called Damuna. The Lahun was then built in the shape it has preserved till today. It is said that it was built by Joseph son of Jacob son of Isaac son of Abraham, during the reign of the Pharaoh al-`Aziz, and that it was he who, as regards al-Fayyum, planned and

organized the canals currently visible, both elevated and long, and canals one on top of the other. He also built the bridge known as Yusufiyya and set up the column in the center of al-Fayyum, which sinks into the ground to a depth that cannot be determined. It is one of the world's wonders and is square in shape. People of diverse nations who came after the time of Joseph attempted to dig down to its base in the earth but failed to do so and the water overcame them, foiling their attempts. The top of this column is on the same level as the land of Munha.

798. "As for the Lahun stone, the distance between the stone's top, between the two domes, in the direction of Lahun, Lahun being the village itself, is sixty steps. It may happen that when the waters decrease in Munha, some of these steps are revealed. In the wall of that stone are water outlets from some of which water flows out today while others are invisible. Between the surface of the stone, which is between the two domes, and the village is a cornice at the bottom of the steps. Water enters al-Fayyum according to the weight of the stone. The arches are there so that the water can exit through them and in order that the waters do not rise above the stone when they are dammed. Thus, the stone of Lahun was built according to careful calculations and water comes to al-Fayyum in the exact amount sufficient for its needs. The construction of this stone is one of the most marvelous of its kind and is most solid in structure. It is the kind of edifice which remains on the earth, neither moving nor disappearing. It was built according to the best principles of engineering and natural philosophy, and put in place at the most propitious time astrologically. Many of our countrymen assert that Joseph built this stone through inspiration, but God knows best. Successive kings of nations that have ruled our land have gone to

visit that site and to contemplate it, having heard about it. In the created world it is a marvel of painstaking construction.”

799. That old man was an Egyptian Copt who embraced Christianity and the views of the Jacobites. One day, the Sultan Ahmad ibn Tulun commanded some theologians who were in his presence to ask the man to demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion. When asked, the Copt replied: “My proof for its truth is that I find it self-contradictory and inconsistent, a religion that mind and soul reject because of its contradictory and paradoxical nature. No amount of reasoning can fortify it, no theological argument can rectify it and no demonstrative proof can be found from reason or sense to support it when one examines it at length and with great care. And yet I have found numerous nations and kings, all of whom were possessed of knowledge and intelligence, have embraced and espoused it. I concluded that they could not have embraced it with all its contradictions as their religion if they had not witnessed and experienced certain proofs, signs and miracles which necessitated their embracing it and their believing in it.”

800. Someone asked him: “What is the contradiction in it?” He responded: “Can this be fully grasped and can one arrive at its limit? Consider, for example, their assertion that one is three and three is one. Or take their description of the hypostases (*aqanim*) and of substance (*jawhar*) which is the Trinity. Are the hypostases in themselves capable and sentient or not? Or take the incarnation of their eternal God in a created man and how he was born, crucified and died. Is there anything more hideous or unseemly than a god who is crucified, whose face was spat upon, on whose head was placed a crown of thorns, whose head was struck with a cane, whose hands were nailed, whose sides were poked with spears and sticks, who asked for water and was given vinegar in the gourd of a colocynth?” They desisted from arguing

further with him after he had expounded the contradictory, corrupt and absurd nature of his faith.

801. A Jewish physician of Ibn Tulun who was present at that assembly then said: “Will the Emir allow me to address him?” Ibn Tulun replied: “Go ahead.” So he turned to the Copt and asked him a question and the Copt said: “Who are you and what is your religion?” “I am a Jew,” he answered. “Then you must be a Magian,” said the old Copt. “How so, since he is a Jew?” he was asked. He responded: “Because Jews allow in some cases marriage with daughters since their religion allows them to marry the daughters of brothers. They are also enjoined to marry the widows of their brothers when the brothers die. If the Jews accept that the wife of his brother is his daughter, he cannot avoid marrying her. This is one of their secrets which they keep hidden and do not advertise. Is there anything in Magianism uglier than this?” The Jew denied this and refused to accept that this was a part of his religion or that any Jew knows this. When Ibn Tulun investigated, he found that that Jewish physician was in fact married to the wife of his brother who was indeed his own daughter.

802. The Copt then turned to Ibn Tulun and said: “These people claim—he pointed to the Jew---that Almighty God created Adam in his image. They relate from one of their prophets whom God named in his book that the prophet one day saw God with a white head and beard and that God said ‘I am the fire that burns and the fever that wastes and I shall hold sons responsible for the sins of their fathers.’ Furthermore, it is stated in their Torah that the daughters of Lot gave him wine to drink, got him drunk, he had intercourse with them, and they became pregnant and gave birth; that Moses twice turned down the prophetic mission entrusted to him by God until God’s anger grew great against him; that Aaron made the calf worshipped by the Israelites; and that Moses

performed certain miracles before Pharaoh which the magicians were able to match. Then there are their views about animal sacrifice and how they claim to draw near to God with their flesh and blood, their rejection of reason, and prohibiting rational examination without offering proof. This is exemplified in their assertion that their sacred law cannot be abrogated and that nothing that any prophet brings after Moses can be accepted if he veers from what Moses brought, though reason dictates that there is no difference between Moses and other prophets if these latter bring clear proofs and irrefutable arguments. But the most outrageous example of their unbelief is their assertion that on the feast of Kippur [*Kifur*], a day of asking for forgiveness---it falls on the tenth of October---a small god they call Metatron [*Mitatron*] stands up on that day, pulls his hair out and says: ‘Woe to me if I ruin my house and orphan my daughter! I shall bow my body and not straighten it until I build my house.’”

803. He proceeded to relate many stories, confused opinions and contradictory views current among the Jews. This Copt held several sessions in the presence of Ahmad ibn Tulun with groups of philosophers, Dualists, Daisanites*, Sabeans, Magians and Muslim theologians, and we have recorded what we thought fit of these debates in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, but recorded them at length in our book *al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat*. That Copt, from what we learnt of his story and found credible, used to argue that reason was corrupt and that all religions were of equal worth. He remained with Ibn Tulun for about a year and received money and gifts, but refused to accept anything. Ibn Tulun then had him returned in honor to his own town where he lived for some more time before he died. He authored some works which confirm the views we related of him, but God knows best how such views can be defended. The Jews reject what the Copt relates regarding

copulation with the brother's daughter though most of them consider marriage with the brother's daughter to be licit.

804. In the land of Egypt and in its Nile are found many marvelous species of animals on land and sea. Among them is a type of fish called *al-Ra`ada* ("stunner") which is about a *dhira`* in length. If it falls into a fisherman's net, his hands and arms are stunned so he knows it has landed in his net, and quickly removes it from the net. Even if he holds it with a stick or cane, it will still stun him. Galen mentions this fish and says that if placed while still living on the head of someone suffering severe headache or migraine, relief is immediate.

805. There is also the horse [hippopotamus] which is found in the Nile. If it leaves the water and steps out to some place on land, the people of Egypt know that the Nile will increase up to that particular spot, and no further or nearer. This is widely known among them from long experience and habit. When it leaves the water, harm is done to farmers and their harvests because it feeds on what they planted. This is because it leaves the water at night and reaches a particular point on land then turns round and returns to the water. Returning from the point it reached on land, it begins to feed but does not feed on its outward journey, as if it measures carefully the amount it feeds on. Some of these animals, once having fed, return to the Nile to drink, then vomit what they have fed in different places, and the plants grow once more. If this is done repeatedly and its harm to the owners of the fields becomes considerable, many *makkuks** of lupins, shelled and laid out, are placed at the place where the animal is known to leave the water. The hippo eats the lupins and turns back to the water. The lupins grow large in its belly and swell to the point where the hippo's stomach bursts and its body floats on the water and is carried to the bank. Where hippos are

present hardly any crocodiles will be found. A hippo is like a horse in shape but its hooves and tail are different and its forehead is wider.

806. Some religious communities state that when Baisar son of Ham son of Noah left the land of Babylon with his children and many members of his family, he turned westwards towards Egypt. He had four sons: Misr son of Baisar, Fariq son of Baisar, Mah and Yah. He resided in a place called Manf [Memphis], a name that persists to the present day. His family was thirty in number and the place was therefore called 'Thirty', just like the town called 'Eighty' in the Jazira and Mosul in the territory of Bani Hamdan*. This latter was so called because of the number of its inhabitants who were with Noah in the Ark. Baisar son of Ham had grown old so he delegated leadership to his eldest son, Misr. People then agreed to submit to him and to join his group, and the land prospered. So Misr son of Baisar became their king and his realm extended from Rafah in Palestine in al-Sham---though some say from al-`Arish while others say from the place known as al-Shajara which is the furthest land of Egypt and the frontier with al-Sham, being a famous locality between al-`Arish and Rafah----all the way to the land of Aswan in the Sa`id in length, and from Ayla, on the frontier with Hijaz, to Barqa in width.

807. Misr in turn had four sons: Qubt, Ashmun, Atrib and Sa. He divided the land of Egypt among the four sons in quarters, and designated the eldest of his sons, Qubt, as his successor. The Copts of Egypt claim descent from their ancestor Qubt son of Misr. The various localities were known by the name of their residents and of the four sons: Ashmun, Qubt, Sa and Atrib. These place-names exist to the present day. Their genealogies became mixed and the progeny of Qubt, the Copts, grew numerous and dominated the whole country. Other groups were included in their line of descent because of the above-

mentioned increase in their numbers and thus all came to be known as the Copts of Egypt. Each group among them knows their genealogy and how they relate to Misr son of Baisar son of Ham right until the present day.

808. When Qubt son of Misr died, Ashmun son of Misr succeeded, and was in turn succeeded by Sa, then by Atrib, then by Maliq son of Badras, then by Kharbata son of Maliq, then by Kalkan son of Kharbata, who reigned for about a hundred years. A brother of his, called Malia son of Kharbata, came next, followed by Tutas son of Malia who reigned for seventy years. Reigning after him was a daughter of his called Huriya daughter of Tutas for about thirty years. She was followed by another woman called Mamum. The progeny of Baisar son of Ham grew greatly in number in Egypt, were divided into branches and crowned women as kings. So the kings of the earth coveted their realm. From al-Sham a king of the Amalekites, called al-Walid ibn Duma`, marched on Egypt and after many wars came to dominate the land whose people then submitted to him. His realm was stable until he died. He was succeeded by al-Rayyan ibn al-Walid the Amalekite, who is Joseph's pharaoh. God in the Qur'an told his story with Joseph and what transpired between them. We related this episode in detail in our book *al-Awsat*.

809. Then came Darim ibn al-Rayyan, the Amalekite, followed by Axamis ibn Ma`diyus the Amalekite, then by al-Walid ibn Mus`ab, the pharaoh of Moses. This latter is a subject of dispute. Some say he was an Amalekite, others that he was from the tribe of Lakhm in al-Sham, still others that he was a Copt from the progeny of Misr son of Baisar. He was known as Talama. We dealt with this question in our book *al-Awsat*. Pharaoh drowned while pursuing the Israelites who were being led out of Egypt by Moses son of Amram [*Imran*]. God Almighty

opened a dry path for them in the sea. When pharaoh and his troops drowned, the remaining children, women and slaves were fearful that they would be invaded by the kings of al-Sham and the Maghrib, so they set up as a queen a woman of prudence and resolution called Daluka. She proceeded to build a wall surrounding the entire land of Egypt, placing on it guard-posts, sentinels and men near enough to one another so that they were within earshot. The remains of this wall are still visible today, i.e. in the year 332, and is known as the “wall of the old woman”. It is said that she built the wall fearing for her son who was fond of the hunt, and she feared he would be killed by wild animals of land and sea, or else assassination by neighboring kings or nomads. She surrounded the wall with crocodiles and other animals but different versions of this narrative also exist.

810. That queen ruled them for thirty years---some say less. In Egypt she built temples and statues, perfected the instruments of magic, and in these temples she had images carved of any people who might arrive from every direction and of their mounts, whether camels or horses. She also had images made of all who might arrive by ship from the sea, from the direction of the Maghrib or al-Sham. Inside these great and loftily built temples she assembled the secrets of nature and the characteristics of the stones, plants and animals, and their powers of attraction and repulsion. She arranged all this to coincide with the movements of the celestial spheres and their correlation with higher heavenly influences. Thus, if an army approached them from the direction of the Hijaz or Yemen, these temple images of camels and so forth would be interred and the invading army would be submerged and lose its men and animals. If the army was advancing from the direction of al-Sham the same would be done to these images from the direction of al-Sham and that army would suffer from calamities to both men and

animals as was done to their images. The same was done to armies coming from the Maghrib or by sea from the direction of Rome or al-Sham or other kingdoms. As a result, other kings and nations were afraid of the Egyptians while they were able to protect themselves from their enemies. Thanks to the wise management of that old woman and her success in uniting the various regions of her kingdom and her prudent policies, their royal dynasties were long lasting.

811. Many people, ancient and modern, have spoken about these natural characteristics and the secrets of nature to be found in the land of Egypt. The story of the achievement of that old woman is widely known among the Egyptians and is accepted by them without hesitation. The temples of Egypt, in the Sa`id and elsewhere, still exist to the present day. They contain types of images which, if painted on certain objects, produce effects in accordance with what the painting or carving was intended to produce. This concurs with their theory of perfected natures. God knows best how this is done.

812. Al Mas`udi said: I was told this story by more than one person in the land of Akhmim in the Sa`id of Egypt who transmitted it from Abu'l Fayd Dhu al-Nun ibn Ibrahim al-Misri al-Akhmimi*, the ascetic. He was a wise man who had his own manner of teaching and practiced his own religious creed and could explain the history of these temples, having visited them and thoroughly examined the pictures and writings in them. He said: "I saw in some temple an inscription which I thoroughly studied and then interpreted as follows 'Beware of manumitted slaves, brash youths, slave-like soldiers and Copts who adopt Arabic ways'." He added: "I saw in a temple an inscription which I examined and interpreted carefully and read the following: 'Those who are predestined act freely but destiny is laughing.' He also claimed

that he had seen in another temple a piece of writing in that ancient language which he thoroughly studied and found it to be a line of verse: *You order your affairs according to the stars, but you are ignorant, And the lord of the stars does what he pleases.*”

813. The nation that built these temples was proficient in astrology and diligent in studying the secrets of nature. From their astrological investigations they came to know that a cataclysm was about to occur on earth but could not determine whether that cataclysm would be a fire that spreads over the earth and burns it or a flood of water that would drown it, or else a sword that would annihilate its inhabitants. Fearing that the sciences would perish when humans disappeared from the earth, they built these temples--- *barabi* in Arabic, singular *baraba*---and inscribed their sciences in them in the form of images, statues and writings. The temples they built were constructed of two elements, mud and stone, and they separated the two types of construction. They said: “If that cataclysm is a fire, what is built of mud will turn to stone and porcelain and these sciences will survive. If the cataclysm is a flood, it will wash away what was built of mud but the stone structures will survive. If it is the sword, both types of structure will survive.” It is said, and God knows best, that this happened before the Biblical Flood though some say after the Flood, and that the cataclysm they were expecting but could not determine whether it was a fire or flood or a sword, was in fact the sword. This was wielded by an invading nation and its king who put all the population of Egypt to the sword and exterminated them. Some believe the cataclysm was a plague which spread among all its inhabitants, the proof for which may be found in the territory of Tinnis where one finds burial mounds piled up in order, containing bodies of the young and the old, male and female, appearing like high mountains. They are known in the territory of Tinnis as “Abu

al-Kawn”. Furthermore, one finds in Egypt in the Sa`id district dead bodies heaped one upon the other in caves, hollows, sarcophagi and many other spots in the ground and no one knows to what nation they belong. Neither the Christians nor the Jews claim them as ancestors and the Muslims have no idea who they might be, and no history records them. They have their clothes upon them and their jewelry is frequently found in these hills and mountains.

814. The temples of Egypt are wonders of construction, like the famous temple at Antinoe [*Ansina*] in the Sa`id, or the temple in Akhmim, or the one in the land of Samanoud [*Samannud*] and so forth. Then there are the Pyramids with their great height and wondrous construction, displaying all kinds of writings by ancient nations and long gone kingdoms which no one can read or grasp their purpose. Some who have taken care to measure them assert that they rise up to a height of 400 *dhira`*s or more and grow more pointed the higher they rise, while their width is as we stated earlier. Painted on them are the images we described above and these relate to the sciences, natural characteristics, magic and the secrets of nature. Among these writings, it is said, is the following: “We have built these pyramids, so whoever claims to be our equal in kingship, strength and royal might, let him try to tear them down and wipe away their traces. To destroy is easier than to build and to scatter is easier than to assemble.” It is said that a Muslim king once began to tear down a pyramid but discovered that the entire land-tax of Egypt would not suffice for the task. They are made of stone and marble.

815. In this book, our aim is to give a historical account that is general and inclusive and not detailed and exhaustive. Thus, in our book called *Kitab al-Qadaya wa`l Tajarib*, we covered all that we directly experienced in our travels over the earth and its kingdoms and all

reports that reached us having to do with natural characteristics and the secrets of nature as related to animals, plants and minerals, as also the wonders of construction, antiquities and regions. There is no dispute among people of understanding that there are in certain regions of the earth villages and towns where no scorpion or snake can enter. These include the cities of Homs, al-Ma`arra, Busra and Antioch. Thus, in the territory of Antioch, if a person stretches his hand beyond the city wall lice will fall upon it but when he pulls it inside, his hand will be free of lice. This was the case until a marble column in some city quarter was broken and a bronze socket was found inside that column where was discovered the image of a louse made of bronze, the size of a palm of the hand. In a few days, or even at once, lice have nowadays come to infest most of that city's houses.

816. Consider the magnetic stone that attracts iron. I once saw in Egypt a snake made of iron or bronze placed on an object to which a magnetic stone was brought near, causing a movement that repelled the snake from the stone. If the magnetic stone is exposed to the smell of garlic, it loses its effect on iron, but when washed in vinegar or treated with some bees' honey it recovers its earlier action of attracting iron. The lodestone (*maghnatis*) and iron have strange properties other than the ones mentioned such as the stone that stops the flow of blood. The Almighty has sole possession of the knowledge of things and reveals to His worshippers what is to their benefit according to time and need. But there are certain matters that He alone knows and has not revealed to His creatures and that human minds cannot attain. Examples are the way in which certain things, when combined, produce different effects such as the intense black color generated when oak-nut juice is combined with vitriol, or how glass as a substance is generated when we combine sand with magnesium and lye. Similarly, if lye water and

dross of silver are combined what issues forth is a substance white as foam, and if lye water is mixed with vitriol water their mixture produces a color red as safflower. Again, if we mate a mare with a donkey a mule is produced while if we mate a horse with a female donkey we obtain a snub-nosed mule, malicious and cunning, called *kawdan*.

817. In our book called *Al-Qadaya wa'l Tajarib*, we described the animals generated in the Sa'id of Egypt, near Abyssinia, and what is produced when bulls are mated with female donkeys and donkeys with cows, and the curious animals produced which are neither donkeys nor cows, like the mule which is neither a horse nor a donkey. In that book, we also cited diverse examples of animal breeds thus generated and of plant-life resulting from the grafting of plants and trees, and further mentioned the characteristics of things and knowledge thereof. This is a large subject and citing some parts of it will have to suffice for the other parts, whereby a part will make you imagine the whole, and a little of it will indicate to you the knowledge of the totality.

818. It could be that these natural characteristics, talismans and other things in this world that generate the sort of movements we have described such as thrusting, stalling, repelling, attracting and functioning, in animals and others, and like repulsion and attraction, that all these acted as signs for ancient prophets of bygone nations which God intended to act as proofs or miracles demonstrating a prophet's truth. This was done in order to distinguish the prophet from others so that he might deliver God's message, His commands and prohibitions, and what is of benefit to God's creatures at that particular moment in time. God then removed that prophet to heaven but his sciences remained with people, as also what God revealed of what we mentioned above. So the origin of these sciences and natural

characteristics is in fact divine since what we have mentioned is possible and neither necessary nor impossible in divine power.

819. Al-Mas`udi said: Let us now return to what we had been considering earlier, namely, the history of Egyptian kings. The king who succeeded the old queen Daluka was Darkun son of Balutis. After him came Burus son of Darkun, then Luqas son of Burus son of Darkun, who reigned for about fifty years. Then came Marina son of Burus for about twenty years, followed by Istamaris son of Marina for twenty years, followed by Balutis son of Minakil for forty years, then by Malusson son of Balutis for twenty years, then by Minakil son of Balutis, then by Baluna son of Minakil. This last waged wars across the earth and is known as the “Lame Pharaoh”. It was he who attacked the Israelites and destroyed Jerusalem. He was followed by Marinus who waged wars in the west. He was followed by Qarqura son of Marinus [lacuna in text] then by Naqas son of Marinus for eighty years, then by Fumis son of Naqas for ten years, then by Kasil. This latter waged war against western kings. Nebuchadnessar, governor of west Persia, invaded his realm on behalf of the king of Persia, destroyed his land and killed his men, then marched westwards. We have dealt with his history in our book called *Rahat al-Arwah*, a work we devoted to the biographies of the kings of the nations and their battles who were not mentioned in our *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

820. When the regime of Nebuchadnessar and his Persian soldiers ended in Egypt, the country was conquered and ruled by the Romans. Its people became Christian and remained so until Kisra Anushirwan ascended the throne and his armies conquered al-Sham and headed towards Egypt. The Persians conquered and ruled the land for about twenty years. Between the Romans and Persians many wars were waged and the people of Egypt used to pay two land-taxes, one to

Persia and the other to the Romans. The Persians then withdrew from Egypt as a result of a crisis in their capital city and the Romans overcame both Egypt and al-Sham and proclaimed the Christian religion, which spread among the people of al-Sham and Egypt. This continued until God in His grace revealed Islam. There followed the well-known incident when the Muqawqas, ruler of the Copts, sent the Prophet Muhammad gifts. Eventually, `Amr ibn al-`As and his companions conquered Egypt during the caliphate of `Umar ibn al-Khattab. `Amr built the city of al-Fustat, which until today is the capital of Egypt. The king of Egypt at that time was al-Muqawqas, leader of the Copts, who resided in Alexandria during certain times of the year and in Memphis at other times, and at yet other times in the Palace of Wax which until today is known by this name and is located in the center of al-Fustat. The conquest of Egypt by `Amr is the subject of many historical accounts, such as his encounters with al-Muqawqas and his capture of the Palace of Wax and other narratives to do with Egypt and Alexandria and the wars of the Muslims in these places. There are also accounts that relate how `Amr entered Egypt and Alexandria in pre-Islamic days and how he met the monk and saw the golden ball that they used to exhibit on their feast-days and how that ball fell into the lap of `Amr. All these events took place prior to the coming of the Prophet, and we have dealt with them at length in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*.

821. Al-Mas`udi said: Historical accounts, though divergent, nevertheless agree that the kings of Egypt from among the pharaohs were thirty-two. There were five Babylonian kings of Egypt, four kings from Moab, these being the Amalekites who invaded Egypt from al-Sham, seven Roman kings, and ten Greek kings---these were all before the coming of Christ. Egypt was also ruled by Persians in the name of

Persian kings. Hence the total number of years of the kings who ruled Egypt, be they pharaohs, Persians, Romans, Amalekites or Greeks, is two thousand and three hundred years.

822. Al-Mas`udi said: I asked a group of knowledgeable Copts in the Sa`id about the meaning of the term “pharaoh” but they were unable to tell me, nor is this term found in their language. It could be, and God knows best, that this term was a title of the kings of those ancient eras and that the language changed, just as Pahlevi, i.e. First Persian, changed to Second Persian or as Greek changed to Roman or Himyar or other languages. Egypt has a marvelous history as concerns its treasures and buildings, and what is found buried of the treasuries of kings that they consigned to the earth, as also the treasuries of other nations who inhabited this land. These treasures are called *matalib* (“things sought after”) until the present day. We have discussed these matters in our earlier books.

823. Among the wondrous tales of Egypt is the one mentioned by Yahya ibn Bukayr. It goes as follows: When `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Marwan* was governor of Egypt on behalf of his brother `Abd al-Malik*, he was approached by a man who said he had a piece of advice for him. Asked what that advice was, the man replied: “Beneath such and such a dome there is a great treasure.” `Abd al-`Aziz said: “What is your proof?” The man answered: “When one barely scratches the surface, a floor of all kinds of marble will appear. As one digs deeper one comes to a door of brass which one removes; beneath it will be found a column of gold, surmounted by a golden cock with eyes made of rubies that are worth all the taxes of the world; its wings are studded with rubies and emeralds and its claws are placed upon golden plates atop that column.” `Abd al-`Aziz ordered that thousands of dinars be placed at that man’s disposal to hire workers for the task. At that place,

a high hill was located. So they dug a deep hole in the ground and the indicated signs of marble began to appear. `Abd al-`Aziz grew more eager and increased the subvention and the number of workers. Eventually their digging revealed the cock's head which, as it appeared, emitted a great flash of light, like lightening, so bright were its ruby eyes and so intense its light and illumination. Then its wings appeared followed by its claws. Around the column another column constructed of all kinds of marble appeared, as also arches and porticos above vaulted doorways. Statues were visible in them and pictures of people in brass and gold and urns of stone, covered and made fast and locked with golden poles.

824. `Abd al-`Aziz rode out to inspect the site and looked at all the objects now visible. One of the workers hastily placed his feet upon a stairway made of brass that led downwards. Once his feet reached the fourth step, two great and ancient swords appeared from the left and right sides of that step and met where the man stood, and before anyone could help him, sliced him in pieces. As his body fell downwards, and some parts of his body reached a certain step, the column shook and the cock crowed in a strange manner, heard from afar, and flapped its wings. Beneath it, weird sounds were heard, produced by waterspouts and mechanical movements whenever an object falls or touches that step. The workers then rushed to the bottom of the hole, their number being about two thousand men among whom were diggers, workers, earth removers, observers and foremen, and all of them perished. `Abd al-`Aziz was alarmed and said: "This is a bizarre pit and one that is forbidden to attain. God save us from it!" So he ordered a group there to cover up the dead bodies with the earth dug from that hole and this became their grave.

825. Al-Mas`udi said: Some people who pursued buried treasure and *matalib* and were tempted to occupy themselves with digging for the treasures of ancient kings and nations which were consigned to the earth of Egypt, had discovered a piece of writing in an ancient language describing a site a few paces distant from some of the pyramids described earlier. The writing indicated the presence of a marvelous treasure at that site. They informed the ruler al-Ikhshid Muhammad ibn Tughj and he allowed them to dig and to employ guile in extracting it. So they dug a huge hole until they arrived at arches, domes, and hollowed stones in cut rocks in which were standing effigies in wood of various kinds and coated with paints that prevented quick decay and dissolution. The painted faces were different: some represented old men, others youths or women or children. Their eyes were of diverse precious stones like rubies, emeralds, turquoise and chrysolite, and some of the faces were coated with gold or silver. When some of these effigies were broken, they found inside them the remains of human bodies. Near each effigy they found some receptacles like vessels of baked clay and other containers of marble in which were a kind of varnish with which the dead bodies inside the wooden effigies had been coated. What remained of that varnish was left in the vessels. The varnish itself was a medicated powder mixed with other odorless substances. When some of this was placed on a fire, perfumed smells were given off of a kind unknown before.

826. Each wooden effigy was made to resemble the human body inside it, though diverse in age and appearance. Facing each effigy was a statue of marble or green malachite resembling an idol in accordance with their idol worshipping practice. The painted effigies contained writings which no member of a religious community has been able to decipher. Some people of understanding among them claim that that

language vanished from Egypt some four thousand years ago. This proves that that nation was neither Jewish nor Christian. The digging did not lead to anything other than these effigies and this took place in the year 328 [939-40]. Strange tales are told of the rulers of Egypt, ancient and modern, until the time of Ahmad ibn Tulun and others, and up to the present, which is the year 332. There are also accounts of the treasures, wealth and monies dug up from the earth during their rule and what riches and precious objects were found in these tombs. All these topics we have treated in our earlier books and works. God brings success.

Chapter 32

An account of the history of Alexandria, its construction, its kings, its wonders and other relevant matters

827. Some scholars relate that when Alexander the Macedonian had firmly established his rule in his country, he set out to select a land with a healthy climate, earth and water until he reached the site of Alexandria. There he found the traces of a vast building and many marble columns in the midst of which was one great column on which was written in the *musnad* script, the *musnad* being the ancient script of Himyar and the kings of `Ad: "My name is Shaddad son of `Ad son of Shaddad son of `Ad. With my hand I held the land tight in my grasp, and destroyed the loftiest of constructions, of mountains and of peaks. I built Iram of the columns, the like of which was never built in any land. I wanted to build here a city like Iram and move to it every noble and high person from all tribes and nations, to a place where there is no fear and no old age, no worry and no sickness. But there occurred something that forced me to hurry, and diverted me from what I desired, and there happened to me that which prolonged my worries and my distress, and my sleep and ease of mind came to an end, so I moved away in safety

from my abode, not because I was defeated by a mighty king, nor out of fear of a massive army, nor out of alarm or ignominy, but because destiny had thus decreed and religious worship of the great and mighty one had ceased. He who beholds what I left behind and knows my history and how long I have lived, how perceptive I was and how vigilant, let him not be seduced by this world, for it is a temptress that takes away what it gives you and retrieves what it grants.” There followed a lot of speech which reveals the transitory nature of the world and forbids being seduced by it or feeling at ease in it.

828. Alexander then resided in that place and gave much thought and deliberation to that speech. He then sent out for craftsmen from all lands to be brought to that site, laid out the foundations, made its length and width to be miles in extent, and filled it with columns and marble. Ships came bearing all types of marble and stones from Sicily, North Africa, Crete and furthest regions of the Mediterranean Sea where it flows in from the Ocean. From Rhodes also came ships bearing the same cargoes. Rhodes is an island facing Alexandria and at a distance of a night’s journey by sea from it. It is the first land of the Franks. At this time, i.e. the year 332, this island is a Byzantine naval construction yard where military ships are built. It is inhabited by numerous Byzantines whose ships attack the territory of Alexandria and elsewhere in Egypt, raiding, taking prisoners and enslaving people.

829. Alexander ordered all workmen and craftsmen to spread out as instructed along the circuit of the foundations of the city wall, and he ordered that an erect piece of wood be placed at equal intervals. From each piece of wood to the next were tied ropes attached to one piece after another. All these were connected to a marble column outside his tent and to this column was tied a huge bell with a mighty sound. He commanded the people and foremen who supervised the craftsmen,

builders and workers that when they heard the sound of the great bell and the ropes, to which small bells were attached, began to quiver, they were to lay down the city's foundations all at once and from all points of its circumference. Alexander wanted this to take place at a time of his choosing and an auspicious astral moment. One day, as Alexander waited to calculate the auspicious astral moment, his head nodded and he dozed off. A crow flew and settled on the rope of the big bell above the column, shaking it. The bell sounded, the ropes shuddered and the small bells rang out---all this was done in accordance with cleverly designed movements and tricks of natural philosophy. When the workers saw the ropes shaking and heard the bells, they laid down the foundations all at once and loud were the cries of thanks and worship. Alexander woke up and asked what had happened, and when he was told, he was amazed and said: "I purposed one thing and the Almighty purposed another, and God rejects everything except what he wills. I wanted the city to last long but he wanted it to fall quickly into ruin and to be ruled by one king after another."

830. When Alexandria had been securely built and its foundations were firm, and night overtook the workers, certain animals came out from the sea and destroyed all that had been built. In the morning, Alexander said: "This is the start of its ruination and confirms the Almighty's purpose that it be destroyed." He recognized an evil omen in the action of these animals. Each day, the building would proceed, be made strong and men would be appointed to ward off these animals as they came out of the sea but each morning what was built would be destroyed.

Alexander grew worried and was frightened by what he was witnessing so he began to ponder what could be done and what trick could be effective to ward off the harm being done to the city. When alone one night and as he weighed his various options back and forth, the solution

occurred to him. When morning came, he ordered the craftsmen to make him a wooden casket, measuring ten *dhira`*s by five, with windows of glass framed inside the wooden casket all around, the whole of which was glued with tar and pitch and other water-tight paints to prevent seepage into the casket, and with rings where ropes could be attached.

831. Alexander and two of his scribes who were skilled in drawing then climbed into the casket and he commanded the casket to be sealed and coated as described. He then ordered two great ships to sail out into the sea. To the casket were attached weights of lead from below in order to make the casket sink down to the sea bed, since it would have been natural for that casket to float because of the air in it and not to sink downwards. The casket was placed between the two ships and wooden beams were attached to them to prevent them drifting away. The ropes of the casket were then tightly attached to the two ships and the ropes were made long so the casket sank until it reached the seabed.

Alexander and his companions then examined the creatures and animals of the sea through the transparent glass and through the clarity of the seawater and found them to resemble demons in the form of humans with heads like lions. Some carried axes, some saws and cutters, replicating the workers and craftsmen of the city and their implements of construction. Alexander and his companions recorded these pictures and copied them in drawings on all kinds of paper together with their distorted visage, forms and shapes. He then shook the ropes and the people aboard the ships felt this, pulled the ropes up and raised the casket. When Alexander climbed out of the casket and returned to Alexandria, he ordered the craftsmen in iron, bronze and stone to sculpt images of these animals in accordance with the drawings he and his companions had made. When this task was finished the effigies were

placed on columns by the seashore. He then ordered construction to resume. When night arrived, the animals and dangerous creatures emerged from the sea but when they saw their effigies on columns that faced the sea, they headed back into the sea and never returned.

832. Alexandria was then built and Alexander ordered the following to be inscribed on its gates: “This is Alexandria. I desired to build it in piety, success, good fortune, happiness and joy and to last across the ages. The Almighty creator, king of heaven and earth, and destroyer of nations, did not wish me to build it in this manner. I built it up and constructed it firmly and built its wall. God granted me knowledge and wisdom in all things and made all things easy for me so nothing in this world that I wanted was ever hard for me to attain, nor did anything I sought ever evade me. All this was done through the grace of Almighty God and in order to show me favor and to benefit his creatures, the people of my time. Praise be to God, lord of the worlds, there is no god but he, lord over all things.” Following that inscription, Alexander recorded all events that would take place in future times such as calamities, construction works and ruins, and what the future of the city would be until the world is annihilated.

833. Alexander had built the city on different levels. Beneath were arches on which the city’s houses were constructed, below which a knight holding a spear could pass throughout these arches and not be hindered. These arches were constructed with spouts and apertures to allow light and air to pass through. At nighttime Alexandria used to glow without any lamp, so white was the marble in its construction. Its markets, streets and alleys were all under arches so that no rain ever bothered them. It had seven walls built of many-colored stones between which were moats, with two barriers between each moat and wall. At

times pieces of green silk would be hung up in the city to blunt the glow of the marble that dazzled the eyes of people with its whiteness.

834. When the city was finally constructed and was inhabited, the perilous sea creatures and animals would snatch its citizens by night, according to the Alexandrine and Egyptian historians. In the morning they would wake up and find that many people were missing. When Alexander learnt about this, he ordered talismans to be set up on columns there called *masal* (obelisks) which exist to the present day. Each obelisk is in the shape of a Cypress tree and is about eighty *dhira`*s in height. They are mounted on bronze columns and beneath each are figures, forms and writings. These talismans work when one degree of the celestial sphere declines and approaches this world.

According to practitioners of talismans among astrologers and astronomers, if one degree of the celestial sphere ascends and another descends within a period of time of about six hundred years, the talismans become effective in their power of repulsion and propulsion.

835. Some authors of astronomical almanacs and others have mentioned this topic, and consider this to be a secret of the celestial spheres. But this book is not the right place to discuss such matters. Other authors maintain that this phenomenon is due to the fineness of the powers of perfected natures, and other views have been put forward by other people. What we mentioned about the degrees of the celestial spheres can be found in the books of recent astrologers and astronomers such as Abu Ma`shar al-Balkhi*, al-Khwarizmi*, Muhammad ibn Kathir al-Farghani*, Masha`Allah*, Habash*, al-Nairizi*, Muhammad ibn Jabir al-Battani* in his Great Almanac, and Thabit ibn Qurra*, as well as others who wrote about astronomical subjects.

836. As for the lighthouse of Alexandria, most Egyptians and Alexandrians who are experts in the history of their country assert that

it was Alexander son of Philip the Macedonian who built it, as mentioned above when we discussed the plan of the city's construction. Others affirm that it was old queen Daluka who built it and made it to be an observation post for enemies approaching her country. Yet others claim that it was the tenth pharaoh of Egypt who built it and we have mentioned this monarch in earlier parts of this work. Still others say the person who built Rome was the one who also built Alexandria, the lighthouse and the Pyramids, and that Alexandria was attributed to Alexander because of his fame as a world conqueror, thus acquiring his name.

837. These people have adduced many reports to prove their contentions. For instance, they argue that no enemy ever approached Alexander by sea nor did he ever fear some king who might invade his land so that he would need to build it as a watchtower. They further assert that the person who built it made it to rest on a glass throne resembling a crayfish, in the midst of the sea, and at the tip of a headland. At its top were statues of bronze and such like, among which was one who pointed with the index finger of his right arm towards the sun, wherever it was in the heavens. As the sun rose the finger followed its course and when the sun sank the arm sank with it, following it around wherever it moved. Another statue pointed with his arm to the sea when an enemy was at a distance of one night's journey. As the enemy approached and became near enough to be visible, the statue would emit a very loud sound heard from a distance of two or three miles, so the inhabitants of the city would know that the enemy was near and they could see them with their eyes. Among these statues too was one that emitted each hour of the day or night a sound different from the sound emitted the hour before, and the sound itself was musical.

838. In the days of al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik*, the Byzantine ruler sent in secret one of his intimate servants, a man of intelligence and cunning, who then approached a Muslim frontier post pretending he was seeking asylum. He and his companions were well turned out so he was sent on to al-Walid, whom he informed that he was an intimate of the Byzantine king and who, out of anger, sought to kill him on some baseless charge. He further stated that he was terrified and wanted to embrace Islam. So he converted to Islam at the hands of al-Walid and became close to his heart. He then affected to offer him good advice about buried treasure which he had dug up from the territory of Damascus and elsewhere in al-Sham and which he claimed to have found in certain books he had with him which described the location of these treasures. When these monies and precious objects were presented to al-Walid, he grew greedy and more avaricious. The Byzantine agent said to him: "O Commander of the Believers, this book indicates that there are buried monies, jewels and treasures that belonged to ancient kings." When al-Walid asked him for details, the man replied: "Beneath the lighthouse of Alexandria are found treasures of the whole earth. This is because when Alexander captured the monies and jewels belonging to Shaddad ibn `Ad and to the Arab kings of Egypt and al-Sham, he built these subterranean arches surmounted by domes, arcades and cellars in which to house these treasures of gold, silver and precious stones. Above all these he built a lighthouse, a thousand *dhira`*s in height, with the mirror on top and the drums placed around it. If they observed an enemy in the sea reflected in the mirror they would shout to those near and raise flags and those further away from them will see them and the inhabitants of the city will be warned so the enemy can no longer make headway against them." Al-Walid sent the Byzantine agent with an army and with many of his intimates and others he trusted, and

they proceeded to tear down half of the lighthouse from its top and remove the mirror. The people of Alexandria and elsewhere clamored loudly and realized this was a trick and a clever ruse practiced upon the lighthouse. When the agent came to know that this view was now widely spread among people and that it would eventually reach al-Walid, and having attained his objective, he escaped by night in a ship he had previously arranged with some people in the know to make ready for him. Thus, his ruse succeeded and the lighthouse has remained in this condition up to the present day, i.e. the year 332.

839. Round about the lighthouse of Alexandria there were diving spots from which was extracted a kind of precious stone used as stones in rings, and resembling certain types of precious stones like amethyst (*karkand*), cornelian (*adhrak*) and jade (*isbadh jusham*). It is said that Alexander used vessels made of these stones for drinking but when he died his mother broke them and threw their fragments into the sea at that site. Some say that Alexander took these types of precious stones and made them sink round the lighthouse in order that the place should not be deserted since precious stones are highly sought after objects on land or sea and in all ages. The site would then be crowded at all times. Most of the precious stones extracted from the vicinity of the lighthouse are of the kind called jade (*isbadh jusham*).

840. I have met many who polish precious stones (*ashab al-talwihat*) and others who concern themselves with these stones that resemble metals [reading *al-mushabbaha bi'l ma`daniyya*] and who work on this stone known as *isbadh jusham*. They fashion from it stones for rings and other things, as also the ring stones known as jasper (*baqalamun*) which come in various colors such as red, green and yellow. Upon examination, these stones change their colors in diverse ways, as mentioned above. The changes in color occur according to the water

inside the precious stone and its clarity, as also according to the different angles of vision when one looks at it. The various colors that this stone assumes, I mean jasper, resemble the diverse colors assumed by peacocks, for these birds constantly change the colors of their tails and wings, I mean the male of the species and not the female. I saw these birds in India assume, when closely examined, colors that were endless and resembled no other color, so often did these colors change as they passed over their feathers like waves. This is because of the great size of their bodies and the wide span of their feathers. The peacocks of India are truly remarkable. When any of them leave India and are brought into the lands of Islam, where they hatch and lay eggs, their bodies become small and murky in color. The rays of vision do not relish looking at them and their resemblance to the Indian peacocks is slight. This has to do with the males, not females. Likewise, the sour orange and rounded citron tree was imported from India after the year 300 [912-13]. It was first planted in Oman, then moved on to Basra, Iraq and al-Sham until it became a common tree in the houses of Tartus and other towns on the frontier regions of al-Sham, Antioch and the coastal regions of al-Sham, Palestine and Egypt, where before it had been unknown. However, when transplanted, these trees lost their pervasive scent and lovely color which they possess in India because of the absence of that particular air, earth and water, and the distinctive nature of the country.

841. It is said that the mirror was placed atop the lighthouse because the kings of the Romans waged war against the kings of Egypt and Alexandria after the death of Alexander. As a result, some kings of Alexandria placed that mirror so as to reveal enemies that approach by sea. However, a person entering that lighthouse can easily get lost inside it, unless he knows well its entrances and exits, for its chambers,

levels and corridors are numerous. It is mentioned that when, during the caliphate of al-Muqtadir, the people of the Maghrib invaded with an army belonging to the ruler of the Maghrib, some cavalrymen rode inside the lighthouse on their horses and got lost. In it are passages that lead to pits where one drops onto the glass crayfish below, while other pits lead into the sea. So these horsemen tumbled down with their mounts and a great many of them were lost, a matter that was only found out later. It is said that they fell onto flooring in front of the lighthouse, where at present there is a mosque in which Egyptian volunteer troops and others stand guard in summer.

842. Many tales are told about Egypt, Alexandria, the Maghrib, al-Andalus and Rome and also about other places in the east, west, south and north, concerning the marvels of their lands, their wondrous buildings and ancient sites, the peculiarities of their regions and the factors that affect their inhabitants. We have omitted to mention them since we cited reports about them in our previous works, including the wonders of the world and of its animals, its lands and seas, thus making it unnecessary for us to repeat these reports here.

843. In previous sections of this work, we did not make mention of fire temples, famous sanctuaries and monumental structures and other topics relevant thereto, but we shall mention them in their appropriate place in this work, God willing. In God is success.

Chapter 33

An account of Black Africans, their genealogies, their diverse races and kinds, their different habitats and a history of their kings

844. Al-Mas`udi said: When the children of Noah scattered across the earth, the progeny of Kush son of Canaan headed west until they crossed the Nile. Some of them travelled north, between east and west. These are the Nuba, Buja and Zanj. Some headed westwards, and these

are of many races like the Zaghawa, Kanim, Marka, Kawkaw, Ghana and other black and exceedingly dark races. Those who headed north between east and west split up and became the Zanj, such as the Makir, Mashkar, Barbara and other Zanj races. Earlier in this book we discussed, when speaking about the Abyssinian Sea, the Barbari Gulf and the types of black Africans who live on its coast and how their lands adjoin the lands of Dahlak, Zaila` and Badi`.

845. These people are the ones who wear the highly-prized panther skins, which is their normal dress. These skins are imported from their land to the lands of Islam. They are the largest panther skins and the best for saddles. The sea of the Zanj and the Abyssinians is to the right of the Indian Sea though their waters are connected. From their land is carried the tortoise shells found on the back of tortoises and it is from these that combs resembling horns are made. The animal known as the giraffe is mostly found in their land though it is also commonly found in the land of Nuba to the exclusion of other Abyssinian lands. The question of how this animal called the giraffe is generated is a subject of dispute. Some say it first originated from the camel, others say it is a cross between camels and panthers, still others say it is an independent species like the horse, the donkey or the cow, and is not comparable to a mule which is a cross between the horse and the donkey. The giraffe is called *ushturkaw* in Persian and it used to be sent as a gift to Persian kings from Nubia as also to the kings of the Arabs and to former Abbasid caliphs and governors of Egypt. It is an animal with long front legs and neck and short hind legs. The hind legs have no knees: these are found only on its front legs. In his *Kitab al-Hayawan*, Jahiz*, when discussing the giraffe, wrote at length about its generation, to the effect that in upper Nubia many wild animals and beasts and other beasts of burden gather together at waterholes when the heat is intense. They then

procreate, with some animals allowing this act and others not, and from all of this many animals are bred of diverse shapes and forms, among which is the giraffe. The giraffe has cloven hoofs and is an animal whose form inclines backwards, and has a straight back down to its rear because of the shortness of its hind legs.

846. Much is written, as stated above, about how the giraffe is generated, and how the panthers of Nubia are very large in size whereas camels are small and short in the legs and how this is comparable to the fact that the wombs of youthful Arab camels are broad enough to accommodate the large two-humped camels of Kirman and other camels of Khurasan, producing camels known as Bactrian or trotting camels (*jummazat*). However, this kind of camel is not produced between a male and female Bactrian camel. This species of camel is only produced when the large two-humped camel is crossed with the youthful Arab she-camel or else when the Bactrian is produced from a cross between Bujawa and Mahriyya camels. The giraffe is the subject of much discussion, cited by the author of the *Logic* in his major book on animals where he lists the functions of its various body parts and other parts of the bodies of animals. We have included the information needed concerning this subject in our book *Al-Qadaya wa'l Tajarib*. The giraffe is a curious animal in its affection towards its young and, like the elephant, is both wild and domesticated and companionable.

847. We spoke above about the blacks and kinds of Abyssinians who travelled to the right bank of the Nile and reached the lowest regions of the Abyssinian Sea. The Zanj alone among all the Abyssinians crossed the gulf that issues from the higher reaches of the Nile that flows into the Zanj Sea. The Zanj then settled in that region and their habitations bordered upon the land of Sufala, the furthest territory of the Zanj. Sufala is where the ships of the Omanis and Sirafis dock, being the

furthest destination in the lower regions of the Zanj Sea, just as the furthest reaches of the China Sea touch upon the land of Sila, mentioned earlier in this book. Similarly, the territory of Sufala, the furthest reaches of the Zanj Sea, touch upon the furthest reaches of the land of Waq Waq*, a land with much gold and many marvels, and is fertile and hot.

848. The Zanj took Sufala as their kingdom's capital and set up a king over them whom they called Waflimi, a title for all their kings across the ages, as already noted. Waflimi, king of all the Zanj, rides out with three thousand knights. Their beasts of burden are oxen and their land has no horses, mules or camels, all of which are unfamiliar to them. Furthermore, they are unfamiliar with snow or hailstones, just like other Abyssinians. Some have pointed teeth and are cannibals. The habitations of the Zanj are from the borders of the gulf in the upper reaches of the Nile all the way to Sufala and Waq Waq. The total area of their settlements and habitations is about seven hundred *farsakhs* in length and breadth, made up of valleys, mountains and sands.

849. Elephants are found in very large numbers in the land of the Zanj. All are wild and shun human company. The Zanj do not use them for war or anything else but kill them. They do so by scattering in water the leaves, bark and branches of a tree that grows there, then the Zanj go into hiding. When elephants come to drink that water their innards are burnt and they become intoxicated, so they fall down, having no joints or knees as already explained. The Zanj then come out holding their mightiest spears and kill them for the sake of their tusks. From their land these tusks are exported, each tusk weighing one hundred and fifty *mann* or more. Most is then exported from Oman to the lands of China and India, for they are carried first from the Zanj land to Oman and

thence to the places we mentioned. Were it not for this trade, ivory would have been found in plenty in Muslim lands.

850. The kings, commanders and notables of China carry rods made of ivory, and no commander or royal intimate enters into the royal presence carrying anything made of iron but solely these ivory rods. They especially prize straight rather than bent tusks in order to use as rods, as explained above. Ivory is also used by them as incense in their shrines that hold effigies and as aromatic smoke in their temples, just as the Christians use the aromatic smoke called “Mariam’s smoke” [cyclamen] and other incense in their churches. The Chinese do not employ elephants in their country and regard owning them and using them in war as an ill omen because of some incident that occurred in ancient times in some of their wars.

851. India has many uses for the ivory they import such as using it as handles for daggers, known as *jarari*, singular *jariyy*, and in the hilts of their swords, known as *qaratil*, singular *qartal*, which are curved. The most common use for ivory in India is to fashion from it chess and backgammon pieces. As regards chess, its pieces are moulded in the shape of speaking animals and others, each piece being about one *shibr* high and one wide, or more. When they play the game the players will be standing and moving it around its squares. Chess and backgammon are mostly played as gambling games with the players’ clothes and jewels as pledge. It may happen that a player runs out of pledges, so continues the game by pledging to cut off a body member. For this purpose, they keep a small bowl of copper nearby, placed on live coals, in which a sort of red grease is made to boil. This is a grease that staunches wounds and stops the flow of blood. If a player pledges one of his fingers and loses his gamble, he cuts it off with a red-hot dagger, dips his hand in the boiling grease to cauterize the wound, then resumes

the game. If he loses again, he will cut off a second finger and a game might turn out such that he will cut off his fingers, palm, arm, upper arm and other body members, all the while cauterizing them with the boiling grease. This is a marvelous concoction made from a mixture of medicinal substances in the land of India and is a wonder for the reasons outlined above. What we have related about them here is a widely known Indian practice.

852. The Indians employ elephants, which breed in their land and among which no wild specimens are found, either for military purposes or as beasts of burden, like bulls and camels. Most of them graze in meadows and swamps like the buffaloes in Islamic lands. Elephants tend to escape from any place where rhinos are found, as already mentioned, and will not graze in any spot where they can smell its presence. In Zanj land, an elephant can live for 400 years. This is mentioned by the Zanj because in their habitat and their trails they discern a kind called the “Great Elephant” that they cannot kill. Among elephant colors are the black, the white, the black-and-white and the dust colored. In India, some elephants live for a hundred or even two hundred years. A female elephant becomes pregnant and conceives once every seven years.

853. The elephant in India has an animal that is greatly harmful to it called *al-zabraq* [stink badger?] an animal smaller than a panther with short hair and shining eyes and fast in leaping, reaching a distance of thirty to fifty *dhira`* or more in each leap. When in sight of an elephant it uses its tail to spray it with urine which causes burning to the elephant. The animal can also attack a human being and kill him. In India, when this animal appears to a person, he will climb and cling to the tallest teak tree he can find, a tree taller than a palm, and bigger than a walnut. A single tree can shelter many humans and animals, judging

by the length of the teak wood imported into Basra, Iraq and Egypt. Hence, if a human being climbs for safety into this tree, and the animal has failed to catch him, it crouches on the ground then leaps to the top of the tree. If it fails to capture the man it will spray its urine at the tree-top or else place its head in the ground emitting strange howls. Clots of blood will then issue from its mouth and it dies instantly. Wherever its urine falls on that tree will be burnt. If the urine falls on a human being he will die, as will all other animals.

854. Indian kings store in their treasuries the gallbladder and sexual organs and other parts of the anatomy of that animal which act as an instantly fatal poison. Some of the poison is sprayed on swords and kills at once. The sexual organs of this animal resemble those of the water dog [shark] from which is extracted *Jandbadastar*. This dog is well known among pharmacists and others. The substance extracted is an Arabized Persian word, *kund*, meaning testes, and was Arabized to *Jundbadastar*. The animal known as *al-zabraq* will not frequent a place where rhinos are found and runs away from them as does the elephant.

855. Elephants run away from cats and will not tarry at all once having spotted a cat. It is mentioned that Persian kings used to protect their war elephants by surrounding them with infantry and would deal with the enemy's mounted troops by unleashing cats upon them. This is the practice until today of the kings of Sind and India. It is further mentioned that pigs may also cause elephants to flee. There was a man in Multan in the Sind called Harun ibn Musa, a client of the Azd tribe, who was a poet and man of courage, a leader of his people and a powerful figure in Sind, in a land adjoining Multan. He was in his castle and engaged in a battle with some Indian kings who had brought forward their elephants. Harun came out in front of the line of battle and headed towards a great elephant. Under his robes he had hidden a cat.

As he came near the elephant, he let the cat loose and the elephant fled in panic as soon as he saw the cat. This was the reason for the defeat of that army, the killing of the Indian king and the victory of the Muslims. 856. Harun ibn Musa composed an ode describing that incident and these are some of its verses:

*Is it not strange that it possesses the intelligence of a human
And is created in the size of an elephant?*

*Is it not strange that in form it is hard to pursue but easy to manage?
More charming than a playful she-monkey, but an intelligence
Superior to that of a man of strength (khanshalil)?*

*Short of neck, diverse in build, long in fangs, short in forehead,
He meets the enemy with a great fang, an ample stomach and a weak
voice.*

*In likeness he is nearest to a wild boar or a buffalo in a forest.
Every four-legged animal contends with it,
But among creatures he has no equal.*

*He submits to a lion of the den
Since it resembles a cat from a distance of a mile.*

*He destroys tigers as well as panthers,
As the wind devastates the nightingale.*

*In form, his hand appears like his nose,
And when described [reading wasafuhu], it is compared to a sharp
sword.*

*He comes forth like a mountain, leading an army,
Bringing great terror to vanguard enemy troops.*

*He moves like a torrent from nowhere,
Light of foot and heavy of tread.*

*If you see him, his terror is increased
By two ugly ears, as if on the head of a ghou.*

*I had prepared a cat for it,
A cat not too troubled by a great elephant (zandabil).
Once the elephant felt its presence in the dust of battle,
God brought us a glorious victory.
The elephant bolted, defying its driver,
Mindless of everything, though noble in body.
Glory be to its creator, and none else,
God of humans and lord of elephants.*

857. The nightingale is a small bird found in the land of Sind and India and mentioned by poets who refer to its small size, whereas the elephant called *zandabil* is great in size and the most sought after. It is also stated that *zandabil* denotes a hard-fought battle involving female elephants.

Describing an elephant, a poet recited:

*It is he whose lips are long
And among elephants is known as zandabil.*

Another poet recited:

Elephants like mountains, zandabil.

858. In his *Book of Animals*, Jahiz cited the ode above and explained some of its verses and the term *khanshalil* by quoting the view of al-Ansari in describing the palm tree:

*At night, it waves its tails,
And bricks of mud are made with their scraps.
It is satisfied by sucking moisture from the soil,
When both the sheep and the old man (khanshalil) go hungry.*

Jahiz adds: But this is not the same meaning of *khanshalil* as in the following verse:

*A beautiful, long-necked maiden, has come to know
That I am well practiced (khanshalil) with the edge of the sword.*

859. Elephants do not breed or bear young except in the land of the Zanj and in India. Their tusks do not grow long in Sind and India as they do in Zanj land. The Zanj use elephant skins as shields, as also the Indians. Such shields are without equal in strength, and neither the Chinese nor Tibetan nor Lamti nor Bajawi nor any shield immersed in yoghurt nor any other shield at all is their equal. The elephant's trunk is its nose and it uses it to convey food and drink to its belly. The trunk is something between cartilage, meat and sinew, and it employs it to fight and strike and bellow, but the elephant's cry is not proportional to its great body and enormous size.

860. The caliph al-Mansur* was keen on collecting elephants, because earlier monarchs had prized them highly, collected them and prepared them for war or else as decorative creatures on feast days or other occasions, and because elephants are the easiest and most convenient mounts for kings. I was once told by a state secretary in Baghdad, a man of reason, wide education and knowledge of history, that one day he bought a female mule of exceptional beauty and agility. He would ride her on his official duties and for business purposes. Whenever the mule saw Bactrian camels or Arabian camels or others that go about their business on the road, she would bolt and rear, and he would find it extremely hard to control. He would bear this with patience because of the mule's agility and splendor, and because no other beast of burden could carry him, so large was he in build and so great was his belly.

861. He continued: "One day, I was riding through the Taq Gate, during the caliphate of al-Muqtadir Bi'llah. He had brought out his elephants for exercise and to prepare them to carry al-Layth ibn `Ali al-Saffar and his companions. Mu'nis al-Khadim had captured al-Saffar in the province of Fars when he rebelled against the state. I came upon a caravan of Bactrian camels fleeing at a gallop in terror of the elephants,

with their riders completely unable to restrain them, so great was their terror. When my mule saw this sight, it reared up on its hind-quarters and threw me to the ground, and I fell off like a bloated skin of a bull. The camels then entered a dead-end alley and my mule, when it threw me off, joined the camels in their flight into that alley. The elephants followed. When my mule saw their great size and build she joined the camels and entered among them as if she had always been living among them, becoming as timid as the camels. Some people saw me and picked me up. A page then entered to lead my mule out but could only do so once the elephants had passed. My mule was then led out from among the camels. I swear to God, that mule would never again bolt or rear when it saw a camel. She had become so accustomed to camels that it seemed as if she had become one of them, for she had deemed the camel a paltry thing when compared to the huge size of the elephant that she had seen.”

862. Every animal possessing a tongue has the base of its tongue on the inside and its tip on the outside except the elephant, the tip of whose tongue is inside and the base outside. The Indians claim that were it not for its inverted tongue, an elephant, if trained, would be capable of speech. The Indians honor the elephant and prefer it to all other animals because of its combination of praiseworthy qualities such as its great height, its grand form, its splendid appearance, its wide back, its low growl, its long trunk, its large ears and its large sexual organ. This is combined with its light tread, its long life-span, the heavy burdens it can carry and its indifference to the load placed on its back. And yet, the Indians say, despite its great size and shape, it passes by a person without that person feeling or hearing its tread until the elephant is upon him, so graceful is its tread and so straight its walk.

863. Jahiz has described the elephant at great length in his *Book of Animals*, praised it highly, and promised to relate many aspects in describing the elephant such as its form, its wondrous build and makeup, its real attributes and fine sense organs, how elephants accept training, their accurate discernment, their rapid learning process and ability to be quickly instructed, the noble components and parts of their bodies, the benefits they bring as also the harm they can do, how much this animal species is superior in its senses, what God has placed in elephants by way of signs and proofs and radiant symbols which God has revealed to the eyes of His creatures, rendering these signs clear to the minds of his worshippers, marking them well and preserving them in order to increase the clarity of proof and prepare them to submit to divine grace. Jahiz proceeds to quote what God mentioned in His book of revelation and in His truthful reports, and to cite well-known prophetic sayings, proverbs, factual experiences and what poets and orators have said about the elephant and how scientists have described it and wise men have marveled at it.

864. [Jahiz continues] Then there is the high reputation of elephants among kings, their value in war, their appearance to the eye, and the awe they inspire in the heart; their long life-spans, their bodily strength, their strong willpower; their grudges, their great distress, their pursuit of revenge; the fact that they are too distinguished to be owned by the riff-raff or by criminals and the low classes, or to be judged cheap in price; their lack of tolerance to vileness or to being treated with contempt or insult; their refusal by nature and instinct to have their bodies cured, their tusks elongated or their limbs grow bigger. Elephants do not breed or reproduce except in their own habitats, countries or places of origin even when kings demand that they be bred or when people, eager to gain favor with kings, attempt to breed them, but all their tricks have

failed, and all their eagerness to have them breed has vanished. [Jahiz further cites] reports about elephant gestation and delivery of their young; the disposition of their bodily members; the manner in which elephants differ from the four basic shapes common to all other animals that slide, swim, walk or fly; how they differ from all animals that change their shape at birth or else those that preserve their original image; how elephants share in certain animal traits and how they differ from all other animals; how courageous they are, how strong, and how daring they are when facing animals that are greater in bodily strength, more voracious and sharper in claws and fangs and yet run away from animals smaller in body, more blunted in their weapons, lesser in courage and inferior in repute.

865. [Jahiz also] records tales about the elephant's blameworthy and praiseworthy qualities; its color, skin, hair, flesh, bones, urine and excrement; its tongue, mouth and the many other matters he promised to recount. As he finally came to discuss the elephant's aspect and description, and the other topics he had already listed and promised to expound, all he did was to record dispersed generalities and incoherent allusions on the subject of elephants and other animals. He failed to mention the peculiar characteristics of its body members, their numerous benefits and their wondrous nature; failed to cite views about the secrets of nature in elephants or the views of Indian philosophers about their origins or what they transmitted from their wise ancestors about the manner of their origination; why elephants came to exist in India and Zanj land to the exclusion of all other spots on earth, and why they cannot come into being elsewhere; the enmity between the elephant and the rhinoceros despite the great size of the former; how an elephant will run away from a cat despite its small body and charming appearance; why an elephant displays great pleasure when it hears

music, unlike all other animals; and how it reacts so well to being trained, and how perceptive and knowledgeable it is when spoken to, and how cunning, shrewd and discerning it is.

866. The author of the *Logic* in his *Book of Animals* provided a lot of information regarding the characteristics of the elephant and the uses of its bodily members, and followed a path in describing the elephant that was not followed by earlier Indian sages. These latter assert that all bodies found in the world are divided into three conditions: concordant, different and contradictory; that bodies in general are either inanimate or capable of growth; and that these are to be distinguished from the category of the heavenly spheres, stars, constellations and other heavenly bodies, which are neither inanimate nor capable of growth but living and rational.

867. Al-Mas`udi said: Let us now turn back to what we had been discussing earlier on, at the beginning of this chapter, namely, the Zanj, their land and other kinds of Abyssinians. The Zanj, despite the fact that they hunt a lot of elephants, as stated above, and collect its ivory, yet they do not make use of that ivory in any of their tools. The Zanj use iron as ornament instead of gold and silver. We already mentioned that they use oxen as beasts of burden and ride on them to war instead of camels and horses. These oxen are ridden like horses, with saddles and bridles.

868. In Rayy I once saw an ox kneel down just like a camel then straighten up quickly when loaded, just like camels when they rise up carrying their loads. This species of bovine animals is used to transport dead animals like horses, donkeys and mules, and their owners are a type of Mazdakist Magians in religion. They live in a village inhabited solely by them outside Rayy. If any beast of burden mentioned above dies in Rayy or Qazwin, one of these people arrives with his bull, makes

it lie down, places the dead animal upon it and heads to his village, where they eat it and use its bones for construction. They dry its meat and store it for winter consumption. Most of what they and their oxen eat comes from such meat, both moist and dry.

869. Most of this bovine species have red eyeballs and all other bovine species run away from them. I once saw in the territory of Isfahan and Qumm some of these animals with iron and brass rings in their noses which held cords acting like halters, as is done with Bactrian camels. In Rayy, too, I once saw a bull of this species charging a bull of another species which, when it saw it approaching, fled in terror. No bovine species is known to make its home in water, islands and lakes except the species known as Abyssinian cows [water buffalo] found in the land of Egypt and its provinces, and in Lake Tannis and Damietta and territories nearby.

870. As for the oxen in the frontier regions of al-Sham, these will pull the biggest waterwheel. They have rings of iron and brass in their noses, as described above. These animals are also found in the territory of Antioch and even more in the lands of Sind, India and Tabaristan. The horns of these bovines are longer than the horns of oxen in Islamic lands, each horn being one or two *dhira`*s in length. Oxen are also found in plenty in Iraq in areas adjoining the cultivated regions of Kufa, Basra, al-Bata'ih and regions attached thereto. [People make mention of *`anqa` mughrib** and they paint images of the *`anqa`* in baths and other places. But I have not seen anyone in these kingdoms nor heard of anyone who has asserted that he actually saw one. I cannot understand this and it may be a name that has no significance.]*

871. Let us now return to the history of the Zanj and their kings. The name of the king of the Zanj, Waflemi, means "Son of the Great God" since God had chosen him to rule over them in justice. If the king acts

unjustly and abandons the path of righteousness, they kill him and deny kingship to his progeny. They claim that in acting unjustly he ceases to be the son of God who is lord of the heavens and earth. They call the Almighty Creator “Mkulunjulu”, which means the Great Lord.

872. The Zanj are a people of eloquence in their language and have orators in that language. An ascetic among them will rise and address a great crowd, urging them to draw near to their creator and to obey him, frightening them with his punishment and power, and reminding them of earlier kings and ancestors. They do not have a sacred law to which they refer but merely certain regulations and policies instituted by their kings according to which they rule their subjects. They eat bananas which are plentiful in their land as also in India. Their most common food is maize and a plant called *kaladi* which they pull out of the ground like truffles or elecampane (*al-rasin*), found in plenty in the territory of Aden and adjacent lands of the Yemen. This *kaladi* resembles the colocasia found in al-Sham and Egypt. Their foods also include honey and meat, and whoever among them falls in love with something will worship it, whether it be plant, animal or mineral. Their islands in the sea are innumerable. In them is found the coconut, eaten by all the Zanj. Among these islands is one which lies at a distance of a day or two’s journey from the coast of the Zanj, and in which are found a number of Muslims. This is the island of Qanbalu* and has been passing from one Muslim king to the next, as already mentioned in this book.

873. As for the Nuba, they are divided into two groups, one to the east and another to the west of the Nile on whose banks they settled. Their habitations border those of the Copts in the Sa`id of Egypt, in the territory of Aswan and elsewhere. The habitations of the Nuba along the banks of the Nile extend upwards and approach near the upper reaches

of the Nile. They have built a capital for their kingdom, a great city called Dunqula. The other group of the Nuba are called `Alwa. They too built a capital city for their kingdom called Suba.

874. While writing this book, and having arrived at this point in time which is the month of Rabi` al-Akhar of the year 332 [December, 943], I was then in Fustat in Egypt. I was informed that the Nubian king in the city of Dunqula was Kubra ibn Surur, a king, son of a king, son of a king and so on. His realm includes Maqurra, `Alwa and the land adjoining his kingdom in the territory of Aswan and is called Maris, whence the name *Marisi* wind. The province of this king borders on the Egyptian provinces of the Sa`id and the city of Aswan.

875. The group called the Bujja settled the area between the Red Sea and the Nile of Egypt, where they split into many factions and had many kings. There are gold mines, or gold ore, in their territory and also emerald mines. Their expeditions and military sorties reach the land of Nuba where they raid and enslave captives. In earlier times the Nuba were more powerful than the Bujja until the time when the religion of Islam appeared and grew in strength as a result of some Muslims settling near the gold mines and the territory of `Allaqi and `Aidhab. A number of Arabs from the tribe of Rabi`a ibn Nizar ibn Ma`add ibn `Adnan came to live there, so their power increased and they married into the Bujja. These grew more powerful by their marriages with Rabi`a who in turn grew more powerful by marrying into the Bujja. Thus Rabi`a was able to exert their strength against their enemies or neighbors from Qahtan or from Mudar ibn Nizar who lived in those regions.

876. The lord of this mine at present, i.e. the year 332, is Abu Marwan Bishr ibn Ishaq, from the Rabi`a tribe. He rides out with three thousand Rabi`a horsemen and their allies from Mudar and Yemen, and thirty

thousand Bujja spearmen on camels, armed with Bujja shields. These are called the *Hadariba*, i.e. the Muslims among the Bujja, whereas the rest of the Bujja are unbelievers who worship an idol of theirs.

877. As for the Abyssinians, the name of their capital city is Ka`bar* [*Ka`ban?*]. It is a great city and the capital of the kingdom of al-Najashi. The Abyssinians have many cities and extensive settlements. The realm of the Najashi extends to the Abyssinian Sea, where there is a coastline with many cities facing the land of Yemen. Among these Abyssinian coastal cities are Zaila`, Dahlak and Badi`. These cities include a number of Muslims who, however, live under the *dhimma* of the Abyssinians. Between the Abyssinian coast and the town of Ghalafiqā on the Zabid coast of Yemen is a journey of three days to cross the expanse of the sea. It was from this spot that the Abyssinians crossed over to Yemen in the days of Dhu Nuwas*, the man who dug the ditch mentioned in the Qur'an. The ruler of Zabid at the present time is Ibrahim ibn Ziyad, ruler of al-Harmala. His ships go back and forth to the Abyssinian shore ferrying merchants with their merchandise. A truce exists between the two sides. This spot in the sea between the two shores, I mean the Yemeni and Abyssinian shores, is the narrowest crossing point.

878. Between the two coastlines there are a number of islands, one of which is known as the Island of Reason. In it is a spring of water known as the water of reason, which sailors use to replenish their water supplies. This water has a wonderful effect on the understanding and the intelligence, and one ancient philosopher has mentioned the effect of this water and its characteristics and cited its cause. In our work *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we made mention of this when discussing the experiments carried out by physicians and how they conducted their cures, both those who lived before the time of Islam and others who

were befriended by kings and caliphs after the coming of our sacred law. At this moment in time, Ibn Ziyad has asserted his authority over this island and has stationed his men on it.

879. In that sea also and adjoining Aden is an island called Socotra [*Suqutra*] from which the name Socotran cactus is derived. This cactus is found only on that island and is exported solely from it. Aristotle son of Nichomachus once wrote a letter to Alexander son of Philip when he marched on India urging him to take an interest in this island and to send to it a group of Greeks. These would settle in it for the sake of that cactus which goes into the make-up of medicines known as emetics [*iyarjat*] and others. Alexander accordingly dispatched to that island a group of Greeks with their families, mostly from the city of Stagyra [*Istaghir*], Aristotle's home-town, who sailed through the Red Sea, overcame the Indians living there and captured that island. The Indians had a huge idol on that island which was later transported, and stories too long to relate are told about this incident. The Greeks on the island multiplied, Alexander died and Christ appeared. Most inhabitants then embraced Christianity and remain Christian to the present day. There is no place on earth---and God knows best---in which there are Greeks who cherish their genealogies and where no Romans or others have mixed their blood with theirs except the inhabitants of that island. At present, Indian ships take shelter in this island. These are ships that attack Muslim shipping to China and India just as the Byzantines attack Muslim galleons in the Mediterranean near the coasts of al-Sham and Egypt. From Socotra is exported Socotran cactus and other medicinal plants. The island is the subject of wondrous tales and has unique plants and medications many of which we have mentioned in our earlier works.

880. As for other Abyssinians, mentioned above, who went deep into the Maghrib like the Zaghawa, Kawkaw, Qaraqir, Madida, Maris, Mabras, Malana, Qumati, Duwaila and Qurma, each of these groups, and others too, have a kingdom and a capital city. We described all the black races, their kinds, habitats and their position vis-a-vis the heavenly spheres, why their hair is wooly and their skins are dark, as also their histories and those of their kings, their strange manner of life and their complex genealogies in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, in the first chapter of a work in thirty chapters. We also dealt with the same subject in our work *al-Awsat*, which included material about them not mentioned in *Akhbar al-Zaman*. In this book we mention only such material which cannot be omitted from it or be allowed to go unmentioned.

881. Al-Mas`udi said: When `Amr ibn al-`As* had conquered Egypt, the caliph `Umar ibn al-Khattab wrote to him instructing him to wage war against the Nubians. So the Muslims invaded them but found them to be accurate marksmen. `Amr refused to conclude a truce with them until he was dismissed from his post as governor of Egypt and replaced by `Abdullah ibn Sa`d, who then concluded a truce with them. The terms of the truce stipulated that this king, who was a neighbor of the Muslims and known as the king of Maris and other Nubian lands, would provide a specific number of captives each year, to be captured from other Nubian kingdoms mentioned earlier in this book. Until the present day this annual conveyance of captives to the ruler of Egypt has become routine and these captives are known in Egypt and in Nubia as *baqt*.

882. The number of captives has been set at 365 which I reckon corresponds to the number of days in a year. Provided a truce is in force with the Nubians, the captives belong to the public treasury of the Muslims. The governor of Egypt, apart from the captives mentioned,

gets forty captives; his deputy who resides in Aswan, near Nubia, and who is in charge of taking possession of the *baqt*, receives twenty captives apart from the forty; the judge who resides in Aswan and attends the delivery of the captives with the governor of Aswan receives five captives apart from the twenty received by the governor; the twelve public notaries from the people of Aswan who attend the delivery of the captives with the governor receive twelve captives in accordance with the arrangements made in early Islamic times when the truce was first concluded between the Muslims and the Nubians.

883. The place where the *baqt* are delivered and is attended by the people named above and by intimates of the Nubian king is known as al-Qasr which is at a distance of six miles from the city of Aswan and near to Bilaq island. Bilaq is a town located in a place called Janadil, a mountainous and rocky place. This island town is surrounded by the Nile just as the Euphrates surrounds island towns situated between Rahbat Malik ibn Tawq and Hit, these being Nawusa, `Ana and Haditha. The town of Bilaq is inhabited by a large number of Muslims, and has a mosque pulpit and many palm trees on both its shores. This town is where Nubian ships and Muslim ships from Egypt and Aswan reach their final destination.

884. The city of Aswan is inhabited by Arabs of various tribes from Qahtan, Nizar, Rabi`a and Mudar together with some from Quraish. Most of them moved to Aswan from the Hijaz and elsewhere. The city has many palm trees, is fertile and beneficent. A date stone is planted in the earth and a palm tree springs up and its fruit can be consumed within two years. Their soil differs from the soil of Basra, Kufa or other palm tree lands, since palm trees in Basra do not grow from date stones but from cuttings and offshoots, that is, young palms. What grows from a date stone does not yield fruit nor can it be grafted.

885. The Muslims in Aswan have many estates which are located in Nubian territory, and for which they pay the land-tax to the king of Nubia. These estates were bought from the Nubians in early days, in the era of the Umayyads and `Abbasids. When the caliph al-Ma'mun was on a visit to Egypt, the king of Nubia sought the caliph's assistance against these people by means of a delegation he sent to Fustat. That delegation, speaking in the name of their king, asserted that some of his subjects and slaves had sold some estates to their neighbors, the people of Aswan. The delegation claimed that these estates belonged to the king and that the people who sold them were his slaves who owned no land but simply took possession of these estates in their capacity as slaves who worked the land. The caliph al-Ma'mun referred the matter to the judge of Aswan and to the city's elders and scholars, and the people of Aswan who had bought the estates realized that these estates were about to be taken away from them.

886. They then decided to play a trick on the Nubian king. They sent word to the Nubians from whom they had bought the estates to say, when summoned before the judge, that they did not admit to being the king's slaves. They instructed them to say: "Our way with our king is like yours, O Muslims. We owe him obedience and pledge not to oppose him. If you, Muslims, are the slaves of your king, and your property is his, then we too are like you." When the judge brought them together with the representative of the Nubian king, they spoke words like these or similar, as they had been instructed to speak. So the sale was declared legal, and is valid right until the present day, since they had refused to admit that they were the king's slaves. Thus, these estates in Nubia, in the land of Maris, passed by inheritance to succeeding generations. Accordingly, the Nubians living in that king's realm became of two kinds: one free and non-slave as described above,

and the other slave. These latter are the ones who inhabit territories other than the ones that border on Aswan, namely the land of Maris. 887. Emerald mines are located in the territory of the Upper Sa`id, in the district of the town of Quft, from which this mineral is exported. The region where emerald is found is called al-Kharba, with mountains and trails. The Bujja protect this place called al-Kharba and whoever comes to mine for emerald has to pay them protection money. The emerald mined from that locality comes in four varieties. The first is known as *murr* which is the best in quality and the most expensive. It is intensely green and with much water. Its green hue resembles the greenest kind of chard, a color that has no murkiness and does not incline to blackness. The second is called *bahri* (marine), so called because the kings of the sea in India, Sind, Zabij and China prize this kind of emerald and boast of its use. They wear it in their crowns, garlands, rings and bracelets. It was therefore called *bahri* for the reasons cited above, and is second in quality after the *murr*. Its green hue resembles the first kind and its water is like the young shoots of myrtle leaves when they first appear on the branches and tips of the myrtle tree.

888. The third kind is known as *maghribi*. This name, with its reference to the Maghrib, originates from the fact that the kings of the west, i.e. the Franks, Lombards, Andalusians, Galicians, Basques, Slavs, and Rus----even though most of them are situated in the north, between east and west, as already mentioned when we discussed the habitations of the progeny of Yafith son of Noah----these kings vie with one another in acquiring this variety of emerald just as the above mentioned kings of India and China vie in acquiring the type called *bahri*. The fourth kind is called *asamm*. This is the lowest in quality and the least expensive

because its water is scanty and its green hue is minimal. This kind varies in its hue between abundant green and only a little green.

889. In sum, these four kinds may be described, with respect to quality or excessive value, as those possessing most water, are most transparent, most green in hue and most free of black or yellow or other colors, as well as most free from spots of discoloration. If free from these blemishes, the emerald would be the best of its kind in quality and appearance. Some emeralds weigh up to five *mithqals* while others are as small as a grain of lentils where they are used in necklaces and other ornaments. The blemishes of emeralds are many: its purity, the boulders in which it is embedded and the white streaks which disfigure this gemstone and are found in it. All who know this gemstone well and study its characteristics agree that snakes, serpents and all other species of reptiles, if they look at a pure emerald, their eyes will overflow. A person bitten by a snake, if given two *daniqs** worth of pure emerald to drink will at once be safe from the poison reaching his abdomen. No species of snake will be found near the emerald mines or territory.

890. The emerald is a soft and pliable stone which turns to lime if exposed to fire. The Greek kings, and the Roman kings who followed them, had a high regard for this gemstone, preferring it to all other gems because of its strange characteristics, many benefits, and light weight, and thus unlike all other mined gems. Of the four kinds, most are found in veins in the ground. The one most sought after is the gem which is free from curvature or holes, straight in line and is equal in length and roundedness. The most inferior kind is the one that is detached in its mine from dirt or picked up from mud. This gemstone may also be found on the surface of the earth in valleys or mountains or in the lowlands or highlands of its territory. These surface gemstones are of the type called *maghribi* or *asamm*, mentioned above.

891. A variety of emerald is also imported from India, from the region of Sindan, and from near Kanbaya in the kingdom of the Ballahara, ruler of Mankir, mentioned above. This kind of emerald is close to what we have described in its luminosity, its green hue and its glow.

However, it is a hard stone, harder than what we described above and heavier than the varieties already mentioned. Only an experienced and perceptive person or a skillful expert can distinguish the Indian variety from the four other varieties described earlier. This Indian kind is known to dealers in gemstones as *makki*, because it is carried from India to Aden and other towns on the Yemeni coast, and thence to Mecca. So it became known by that name and acquired the appellation we mentioned.

892. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we treated at length the subject of transparent gemstones and described their mines in great detail and clarity. I once encountered in the Sa`id of Egypt a group of intelligent people who possessed knowledge of this gemstone, i.e. emerald, and its mines, who told me that emerald decreases and increases at certain seasons of the year depending on the power of the elements in the winds and the blowing of one of the four kinds of wind. Its green hue and its glowing radiance grow more intense at the start of a month and as moonlight increases. Likewise, I found in works written by experts on minerals, both gemstones and others, that white and yellow sulfur and also other kinds of sulfur increase in their mines in years when lightening and thunderbolts are frequent and severe. We already mentioned earlier on in this work how camphor in the land of Fansur and elsewhere in India increases in years when there are frequent thunderbolts, thunder and lightning. Were it not that one who writes at great length is called a “wood-cutter by night”; were it not that conciseness requires merely a passing but significant reference to a

subject, and an explicit allusion to what lies deep in the mind; and were it not that eloquence is defined as “making things clear in the briefest possible words”, I would have written at far greater length about this topic.

893. Between the place known as al-Kharba, where is found the emerald mine, and the nearest areas of settlement is a seven-day journey. These settled regions are Quft, Qus and other towns in the Egyptian Sa`id. The town of Qus overlooks the Nile. Between the Nile and Quft is a distance of two miles and both Quft and Qus have wondrous histories as to how they were first built and their history in the days of the Copts. However, the town of Quft is nowadays falling into ruin whereas Qus is more built up and more populated. The valley of the Bujja, who own the emerald mine, is connected in its settlements with the territory of `Allaqi, the gold mine, as mentioned earlier on in this chapter. Between `Allaqi and the Nile is fifteen travel stations. The water of the people of `Allaqi is rain water but they also obtain water from a spring flowing in the center of `Allaqi. The nearest urban area to it is the city of Aswan from which the `Allaqis obtain provisions. The Nubians and their caravans trade continuously with Aswan and the people of Aswan are intermingled with the Nubians.

894. Al-Mas`udi said: As for the region called al-Wahat (oases) which is located between Fustat and Alexandria, the Sa`id of Egypt, the Maghrib and the land of the Abyssinians from among the Nubians and others, we related in our earlier works some highlights of its history, the styles of its buildings and the characteristics of its soil. In this region one finds glassy sulfates and vitriol and acidic and other kinds of springs. The governor of al-Wahat at present, i.e. the year 332, is a man from Lawata called `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan but he is Marwanid in sentiment. He rides out with thousands of troops mounted on horses or

camels. Between him and the Abyssinians is a journey of six days, and the same distance separates him from the other settled regions we mentioned.

895. In his [i.e. Marwan's] region there exist certain marvels and peculiar features. It is a region that is self-supporting, unconnected to any other and needing no other. From his land are carried dates, raisins and grapes. I saw a companion of that governor who resided in al-Wahat waiting at the door of al-Ikhshid Muhammad ibn Tughj. This was in the year 330 [941-2]. I asked him many questions about the news from his country and what I needed to learn about the peculiar features of his land. This was my normal practice at all times with all the other people I met whose lands I was unable to visit. This man informed me about the glassy sulfate and kinds of vitriol in his land, the exports from that land, the acidic springs in it and the various types of water and their diverse tastes.

896. The author of the *Logic* stated that there exist in certain localities acid springs whose water is used instead of vinegar, and mentioned the places where such bitter springs may be found, adding that the bitterness of the water is so intense that it renders bitter whatever is mingled with it. He further asserted that the reason for the difference in taste of these waters lies in different soils such as vitriolic and other dark grey and igneous soils. He also mentioned the types of food in the land of Sicily, mentioned above, which when mixed with water, produce different tastes depending upon their differences and number. There are eight tastes: sweet, greasy, sugary, salty, acidic, bitter, astringent and smarting. People have disagreed about this topic: some say there are seven kinds of taste while others say six. Most however cite their number as eight, as we have done.

897. Earlier authors have expressed diverse views regarding the effects of water. For instance, sweet water, if warm, is nourishing and fattening. If used externally and internally as needed, it purifies the body. If used excessively, it causes body members to sag and grow weak. Cold water tightens body members and drives away thirst but excessive use numbs the body and kills it. Salty water is beneficial in blockages of the liver and spleen and sulfurous water is good for old wounds and ulcers and for itching. Boric is good for itching and for scabies while tar water is good for backbone and joint pains. Iron water is beneficial for flaccid intestines and interior veins, while brass water is good for the moistness and humidity found in the body and the head. Gypsum water contracts the stomach, shrivels it and shrinks it. Water of vitriol staunches the blood and seawater is good for leprosy. Some people claim that if drunk in small quantities with oil of almonds, seawater is good for corrupt humors but it also causes a terrible weakening of vision. It is also said that the healthiest water for bodies is the white and sparkling kind that issues from clay mountains from where the sun rises and sets, and quickly accommodates itself to both heat and cold. People have expressed many kinds of views regarding the types of water, their description, benefits and harm. This present book is not the appropriate place to discuss these topics. It is just that the drift of writing led us to mention this topic and our discussion of various subjects steered us towards making mention of it.

898. All that we have related regarding that part of the land of Abyssinia which lies to the west of Yemen, Jidda, and Hijaz and borders the Red Sea is a land burnt by the sun and infertile in its soil. Nothing is carried from its coastline except the tortoise shells and panthers mentioned earlier. Likewise, the coastline of al-Shihr and al-Ahqaf, from Hadramawt to Aden, is a land which offers no prosperity

to its people and from where nothing is exported nowadays save the incense called *kundur*. That sea is connected to the Red Sea and is to the right of the Indian Sea though the waters are all connected. Of all the seas and gulfs we have mentioned which the Abyssinian Sea enfolds, none is harder to navigate, higher in waves, more malodorous, more denuded of all good things or less beneficial in its depths or on its surface, than the Red Sea. Ships will cross all other parts of the Abyssinian Sea and sail through them by day and night except the Red Sea. Ships will cross it in the daytime but when night falls they drop anchor at certain well known places just like celebrated travelling stations and famous resting lodges on land. This is due to its great waves, its darkness and its desolation.

899. Nor is the Red Sea anything like other seas connected to it such as the seas of India and China. In fact, it is the very opposite. For in the depths of these other seas are found pearls and in their mountains are found gems and mines of gold, silver and white (*qala`i*) lead. In the mouths of their animals is found ivory. Their plant life includes ebony, bamboo, alkanna, campeche, teak, aloeswood, camphor trees, nutmeg, carnation, sandalwood and all sorts of spices, perfumes and amber. The birds of this region include white and green parrots (*babaghi*), singular *babagha*, and various kinds of peacocks, diverse in shape and size, some of which are as large as an ostrich. Among the crawling animals of India is the civet that resembles the cat in Muslim lands. These are numerous and spotted like cats. Most of what their udders produce is a well-known scent called civet milk, a marvelous sort of perfume. There is also the sweat that resembles musk which appears at a certain time of year on the foreheads and heads of elephants.

900. Indians pay close attention to the season of the year when this scent appears. They remove it and include it in their perfumed creams,

making these the most expensive and most highly treasured of perfumes, used by kings and the elite for a variety of beneficial purposes. These include the fineness of the scent itself and its use as a skin ointment, transcending all their other perfumes. They also add the effects of this scent on a human being when he smells it or uses it, such as, for instance, an increase in sexual appetite among both men and women, an increased eagerness for copulation, excitement of carnal desire, a heightened enjoyment of music, and a greater energy and cheerfulness. Many courageous Indian combatants and warriors use this ointment when facing their enemy in battle because doing so in their view encourages the heart and soul to advance headlong into the fight. Most of this sweat appears on the foreheads of elephants at a season of the year when they are gripped by sexual desire and become very agitated. When in this state, their minders and guides run away since the elephants cannot distinguish between the people they know from those they do not. When an elephant is in such a state, it takes to the valleys, mountains and forests, straying far from their home and normal habitat. If the elephant meets with a rhino, the rhino will then run away from the elephant and abandon its normal habitat since an elephant gripped by that condition is like a drunkard, with no rational discernment, and has no fear of a rhino or anything else whom it used to fear before. When that season of the year passes away and the elephant is made to return, it heads back to its home from as far away as a month's journey or more, though still slightly drunk. The elephant will remain sick for a period lasting as long as its period of agitation. This is the case with great elephant males known for their daring and audacity.

902. There is also the subject of musk deer, referred to earlier in this work, and its curious and beneficial qualities which we omitted to mention at length, though what we did mention suffices as a summary.

The Indians have much to say about the appearance of this kind of scent when an elephant is in the above-mentioned condition as also the difference between the elephant and all other beasts of burden. They assert that the elephant panics when it comes to drink from streams or rivers if it finds the water clear and that this makes the elephant nervous and distressed, refusing to drink from clear water. It is said that the same applies to most horses. If they come to drink and find the water clear they stir it with their legs until it turns murky and then drink it. Thus, horses are like elephants in this regard and unlike all other animals. This, it is claimed, is because when they see their images on the surface of the water when that water is clear and transparent, they intend, perhaps, to remove these images by stirring the water with their legs so that their distressed images would disappear. Most camels too, it is said, have this same habit. But different explanations are also cited. Thus large-sized animals, when they see their images reflected on the transparent surface of the water, are impressed by their own size and beauty and how much more handsome they are than lesser animals. But no animal apart from the horse, camel and elephant does what they do. 903. It is also asserted that the elephant, with its great size, its sensitive feelings, its sharp intellect, its excellent discernment, its ability to distinguish friend from foe among humans and others, and its receptivity to training will refrain from coming near a female when pregnant, as is the case with male and female camels. No other beast of burden, except the elephant and the camel, will refrain from copulation with a pregnant female. This is a topic which, were we to cover it fully and in detail, would make this work too long and exceed the bounds of brevity and conciseness. In our *Akhbar al-Zaman* and our other books we dealt with this subject in full.

904. Let us now turn to describe certain races from the progeny of Yafith son of Noah since we have in earlier sections of this work already made mention of many nations with their various skin colors, diverse habitats and sundry ways of life. Success comes from God.

Chapter 34

An account of the Slavs, their homelands, a history of their kings and the dispersal of their groups

905. Al-Mas`udi said: The Slavs (*Saqaliba*)* are the progeny of Madhai son of Yafith son of Noah. All Slav races are descended from him and all their genealogies refer back to him. This is the view of the many scholars who are experts in this field. The Slav homelands are in the north and extend all the way until they border on the Maghrib. They are of different national groups and wage war on one another and have their own kings. Some have submitted to Christianity and to the Jacobite sect while others have neither revealed scripture nor sacred law, being pagans who know nothing of laws. These latter are of many races. One race is known as Walitaba. These were in ancient times the royal dynasty, and their king was called Majik. All other groups of Slavs were subject to them because royalty belonged to them and their kings submitted to them.

906. Next to this race of Slavs is one called Asturana and their king nowadays is called Basqlabij. Another race is called Dulaba and their current king is called Wanj Slav. Then there is a race called Namjin and their king is called Gharand. This is the bravest of the Slav races and the most skilled horsemen. Another race is called Manabin and their king is called Ratimir. Next is a race called Sarbin [Serbian] a race held in awe by the Slavs for reasons and explanations too long to mention. They are not restrained by any religion that might bind them. Next is a race called Murawa [Moravian] then a race called Kharwatin [Croatian] then

one called Sasin, then one called Khashanin then one called Baranijabin. The names of some of the kings given above are well known titles. The race known as Sarbin burn themselves when one of their kings or chiefs die and they burn his mounts. They have certain customs that resemble the customs of the Indians.

907. In earlier portions of this book we mentioned the Slavs in passing when discussing the Caucasus and Khazar and stated that in the land of the Khazars there are numerous Slavs and Rus who burn themselves. This race of Slavs and others reside nearer to the east and further from the west.

908. The foremost Slav king is the king of Aldair. He possesses wide cities and many settlements, armies and subjects. Muslim merchants travel to his capital city with all sorts of merchandise. Next to this king of the Slavs comes the king of al-Afragh who has a gold mine, many cities and settled areas, and many armies and subjects. He wages war against the Byzantines, the Franks, the Bazkard and other nations, and wars are continuous among them. Next to this king of the Slavs comes the king of the Turks. These are the most handsome, most numerous and most courageous of the Slavs. There are numerous Slav races and nations and this book cannot begin to describe all their groups and lines of descent.

909. We have already made mention of the king to whom the Slav kings of old used to pay homage namely, Majik the king of Walitaba. This race of Slavs is one of their most prominent races and regarded by them in very high esteem, and they held precedence among them. Then disputes and divisions arose among them, their polity collapsed, each race became an independent entity and each set up their own king, as already reported about their kings. We have mentioned in general and in

detail much of their history in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*.

Chapter 35

An account of the Franks and Galicians and their kings and other relevant topics

910. There is no disagreement among scholars of religious communities that the Franks [*al-Ifranj*], Slavs, Lombards, Spaniards, Yajuj and Majuj, Turks, Khazar, Burjan, Alans, Galicians and other races we have mentioned who settled in the north are all the progeny of Yafith son of Noah. Yafith was the youngest of Noah's children. The Franks are the most valiant among them, the most invincible, the most numerous, the widest in realm, the most numerous in cities, the most politically stable and the most submissive and obedient to their kings. However, the Galicians are more valiant than they and more vicious in combat such that a single Galician warrior can take on several Franks.

911. All Franks are united behind a single king and there is no dispute among them about this matter and no factionalism. The name of their capital at the present time is Paris [*Bariza*], a great city. They have about one hundred and fifty other cities, not counting large settlements and agricultural districts. The first Frankish possession in the sea before the coming of Islam was the island of Rhodes which we already mentioned as an island facing Alexandria and where there is now a Byzantine ship building yard. The Franks had also held the island of Crete [*Iqritish*] but the Muslims have conquered that island and have settled in it until the present time.

912. North Africa and Sicily also had once belonged to the Franks. We have mentioned these islands above, and wrote also about the island known as the Volcano, a lofty peak (*atama*) from which are spewed fiery objects as large as a headless human body. These objects rise up

into the air then fall into the sea where they float on the surface of the water. These are the stones used to erase writing from tablets. They are white cubes with holes resembling a honeycomb or the hives of small hornets. These peaks are known as the peaks of Sicily. On this island of Sicily is the tomb of the philosopher Porphyry [*Farfuris*] who is the author of the book called *Isagoge*, or introduction to logic, a book known to be by this author. We have also mentioned other peaks on earth such as the peak in the valley of Barahut, in Hadramawt and the land of Shihr, the peak of the land of Zabij in the China Sea and the peak of the land of Asak between Faris and al-Ahwaz, in the province of the city of Arrajan, in the land of Faris. This latter peak is one whose fire can be seen from a distance of twenty *farsakhs* at night and is well known in the land of Islam. By *atama* (peak) we mean a fountain of fire that issues from the ground.

913. In this book, we have not dealt with the subject of sulfurous or vitriolic hot springs nor the hot springs where fire rises from its waters like the hot spring in the land of Masabadan, in the territory of Arywajan and Sirawan, and called Numan. This is a hot spring in the midst of whose water fire can be seen. It is a marvel and water is prevented from accessing it because of the fire that appears on its surface which water itself cannot quench or repel, so formidable is the fire and so exceedingly powerful is its flame. It is one of the wonders of the world. We have not mentioned this topic because we have already discussed the causes of all these phenomena in our earlier works. We also discussed the subject of the different benefits of water in earlier portions of this work in general terms or by alluding to them when speaking of the oases of Egypt, though all these subjects were covered in detail in our earlier books.

914. Al-Mas`udi said: In a book that fell into my hands in Fustat, in Egypt, in the year 336 [947-8], which Ghodmar the bishop of Gironde [*Jarunda*], a Frankish city, had presented to al-Hakam ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn `Abdallah ibn Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Hakam ibn Hisham ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn Mu`awiya ibn Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan ibn al-Hakam, the heir apparent to his father, `Abd al-Rahman, the ruler of al-Andalus at this time, and addressed in his realm as Commander of the Believers----I found that the first Frankish king was called Clovis [*Quluduwiya*]. He was a Magian but was converted to Christianity by his wife, called Clotilde [*Ghurutild*].

915. Clovis was succeeded by his son Theodoric(?) (*Ludhriq*) who was succeeded by Dagobert [*Daqubart*] then by his son Ludhriq then by his brother Carloman [*Qarluman*] then by his son Carl [*Qarlu*] then by his son Pepin [*Babin*] then by his son Carl who reigned for twenty-six years. He was a contemporary of al-Hakam, ruler of al-Andalus. Thereafter, his sons quarreled and clashed to the point where the Franks were almost wiped out because of them. Lewis [*Ludhwiq*] son of Carl then became their king, reigning for twenty-eight years and six months. It was he who came to Tortosa [*Turtusha*] and besieged it.

916. He was succeeded by Carl son of Lewis. It was he who made peace with Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Hakam ibn Hisham ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn Mu`awiya ibn Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. Muhammad was addressed as the Imam [i.e. caliph]. He reigned for thirty-nine years and six months. Next came his son Lewis who reigned for six years. A rebellion against him took place led by a Frankish commander called *Qumis* [Comes/Count] who ruled the Franks for eight years. It was he who made a seven-year peace with the Magians [i.e. Vikings] to keep away from his land in return for six

hundred *ratls** of gold and six hundred of silver which the ruler of the Franks had to pay as tribute to them. Next came Carl son of Taqwira [sic] for four years, then another Carl for thirty-one years and three months. Next came Lewis IV son of Carl, king of the Franks at this time, which is the year 336. He has already reigned ten years up till now as reported to us of his news.

917. Al-Mas`udi said: The most fierce of the neighboring nations of al-Andalus are the Galicians. The Franks wage war against them but the Galicians are more violent. `Abd al-Rahman son of Muhammad, the present ruler of al-Andalus, once had a vizier, from among the progeny of his father, called Ahmad ibn Ishaq. `Abd al-Rahman had him arrested for having transgressed the religious law and thus deserved punishment. `Abd al-Rahman then executed him. This vizier had a son called Umayya who lived in a frontier city of al-Andalus called Santarem [*Shantarin*]. When he learnt what had been done to his brother he rebelled against `Abd al-Rahman and escaped to the realm of Ramiro, [*Rudhmir*] king of the Galicians, whom he helped against the Muslims and to whom he revealed their weak points.

918. One day, Umayya went out of the city to hunt in one of his parks. His hirelings meanwhile took over the city and prevented him from returning to it and wrote to `Abd al-Rahman. So Umayya, the brother of the executed vizier, went and joined Ramiro, who made him an intimate of his and appointed him as a vizier, and he became a courtier. `Abd al-Rahman, ruler of al-Andalus, then invaded Zamora [*Sammura*], capital of the kingdom of Galicia. We described above its construction and its walls when discussing reports about the seas and the wonders surrounding them and the various nations living in their vicinity. `Abd al-Rahman led an army of more than one hundred thousand men. The battle between him and Ramiro took place in the month of Shawwal in

the year 327, three days after the solar eclipse [i.e. July, 939] which occurred in that month. The Muslims were victorious at first. When the Galicians found themselves under siege and driven inside their city, they rallied. When the Muslims crossed the trench, they killed fifty thousand Muslims. It is said that Umayya was the one who prevented Ramiro from pursuing the Muslim survivors, cautioning him against an ambush and tempting him with the monies, equipment and treasuries left behind in the Muslim camp. Were it not for this, the entire Muslim force would have been wiped out.

919. Umayya then sought safe-conduct from `Abd al-Rahman and escaped from Ramiro. `Abd al-Rahman received him well. Following that battle `Abd al-Rahman, the ruler of Andalus, had sent out armies under various generals against the Galicians and several battles ensued during which the number of Galician dead was double that of the Muslims at the earlier battle. Thereafter the Muslims have had the upper hand against them right until the present time. Ramiro is still the king of the Galicians until now, which is the year 336. The king before him was called Ordoño [*Urdun*] and, before him, Alfonso [*Adfunash*]. Both the Franks and Galicians are Christians of the Mulkiyya* sect.

Chapter 36

An account of the Lombards and their kings

920. We have mentioned the Lombards above and stated that they are from the progeny of Yafith son of Noah. Their lands border on the west and their realm lies in the north. They possess many islands with numerous populations. They are a very valiant and unassailable nation, and have many cities but are united under a single king. The title of their kings at all times is “duces” [*adakis*] and their great and capital city is Benevento [*Banabant*], traversed by a great river and split into two quarters. This river is one of the rivers of the world known for its

great size and its wonders and called Sabato [*Saibut*]. It has been mentioned by a number of ancient authorities who concerned themselves with this subject.

921. The Muslims who were their neighbors in al-Andalus and the Maghrib had conquered many of their towns such as Bari, Taranto, Sardagna [*Sardania*] and other major towns in which Muslims settled for some time. The Lombards however rallied and once again attacked the Muslims in these towns and expelled them after many wars. The towns mentioned above are now, i.e. the year 336, in the hands of the Lombards.

922. Al-Mas`udi said: The Galicians, Franks, Slavs, Lombards and other nations mentioned above live in adjacent homelands and most are at war with the Andalusians. The ruler of al-Andalus at present possesses great power and impregnability as already mentioned when discussing his line of descent and history. `Abd al-Rahman ibn Mu`awiya ibn Hisham had travelled to al-Andalus in the early days of the `Abbasid dynasty and many tales are told of how he arrived in al-Andalus. Cordoba [*Qurtuba*], as already mentioned, is the capital of the Andalusian kingdom. They have many cities and broad, settled and connected regions with frontier posts on the borders of their land. It may happen that neighboring nations from the progeny of Yafith such as the Galicians, Burgundians, Franks and others, unite against them. The ruler of al-Andalus at present commands a hundred thousand troops and is unassailable with his fighting men, wealth, horses and weaponry. Only God is everlasting.

Chapter 37

An account of `Ad and its kings

923. Some scholars who concern themselves with world history assert that, after Noah, kingship first became established in First `Ad, before

all other Arab kingdoms. The proof of this comes from the words of the Almighty: {And He who destroyed First `Ad}. This proves their precedence and that there was a second `Ad. God spoke about their kingship and about their cruel despotism and what they built of monumental structures which across the passage of time have been called *`Adiyya*. God also spoke about his prophet Hud who addressed `Ad as follows: {Do you build on every height a marvelous mansion?}. Thus, according to that group of scholars, `Ad was the first kingdom on earth after God had destroyed the unbelievers among the people of Noah, as is clear from the Qur'anic verse: {Remember how He made you his deputies following the people of Noah}.

924. These `Ad people were as tall as palm trees and their lifespans were equally long. Their spirit was ardent and their hearts were cruel. No nation on earth was more violent, more efficacious, more rational or more imaginative than they. Death did not affect their bodies because of the powerful effects of nature and what they had been granted by way of excessive and perfect constitution and form, as related by the Almighty.

925. `Ad was a man of great might and awe-inspiring appearance. He is `Ad ibn `Us ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Nuh. He was a moon worshipper. It is said that he lived to see four thousand direct descendants and that he married a thousand wives. His land adjoined the Yemen, being the territory of al-Ahqaf and Suhar, that is to say from Oman to Hadramawt as mentioned earlier in this and our other books. Some historians who specialize in Arab history claim that when `Ad had attained middle age and saw children and grandchildren and lived to witness eight generations of his progeny and their great number, together with the firm establishment of kingship and general stability, his good deeds then spread to all people, he received guests and treated them well, his

affairs were orderly and he prospered. He lived for a thousand and two hundred years and then died.

926. The king after him was his eldest son Shadid ibn `Ad who reigned for 580 years though other dates are also mentioned. Next came his brother Shaddad ibn `Ad who reigned for 900 years. It is said that he gained mastery over all the kingdoms of the world. It was he who built the city of Iram of the columns, as already mentioned in our earlier books when discussing that city, and how people disputed concerning its nature and substance, and in which country it is located. This is Second `Ad mentioned by the Almighty in the verse: {Have you not seen what your Lord has done to `Ad, Iram of the columns?}. This was the most violent of all nations.

927. Shaddad ibn `Ad travelled throughout the earth and displayed great might in the kingdoms of India and elsewhere in the kingdoms of east and west, waging many wars which we have refrained to mention since we bound ourselves to be concise. We therefore rely on the detailed accounts we gave of that history in our work *Akhbar al-Zaman*. Later in this work we shall relate in general terms the history of the people of `Ad and their prophet Hud when we come to mention the dispersal of mankind in Babylon and the diffusion of genealogies together with the verses recited relative to these events.

928. As for the disputes among people, ancient and modern, regarding the cause of their huge bodies and long lifespans, we discussed this topic in our two books called *al-Ru'us al-Sab'iyya fi al-Siyasa al-Mulukiyya* and *Kitab al-Zulaf*. In these works, we explained the reason why wild beasts and camels are not found in al-Andalus and what this land generates by way of precious stones as also plant life and minerals, and what is to be found in the land of Galicia, to which the Galician kingdom, discussed above, is linked. The Galicians are the most

formidable enemies of the people of al-Andalus and the most violent towards their neighbors. Next to them in power comes a nation with a great kingdom called the Basques [*Washkansh*], as mentioned above in this work and in our other works that preceded this one.

Chapter 38

An account of Thamud and its kings, and of Salih its prophet

929. Al-Mas`udi said: Earlier on in this work we briefly mentioned Thamud and its prophet Salih, though in our other works we dealt with this topic in detail. The realm of Thamud ibn Ghathir ibn Aram ibn Sam ibn Nuh extended from al-Sham to the Hijaz and all the way to the Abyssinian Sea. Their habitations in Fajj al-Naqah and their houses are still visible today and carved in the mountains. Their traces and vestiges are still evident and lie on the pilgrimage road for pilgrims coming from al-Sham, near Wadi al-Qura. Their houses are carved in the rocks and their doors are small. Their living areas are about the same as ours today which means that their bodies resembled ours. This disproves what the *qussas* (popular story-tellers) relate about the huge size of their bodies, for these people are not like `Ad whose habitations and places of residence and buildings in the land of al-Shihr indicate the huge size of their bodies.

930. The reign of the first of their kings lasted two hundred years. He was Ghathir ibn Aram ibn Thamud ibn Ghathir ibn `Aws ibn Aram ibn Sam ibn Nuh. Succeeding him was Junda` ibn `Amr ibn al-Dhakil ibn Aram ibn Thamud ibn Ghathir ibn Aram ibn Sam ibn Nuh who reigned for 290 years until his death. This Junda` died some forty years after the appearance of the prophet Salih, as mentioned above, making the total years of the reign of king Junda` 327 years. These are the kings of Thamud.

931. God sent Salih as a prophet to the Thamud while still a youth and during an interval between prophets. Thus, about a hundred years separated him from the prophet Hud. Salih called Thamud to the worship of God. Their king was then Junda` ibn `Amr, as mentioned above. Only a few of his people answered the call of Salih. As Salih grew older so his people drew further away from true faith. When he kept repeating his warnings and exhortations, his promises and threats, they asked him for miracles and to show them wonders in order to prevent him from preaching to them and stop him from addressing them.

932. One day, Salih attended a feast day of his people on which they brought out their idols. His people were camel riders so, following agreement among themselves, they asked him for a sign that resembled their possessions, i.e. demanding the same sort of commodity as that which they owned. One of their leaders said to Salih: "O Salih, if you are truthful in what you tell us and that you are speaking in the name of your lord, bring out for us a she camel from this rock. Let it have beautiful eyes, be black, pregnant, near to delivery, intensely dark, long-haired, long-necked, with hair over its forehead, and furry." Salih called on his lord for help and the rock began to fidget and sounds of moaning and longing issued from it. Then after prolonged labor like that of a woman giving birth, the rock split open and a she camel emerged having the same traits they had demanded. Following it from the rock was a newly born camel resembling it in appearance and the two began actively to graze on pasture and to look for water and grassland. Some who were present then believed. The leader who had asked Salih for a miracle was Junda` ibn `Amr.

933. The she camel remained with them and they would milk it and it would produce enough milk to satisfy the entire tribe of Thamud, but it

bothered them with its pasturing and drinking. Among the Thamud were two women known for their beauty. They were visited by two Thamud men called Qudar ibn Salif and Misda` ibn Mu`arrij. The two women were called `Unaiza bint Ghanam and Saduf bint al-Majaba. Saduf said: "Had we had water today we would not give you wine to drink, but this is the day when the she camel comes to water and there is no way we can drink." `Unaiza said: "If only some men were to rid us of that she camel! After all, is it not a mere camel?" Qudar said: "O Saduf, if I were to rid you of the she camel what will you give me in return?" "I will offer myself to you. Can anything prevent this?" she answered. Her companion gave a similar answer to the two men who had said: "Give us wine to drink." They drank till they were drunk, then went out and tempted seven others. These are the group of nine mentioned in the Qur'an as being those who {corrupt the earth and do not mend their ways}. They headed towards the path taken by the she camel as it came forward and Qudar struck its tendon with his sword and hamstrung it. Misda` followed suit and shot the other tendon with an arrow so the she camel collapsed on its face. Qudar approached its breast and stabbed it while its young sought refuge behind a rock where some of them pursued and killed it. They then distributed the meat of the she camel.

934. When Salih came and saw what they had done he threatened them with torment. This happened on a Wednesday so they said to him in mockery: "O Salih, when will this torment from your God that you promised us take place?" Salih answered: "On the morning of Mu`nis, that is Thursday, your faces will turn yellow. On `Aruba, they will become red. On Shiyar they will turn black. The torment will fall upon you the following morning." Al-Mas`udi said: Later on in this book we

shall mention the names of the days of the week and of the months in their language.

935. The nine men then decided to kill Salih, saying: “If he is telling the truth, we would have killed him first before he kills us. If he is a liar, we would make him follow his she camel to death.” So they came to him by night but the angels came between him and them, and pelted them with stones, and God made him unassailable. When morning came, they looked and found their faces had turned yellow, like saffron, as he had promised them. Their color was changed and their bodies were transformed and people grew certain that the threat was real and torment was imminent. On Sunday eve, Salih departed with some believers and came to the site of the city of Ramla in Palestine. The torment fell upon them on Sunday.

936. Some of those who believed in Salih recited the following verses:

*O men of the tribe of `Atid,
I see your faces as if dyed with saffron.
On the day of `Aruba the yellow faces turned red,
Calling “O for a man of strength and experience!”
On the day of Shiyar faces from the two clans turned black,
Before the rising of the sun.
When dawn first broke, a scream came upon them,
Bringing evil upon all of them.*

Regarding Thamud, Habab ibn `Amr, a man of faith who had deserted them and left their homeland, recited the following verses:

*Thamud was a tribe of power and virtue:
No neighbor of theirs ever suffered injustice.
But they killed a she camel that belonged to their God,
And one they had vowed to God, so their act was sacrilegious.*

937. When in this book we come to speak of the dispersal of mankind in Babylon we shall mention in general some reports about Thamud and how mankind and their languages dispersed, and what each nation said about this event in verse, according to the language that God gave to each, though we have explained all this in great detail in our two earlier works *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, God willing.

Chapter 39

An account of Mecca, its history, the building of the Ka`ba, and who was successively in charge of it, such as Jurhum and others, and matters relevant thereto

938. When Abraham made his son Isma`il settle in Mecca with his mother Hajar and prayed to God to guard over them as related by God and how He had made him reside {in a valley where no vegetation grows}, the site of the Ka`ba was a red mound. Abraham ordered Hajar to build a booth of reeds to serve as a house and shelter. There followed the well-known incident of the thirst suffered by Isma`il and Hajar until God brought forth for them the well of Zamzam. God also caused drought to afflict the region of al-Shihr and Yemen so that the Amalekites [*`Amaliq*] and Jurhum and the remnants of `Ad in that land dispersed across the earth.

939. The Amalekites headed towards Tihama in search of water, pasturage and a fertile homeland, led by al-Samaida` ibn Hubar ibn Lawi ibn Qaitur ibn Karkar ibn Haid. As the Karkar tribe marched steadily forward, lacking water and pasturage and becoming progressively more exhausted, al-Samaida` ibn Hubar recited some verses in the *rajaz* meter urging them on, and comforting them in their hardship, as follows:

*March forward in the land, O tribe of Karkar,
For I see the times have turned injurious.*

*Jurhum, the wise tribe of Qahtan, have departed,
Worn out by mutual violence.*

940. When their scouts, who were in the vanguard, approached the valley of Mecca seeking water, they saw birds ascending and descending so they entered into the valley and saw the booth atop the red mound in which lived Hajar the mother of Isma`il. She had erected some stones around the water to prevent it from flowing away. A saying reported from the Prophet on this subject goes as follows: “May God have mercy on our mother Hajar! Were it not for her tenacity in preventing the water of Zamzam from flowing away by surrounding it with stones, the water would have run into the ground.” The scouts greeted her and asked her permission to dismount and drink from the water. She was cheered by their company and permitted them to dismount. They in turn sent word about the water to their families trekking behind them. Thus, they settled in the valley, feeling secure, and rejoicing at finding water, at the lights of prophecy shining in that valley, and at the site of the Sacred House. Thus Isma`il grew into manhood and spoke Arabic, unlike the language of his father. In this book and in others we mentioned what people, both from Qahtan and from Nizar, said about this subject.

941. Isma`il married al-Jada’ bint Sa`d the Amalekite. Abraham had asked Sarah’s permission to visit Isma`il and, having obtained it, came to Mecca. Isma`il was out hunting and herding with his mother Hajar. So Abraham greeted al-Jada’ the wife of Isma`il but she did not return his greeting. He asked: “Can I dismount and ask for hospitality?” “No, by God,” she answered. “What is the master of the house doing?” he asked. “He is absent,” she answered. He said: “When he returns, tell him that Abraham, having come to ask about you and your mother, says to you ‘Replace the threshold of your house with another’”. Abraham

then headed back at once to al-Sham. When Isma`il and his mother Hajar came back, and looked at the valley glowing with light and with the sheep trailing behind them, he asked his Amalekite wife: "Did anything happen after I left you?" "Yes," she responded, "An old man passed by". She then recounted the story. He said: "That was my father, friend of the All-Merciful. He commands me to divorce you, so go back to your family. There is no good in you."

942. When the tribe of Jurhum heard that the tribe of Karkar had settled in the valley, how prosperous they were and how much milk their animals were producing while they themselves were experiencing drought, they headed to Mecca, led by al-Harith ibn Mudad ibn `Amr ibn Sa`id ibn al-Raqib ibn Zalim ibn Hini ibn Nabt ibn Jurhum.

Reaching the valley, they settled in Mecca alongside Isma`il and the earlier Amalekites of the Karkar tribe. Concerning the Karkar tribe some say they were Amalekites, some from Jurhum but the former attribution is better attested. Isma`il then married as his second wife Sama bint Muhalhil ibn Sa`d ibn `Awf ibn Hini ibn Nabt.

943. Abraham again sought permission from Sara to visit Isma`il but she in her jealousy made him swear that upon arrival he would not dismount. People disagree as to what he was mounted upon. Some say he was mounted on *Buraq**, some say on a female donkey and some mention other animals. When Abraham arrived at the valley, he greeted the Jurhum wife of Isma`il and she returned his greeting, bidding him welcome and treating him most graciously. When he asked her about Isma`il and Hajar, she told him where they were and that they were herding sheep, then invited him to dismount but he refused. It is said that Hajar had by then died, aged ninety. The Jurhum woman insisted that Abraham dismount but he again refused. So she offered him milk and slices of meat from the hunt, which he blessed. She carried a stone

which was in the house and he leaned down in the saddle as she placed it under his right foot. She then combed his hair and greased it. Moving the stone to his left side, he put his left foot on the stone and inclined his head towards her and she combed and greased the other side. His two feet left their traces on that stone in their right and left order, as described. When the Jurhum woman saw this, she was awed by it. This stone is in fact the Station (*Maqam*) of Abraham. Abraham then said to her: "Raise this stone for it shall have great importance and fame later on." He added: "When Isma`il returns, tell him that Abraham greets you and tells you to keep the threshold of your house for it is indeed an excellent threshold." Abraham then departed back to al-Sham.

944. It is stated that Isma`il was called by this name because God heard (*sami`a*) the prayer of Hajar when she ran away from her mistress Sara, mother of Isaac. It is also said that God heard (*sami`a*) the prayer of Abraham. Isma`il was taken to God aged 137 years and was buried in the Sacred Mosque near the site of the Black Stone. Isma`il was the father of twelve males: Nabit, Qidhar, Adbil, Mabsam, Misma`, Duma, Dawam, Masa, Hadar, Thima, Yatur and Nafis. Each had progeny. Abraham came to Mecca when Isma`il was thirty years old and this was when he commanded him to build the Ka`ba. Isma`il built it from diverse stones quarried from the mountains. He made its length to be thirty *dhira`s*, its width twenty-two and its thickness nine *dhira`s*. He made a gate for it but no roof. He placed the corner-stone (*rukna*) where it is and joined the Station to the Ka`ba. This is mentioned in the Qur'an as follows: {Remember when Abraham and Isma`il were raising the foundations of the House}.

945. God ordered Abraham to announce to people the obligation of pilgrimage. When Isma`il was taken up to God, his son Nabit took over the upkeep of the House. He was followed by people from Jurhum

because Jurhum had overcome the family of Isma`il. The king of Jurhum at that time was al-Harith ibn Mudad who was the first to act as guardian of the House. He would station himself at a place now known as Qu`aiqu`an, and whoever entered Mecca as a trader he would charge him a tenth of the merchandise as tax, this being on the heights above Mecca. Meanwhile the king of the Amalekites al-Sumaida` ibn Hawbar would station horses on the plains of Mecca who would also charge a tenth from people entering Mecca from that side.

946. Wars then broke out between Jurhum and the Amalekites. The king of Jurhum, al-Harith, rode out with clashing (*qa`qa`*) spears and shields so the place was called Qu`aiqu`an. Then al-Sumaida` rode out with his troops mounted on noble (*jiyad*) horses so the place has been known as Ajyad until the present day. The Jurhum were defeated and humiliated (*iftadahu*) so the place became known as Fadih until the present day. The two sides then made peace and cooked a meal (*tabakhu*) and the place has been known as Matabikh ever since. The guardianship of the House passed to the Amalekites. Later, Jurhum triumphed over them and they in turn became guardians of the House for about three hundred years.

947. The last of the Jurhum kings was al-Harith ibn Madad the Younger ibn `Amr ibn al-Harith ibn Madad the Elder. He added to the structure of the House and raised it higher than it had been at the time of Abraham. Jurhum sinned in the Sanctuary to the point where a man called Isaf had sexual relations with a woman called Na`ila in the House. God then transformed them into stones which were later taken for idols and were worshipped as a way of drawing near to God. It is also said that they were two stones that were carved and made to resemble the persons mentioned and given their names. God then afflicted Jurhum with nosebleeds and with ants and other calamities,

and many of them perished. The progeny of Isma`il then multiplied and grew powerful and invincible to the point where they gained mastery over their maternal uncles, the Jurhum, and drove them out of Mecca. The Jurhum departed to the land of Juhaina where a flash flood at night did away with them. The place was known as Idam.

948. Umayya ibn Abi al-Salt al-Thaqafi* mentioned this incident in a line of verse:

*Jurhum cultivated the region of Tihama for long eras
Until Idam flooded them all.*

On the same subject, al-Harith ibn Mudad the Younger, from Jurhum, recited:

It was as if, between al-Hajun and al-Safa, there never existed
A friendly companion, nor ever did anyone spend the night in Mecca
In pleasant conversation.*

*Yes, indeed. We were once Mecca's inhabitants,
But the evil accidents of time, the nights and misfortunes,
Destroyed us.*

*We were Isma`il's in-laws and neighbors,
And suffered no hardship while we were there.*

*We were guardians of the House, after Nabit,
Circumambulating the House, with evident merit.*

*My God substituted for this life exile in a foreign land,
Where the wolf howls and enemies surround me.*

His son, `Amr ibn al-Harith, recited the following:

*We were the guardians of the House, residing therein,
To whom every person in a state of ihram*
Fulfilled his sacred vow.*

*We lived there before Zamzam,
Having inherited it from the progeny of Hini son of Nabt son of Jurhum.*

He also recited:

Our shelter was Jurhum, and what a shelter it was!

Guardians and protectors of God's House,

They committed sin, after having been pious,

And earned punishment instead of reward.

949. Guardianship of the House then passed to the descendants of Iyad ibn Nizar ibn Ma`add. Many wars followed between the progenies of Mudar and Iyad ending with victory for Mudar over Iyad, who migrated to Iraq. Later on, we shall give a general account of Mecca's history and the children of Nizar and Khuza`a as well as others. Al-Mas`udi said: In this chapter we have already related in general a history of Jurhum and other tribes.

950. I have found another version of this tale which goes as follows: the first king of Jurhum in Mecca was Mudad ibn `Amr ibn Sa`id ibn al-Raqib ibn Hini ibn Nabt ibn Jurhum ibn Qahtan, who reigned for a hundred years. Succeeding him was his son `Amr ibn Mudad for one hundred and twenty years. Next came al-Harith ibn `Amr for two hundred years---some say less. Next came `Amr ibn al-Harith for two hundred years. Then came Mudad ibn `Amr the Younger ibn al-Harith ibn `Amr ibn Mudad ibn `Amr the Elder ibn Sa`id ibn al-Raqib ibn Hini ibn Nabt ibn Jurhum ibn Qahtan for forty years. The extinct Arabs (*al-Arab al-`ariba*) from `Ad, `Abil, Thamud, Jadis, Tasam, the Amalekites, Wabar and Jurhum vanished, and only the progeny of `Adnan and Qahtan remained. The extinct Arabs mentioned above merged into `Adnan and Qahtan and their genealogies were erased along with all traces of them.

951. The Amalekites had grown mighty and wicked on earth so God gave mastery to the kings of the earth and they extirpated them. Earlier in this work, when discussing the genealogies of the Romans, we

mentioned the view of those who attached the progeny of Amalek (*Imlaq*) and others to the descendants of Esau (*Isu*) son of Isaac son of Abraham, but we stated that the Arab genealogists give a different version of their genealogy which is the better known among people.

Poets wrote elegies about the Amalekites such as the following verses:

The Amalekites have passed away. There remains of their number

Neither a contemptible wretch nor a man of honor or courage.

They grew tyrannical, so God vanquished them for such

Is His verdict upon people, and such His promise.

He governs all.

952. As for Tasm and Jadis, they vanished in the wilderness within the space of seventy years because of the conflicts between them and their struggles for leadership. So they disappeared without a trace. The Arabs used them in their proverbs, and poets in their verses alluded to them. As for al-Rass and its people, we have made mention of them in our previous books. They are the tribe of Hanzala ibn Safwan al-`Absi, whom God had sent to them as a prophet but they called him a liar. We mentioned his history already but in passing. Many and diverse views have been expressed about the people of al-Rass that differ from what is to be found in this book.

953. The above tribes have been mentioned in the Torah where each is related back to the progeny of Sam son of Noah, and the progeny of Iram son of Sam son of Noah and from his son `Us son of Iram, as also the progeny of Mash son of Iram. Thus, `Us son of Iram begat Ghathir son of `Us and `Ad son of `Us. Ghathir begat Thamud and Jadis while Mash son of Iram begat Iram son of Mash and Nabit son of Mash. All Nabateans and their kings descend from Nabit son of Mash. `Ad son of `Us son of Iram son of Sam son of Noah and his descendants settled in al-Ahqaf, in the land of Hadramawt, while Thamud son of Ghathir son

of `Us son of Iram son of Sam son of Noah and his descendants settled on the upper reaches of the Hijaz. Jadis son of Ghathir settled in Jaww which is the land of al-Yamama between Bahrain and Hijaz. This land is at present, i.e. the year 332, ruled by al-Ukhaidir al-`Alawi, a descendant of al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib*. He is a neighbor of Bahrain and its inhabitants until the present. Tasm son of Lud son of Sam son of Noah and his descendants settled in al-Yamama with the Jadis, while `Amliq son of Lud son of Sam son of Noah settled in the Hijaz.

954. Earlier in this work we mentioned that the progeny of `Ilam settled in al-Ahwaz and Faris. He is `Ilam son of Sam son of Noah. Nabit son of Mash son of Iram son of Sam son of Noah settled in Babil and dominated Iraq. These are the Nabateans, and from them descended the above-mentioned kings of Babil whom, we stated, had cultivated the land and made it prosperous. They were the noblest kings on earth but fate caused their demise and deprived them of kingship and power to the point where one can now observe their currently humble condition in Iraq and elsewhere.

955. Some theologians, including Dirar ibn `Amr*, Thumama ibn Ashras* and `Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz* maintain that the Nabateans are better than the Arabs, arguing that a people whom the Almighty honored by making the Prophet Muhammad to be of their number have been granted the highest of all honors. However, a people denied this honor by the Almighty have been denied every honor in the world. There can be no gift of grace to any people greater than the gift of the Prophet and no calamity greater to a people than to be denied the honor of having the Prophet as one of them. And yet they possess merit with God, which is somewhere between grace and disgrace.

956. Al-Mas`udi said: Since these theologians did not seem bothered by elevating the Nabateans and preferring them to the progeny of Qahtan and `Adnan [i.e.Arabs] , in whom resides the virtue and honor of prophecy and kingship, someone defending Qahtan and Nizar might argue as follows: If the Nabateans are superior to the Arabs because God tested them by removing prophecy from them and bestowing it on the Arabs by making the Prophet to be of their number, the Arabs can use the same logic used by the pro-Nabateans and argue as follows. We Arabs have come to be better than the Nabateans because God tested us by denying the superiority of the Nabateans through severely testing them and through removing the Prophet from their ranks. Thus the Nabateans are inferior to the Arabs since the Arabs possess the virtue of being tested by God in denying them the virtue of the Nabateans, though these latter were severely tested when God denied them the Prophet. Thus the greater virtue belongs to the Arabs. This kind of argument* can work both in their favor and against them since they can logically be refuted using the same terms when they argue for the superiority of the Nabateans to the Arabs.

957. We have already mentioned the disputes regarding genealogies, the honors attached thereto and the question of virtuous acts irrespective of honorable pedigrees. We also mentioned the view that good acts go together with a good pedigree or that good acts are separate from pedigree, as well as the views of the Shu`ubiyya* and others. All these views were reported in our book entitled *Al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat*. Abu'l Hasan Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn al-Munajjim* in his work refuting the Shu`ubiyya mentioned many other arguments and refutations and stated: "He whom God has singled out and selected from among his worshippers and creatures: was this done by way of reward or by way of simple preference? If one claims this was done as a reward, this

would contravene normal Arabic usage and meaning. For one who gives a wage to his hireling and fulfills his obligations to his worker cannot be said to have singled him out by a gift. This can only be said if he delayed his wages when no work was done or denied these wages to someone else without any fault being committed.

958. “If they claim that he did so by preferring him, we answer as follows. If it is allowed that God can direct His mercy towards some of His creatures without their having done anything to deserve it, why can He not honor them through their pedigree if this pedigree was not their own work? If they say that it is not just to honor them for anything other than their actions, we answer as follows. What if someone objects and claims that it is not just for God to grant them His mercy rather than others, and without any good deeds performed by them, and without any sins being committed by others? What then would be the difference between you, O Shu`ubiyya, and him who makes such a claim, even though God has clearly stated those whom He singled out in the following Qur’anic verse: {God chose Adam and Noah, the House of Abraham and the House of `Imran above all mankind: a progeny one from another}.”

959. Accordingly, it is incumbent on all who have an honorable pedigree and splendor not to make this a reason for slacking off in performing virtuous deeds consonant with that pedigree or for trusting in his ancestors, for an honorable pedigree should promote honorable deeds and a nobleman is more fit to perform such deeds since nobility presumes honorable behavior and does not retard it, just as the good promotes the good and motivates it. Most people have been praised for their deeds and not their pedigree, as can be seen in much verse and prose.

960. A poet once recited about Hashim ibn `Abd Manaf*, the paragon of all those with a pedigree:

*`Amr of grandeur, he who crumbled (hashama) bread for his people
When the men of Mecca were living through drought
And were emaciated.*

Thus the poet praised Hashim for his deed and not his pedigree even though that pedigree was truly noble. Those of noble pedigree should be such as was once described by one of their number, `Amir ibn al-Tufail, who recited:

*And I, though I am the son of the knight of `Amir, and from the clan's
Very heart, its most authentic part, and free from blemish, yet
`Amir did not choose me for its leader because I inherited that post:
God forbid that I should rise high because of mother or father.
But I protect its territory, ward off harm from it,
And shoot back from my quiver whoever shoots at my clan.*

Another poet recited:

*Though our ancestors are nobly born, never do we
Put our trust in pedigree.
We build as our ancestors built,
And accomplish what they accomplished.*

961. Al-Mas`udi said: When `Amr ibn `Amir left Ma`rib with his children, the clan of Rabi`a split off (*inkhaza`a*) and settled in Tihama so they were called Khuza`a because of that split. When war broke out between the two sons of Nizar, Iyad and Mudar, and Iyad was defeated, Mudar pulled out the Black Stone and buried it in some place. A woman of Khuza`a saw this and informed her clan so they made it a condition for Mudar that if they returned the Black Stone they would be made guardians of the House. Mudar agreed and Khuza`a became its guardians.

962. The first among them to assume guardianship was `Amr ibn Luhayy, Luhayy's name being Rabi`a ibn Haritha ibn `Amir. He changed the religion of Abraham and made the Arabs worship idols. We have stated the reason for this earlier in this work and in other works. This was because he had travelled to al-Sham and saw some people worshipping idols. They gave him an idol which he then set up in the Ka`ba. Khuza`a grew in power and the injustice of `Amr ibn Luhayy spread far and wide. Concerning this, a man from Jurhum who was a believer in the religion of Hanifiyya* recited:

O `Amr, act not unjustly in Mecca,

For it is a sacred town.

Ask where `Ad have ended up:

Thus do people vanish.

Ask too about the Amalekites,

Who once ruled that town.

963. When `Amr set up more and more idols around the Ka`ba, idol worship became dominant among the Arabs and the Hanifiyya all but disappeared. A man called Shihna ibn Khalaf al-Jurhumi recited:

O `Amr, you have innovated diverse gods in Mecca,

Setting them up as idols around the House.

The House has always had one God,

But you have made him into many gods for people.

You will surely know that God will soon

Choose other than you for guardians of his House.

964. `Amr ibn Luhayy lived for three hundred and forty-five years. Guardianship of the House belonged to Khuza`a while Mudar held three functions: (1) leading people away from `Arafa*, and (2) pressing on the multitudes to Mina* following the sacrifice. This second function finally devolved upon a man called Abu Sayyara who, for forty years

and until the coming of Islam, used to press people on from Muzdalifa* to Mina, riding on a donkey that never tired. For the Arabs, this became proverbial, so they would say: "Healthier than Abu Sayyara's donkey". Regarding Abu Sayyara, a member of his clan recited:

We used to protect Abu Sayyara

As he pressed people forward, riding on his donkey.

965. The third function of Mudar was to postpone a month during the sacred months*. This postponement was done by the clan of Malik ibn Kinana. The first among them to do so was Abu al-Qalhamas Hudhaifa ibn `Abd, followed by his son Qila` ibn Hudhaifa. When Islam appeared, the last of them was Abu Thumama. The Arabs, having completed their pilgrimage and about to commence their return journey, used to gather around him and he would rise and address them as follows: "O God, I have sanctioned one of the two months called Safar, namely the first, and postponed the second till next year." When Islam appeared, the sacred months had returned to where they had begun and as they had been originally. This is plain in the saying of the Prophet: "Time has turned full circle and has now come to be where it was when God created the heavens and earth." What the Prophet informed us in this saying is also what God informs us in the following verse: {To postpone the sacred month is to increase in blasphemy}. Boasting of their function of postponing months, `Umair ibn Qays al-Firasi recited in an ode of his:

Are we not those who postponed for the Ma`add [i.e. Arabs]

Lawful months and turned them into unlawful?

966. Qusayy ibn Kilab ibn Murra* had married Hubba bint Hulail, Hulail being the last guardian of the House from the tribe of Khuza`a. Now `Amr ibn Luhayy, having lived the long life we mentioned above, died after having fathered a thousand descendants. When Hulail was at

the point of death, he being the last of the Khuza`a to act as guardian, as already mentioned, he delegated guardianship to his daughter, the wife of Qusayy ibn Kilab. When he was told that she could not open or close the House, he nonetheless delegated guardianship to her but appointed a man from Khuza`a, known as Abu Ghubshan al-Khuza`i, to open and close it. He in turn sold this function to Qusayy in return for a camel and a skin of wine.

967. That action of his became proverbial among the Arabs who would say: "A deal more unprofitable than that of Abu Ghubshan." Regarding his selling of the guardianship of the House for a camel and a skin of wine, and the transfer of this role from his clan to Qusayy ibn Kilab, a poet recited:

Abu Ghubshan is more unjust than Qusayy,

More unjust too than the Khuza`a of Fihir.

Do not blame Qusayy for buying it:

Blame instead your old man who sold it.

Another poet recited:

If Khuza`a in old times used to boast,

That boast, we find, concerned the drinking of wine.

They sold the Ka`ba of the All-Merciful, in plain view,

For a skin of wine. Wretched is he who boasts of his sins!

968. Guardianship of the House remained in the hands of Khuza`a for three hundred years. Qusayy's power became well established and he imposed the tax of one-tenth on all non-Quraish who entered Mecca. He built the Ka`ba, arranged Quraish according to a Meccan pedigree, singled out a group of Quraish called *abtahi*, plural *abatih*, and designated outlying clans (*zahiri*) as such. Quraish of the *bitah* were the following clans: Banu `Abd Manaf, Banu `Abd al-Dar, Banu `Abd al-`Uzza, Banu `Abd ibn Qusayy, and the clans of Zuhra, Makhzum, Taim

ibn Murra, Jumah, Sahm, `Adiyy, also known as “Lickers of Blood”, and Hisl ibn `Amir ibn Luayy.

969. Quraish of the “outside” were the following clans: Banu Muharib, Banu al-Harith ibn Fihri, Banu al-Adram ibn Ghalib ibn Fihri and Banu Ma`is ibn `Amir ibn Luayy. Concerning this matter, Dhikwan, client* of `Abd al-Dar, recited the following verses to al-Dahhak ibn Qais al-Fihri:

*I overpowered al-Dahhak until I dispatched him
To an inferior pedigree among his people.
If only a group of Quraish had witnessed this,
I mean Quraish of the Bitah, not Quraish of the outside!
But they were absent and I was the only witness.
O what a wretched protector of countrymen am I!*

970. The “Allies”* among the Quraish were the clans of Banu `Abd al-Dar ibn Qusayy, Sahm, Jumah, `Adiyy and Makhzum. The “Perfumed Ones”* were Banu `Abd Manaf, Banu Asad ibn `Abd al-`Uzza, Banu Zahra, Taim, and Banu al-Harith ibn Luayy. Concerning this matter the poet `Umar ibn Abi Rabi`a* recited the following verses in reference to a woman:

*She has ancestors among the “Perfumed Ones”,
Then attained the nobility of the “Allies”.
When identified, her pedigree falls between `Amir ibn Luayy
And `Abd Manaf.*

971. When Quraish secured *ilaf* from surrounding kings, *ilaf* meaning safe-conduct, and they collected together (*taqarrashu*), *taqarrash* meaning coming together, Ibn Hilliza al-Yashkuri recited:

*Brothers who collected the riff-raff against us,
In ancient times and in modern.*

When Quraish obtained safe-conduct from the kings, they set out on their journeys to al-Sham, Yemen, Iraq and Abyssinia. Concerning this, Matrud al-Khuza`i recited:

*O you who turns his mount around,
Why don't you stop by the clan of `Abd Manaf?
They were the ones who obtained the covenant from far horizons,
And who performed the journey of Ilaf.*

972. There are very many historical reports about Mecca, as also about Jurhum, Khuza`a and other clans of Ma`add. In our other works we dealt at great length with their histories, while in this work we merely deal with them in brief by way of alluding to these earlier accounts of ours. When we come to treat of the dispersal of mankind in Babylon, we will, God willing, give general accounts of the history of Mecca, `Abd al-Muttalib*, Abyssinia and other related topics. In God is success.

Chapter 40

An account of diverse reports relating to the description of the earth, its countries and how the human soul longs for its homeland

973. Men of understanding relate that when `Umar ibn al-Khattab* conquered for the Muslims the lands of Iraq, al-Sham, Egypt and other territories on earth, he wrote the following letter to a wise man of that age: "We are a nation of Arabs and God conquered these lands for us and wishes us to occupy the earth and settle its cities. So describe to me the cities, their climates, habitats and the effect of their soil and air on their inhabitants." The wise man wrote back: "Know, O Commander of the Believers, that God divided the earth into parts which are the east, west, north and south. That part which lies farthest in the extreme east where the sunlight first shines forth is one which is loathsome by reason of its being burnt, its fiery nature, its severity and the scorching of its

inhabitants. The part which extends deep into the west is more harmful to its inhabitants than the extreme east because its harm is less obvious. Likewise, the part lying in the extreme north is more harmful with its extreme cold and snow and the injuries and perpetual pains caused to the human body, while the extreme south, and because of its fiery nature, scorches all animals that come in contact with it. Accordingly, the inhabited part of the earth is merely a small part of the whole which corresponds to a moderate zone and has its fair share of this division of the earth. I will now describe to you, O Commander of the Believers, the inhabited parts of the earth.

974. "Al-Sham is a land of overflowing torrents, rainclouds and plentiful rain all of which moisten the body, dull the intellect and lighten skin colors, especially in the territory of Homs. Here the body is improved and its color is light but the understanding is slow and knowledge is exhausted, human nature becomes coarse, the natural disposition is erased and the human mind is robbed. Al-Sham, O Commander of the Believers, though it is as I have described it, nevertheless has fertile pastures and pouring rains. It has many trees and numerous rivers, and yields abundant tribute. It is the homeland of the prophets and in it is Jerusalem, the great object of desire. In it has dwelt the noblest and most pious of God's creatures among saints and hermits, and its mountains are the home of those who devote themselves to God.

975. "As for Egypt, it is a wide, low-lying land, home of the Pharaohs and native land of tyrants. Its excellence is derived from its Nile, but it is a land more worthy of censure than of praise. Its air is unchanging, its heat is excessive, its evil is ever present. It darkens colors, corrupts minds, and multiplies sorrows. It has mines of gold, precious stones, emeralds and buried treasure. In its soil grow crops and palm trees. Yet

it causes bodies to become obese, it darkens the skin, and life spans grow long. Cunning, hypocrisy, wickedness, craftiness and fraudulent behavior are traits of character found among its people. It is a land from which profit may be derived but not one fit for residence since its civil wars are unending and its evils are continuous.

976. “As for Yemen, it thins out the body, clears the mind and removes humidity. Its people are zealous and resolute and they have accomplished memorable deeds. Its fertile land is dense in herbage though its frontier regions are barren. Its climate is unstable and its people are deceitful. They have a trace of beauty, a measure of tenderness and a touch of eloquence.

977. “As for al-Hijaz, it is a barrier (*hajiz*) between al-Sham, Yemen and the Tihamas. Its climate is very hot and its nights are overwhelming. It turns the body thin, contracts the skin of the head, lends courage to hearts, saps energy, and inclines the soul to sadness. It is a bare, drought-stricken land of hardships. As for the Maghrib, it hardens the heart, turns human nature harsh, makes the mind irresolute, removes mercy from the soul, instills courage, and gets rid of meekness. There is treachery in its people as also wickedness and cunning. Their habitats are diverse and their undertakings are not performed in common. Their land at the end of days will witness great and momentous events and will experience startling occurrences.

978. “As for Iraq, it is the beacon of the east, the navel of the earth and its very heart. To it waters flow; the brightness of its beauty is uninterrupted; it is the height of moderation. Hence, the temperaments of its people are pure, their minds are clear, their understanding is sharp, and their resolution is hardened. Shrewdness may be observed among them, their minds are powerful and their judgments are sober. Iraq is the center of the earth and the region most desired since ancient days. It is

the key to the east, the passageway of light, and the place where eyes may roam. Its cities are like al-Mada'in and others that resemble it. Its people have the most moderate of colors, the purest of breezes, the best temperaments, and the readiest wit. They possess the sum of all virtues and all admirable qualities. Iraq's advantages are many and this is due to the purity of its air, its delightful breezes, its moderate soil, its plentiful water and the ease and comfort of living.

979. "As for the Jibal*, they make the body rough and coarse and the understanding slow and limited, blight the intelligence, and dampen the spirit, due to the coarseness of the soil and the thickness and density of the air, the constantly changing direction from which the winds blow, and their harmful effects. Innate manners and outward forms, O Commander of the Believers, correspond to the country concerned, resemble it, approximate it and are appropriate to it. In a country where the air is moderate, the water is light, and the food is dainty, the outward forms and manners of its people will correspond to that country's basic characteristics and essential nature. Any country that veers from moderation will have inhabitants who are proportionately wretched.

980. "As for the land of Khurasan, it enlarges the head and body and makes the intellect subtle. Its people possess rational minds and they are high-minded and ambitious. They are a people of profundity and deep thought, wise judgment and discernment.

981. "As regards the land of Faris, it is a wide land with abundant herbage, soft climate, plentiful water, is covered with trees and with plentiful fruit. However, its people are tightfisted and dishonest, their morals are wicked, their intentions are base, and they are cunning and duplicitous.

982. “As for the land of Khuzistan, which is the agricultural hinterland of al-Ahwaz, this land corrupts the mind, dulls the understanding, slackens willpower, obliterates generosity, and makes its inhabitants as easily herded as sheep or ignoble mobs.

983. “As for al-Jazira*, there is a harmony between the open country and the pleasant climate. It is a fertile land and pasturage, and its people are vigorous, courageous and skilled. Its open country, O Commander of the Believers, is the best piece of land on earth, the noblest and the most elevated in the direction of both highlands and lowlands, in order to protect the inhabitants from the winds and dust, and to prevent diseases from reaching them. Besides, the climate is temperate, the waters are pure, the air is healthy to breathe, and sorrows and grief do not touch them. Know, O Commander of the Believers, that God divided the earth into diverse parts, preferring some parts to others. The best of all the parts is Iraq, lord of horizons, a land inhabited from antiquity by countless and matchless generations and nations.

984. “As for India, China and the Byzantine realm, there is no need for me to describe them to you except to say they are wide lands and very far from us, and lands of unbelief and tyranny. The information I provided is sufficient for you in order to satisfy your desire to know. The description I gave of these countries is by way of a general account of the circumstances of their inhabitants and the most predominant of their ways of life. If among these inhabitants is found one who does not fit the above description, he would be a rarity, O Commander of the Believers. My judgments concern the majority of them.”

985. Al-Mas`udi said: Some scholars of biography and history state that when `Umar ibn al-Khattab decided to set out to Iraq, and having heard about the massing of Persian troops at Nihawand, asked Ka`b al-Ahbar* about Iraq, and the latter said: “O Commander of the Believers,

when God created things, each thing headed to a particular destination. The Mind said: 'I am going to Iraq' and Knowledge said: 'I am going with you'; Wealth said: 'I am going to al-Sham' and Civil Disturbance said: 'I am going with you'; Prosperity said: 'I am going to Egypt' and Humiliation said: 'I am going with you'; Poverty said: 'I am going to the Hijaz' and Contentment said: 'I am going with you'; Convalescence said: 'I am going to the deserts' and Health said: 'I am going with you.'"

986. Al-Mas`udi said: The most central of regions is the one where we were born, though the stream of days has parted us and put a vast distance between us, causing our hearts to ache for it, it being our homeland and birthplace. It is the region of Babylon, a region much prized and valued by Persian kings who cared greatly for it. They would spend the winter in Iraq and most of them spent the summer in the Jibal, thus moving during the seasons of the year between cold and hot locations. The nobility of Islam like Abu Dulaf al-Qasim ibn `Isa al-`Ijli and others like him would spend winter in hot climes like Iraq and summer in cold climes like the Jibal. This is why Abu Dulaf recited:

I am a man whose acts resemble those of Chosroes:

I spend summer in the Jibal and winter in Iraq.

987. This is so because of what this region of Iraq has been endowed with, such as its many conveniences, the moderate nature of the land, its pleasant living conditions and the two rivers that flow into it, the Tigris and the Euphrates, the widespread conditions of security, absence of evil persons, its place in the center of the earth, and as the clime of the sun, which is the middle region of the seven climes*. The ancients used to compare Iraq with respect to the world to the heart in the body, for its land is in the clime of Babylon from which all religious beliefs branched out through wise ordering, just as all things branch out from

the heart. Accordingly, the colors of its inhabitants are temperate and their bodies are of average size. They have been spared the blond color of the Byzantines and Slavs, the black color of the Abyssinians, the coarseness of the Berbers and the rudeness to be found in other nations. The good qualities of all regions are concentrated in them. As they are moderate in their physical appearance so too are they subtle in wisdom and in adherence to the best in all things. The noblest part of this clime is the City of Peace [Baghdad]. It pains me to think how fate has decreed that I should be parted from that city in which we were born and in whose gardens we grew up. But it was the fault of time and fate whose habit is to disperse and scatter people.

988. Scholars have mentioned, concerning this topic into which we have now diverged, that it is a mark of loyalty and devotion in a person to long for his friends and his homeland, and to weep for what has passed of his life; that it is equally a sign of maturity that a soul should long for its birthplace and where it was raised; and that it is customary that a person would harm himself for the sake of his homeland's welfare. Ibn al-Zubair said: "People are never more content with their apportioned fate than their contentment with their homeland." Some Arab sages said: "God made countries to prosper through love of homeland." The Indians said: "The sanctity of your homeland is like the sanctity of your parents because your nurture comes from them and their nurture comes from the homeland." Another person said: "The land most laudable for you to cherish is a land whose water you imbibed and whose food you were fed." Another said: "Your partiality towards your place of birth is a sign of your honorable pedigree." Hippocrates said: "A sick person is treated with the medications of his homeland, for nature inclines to its own climate and yearns for its own nourishment." Plato said: "The nourishment of nature is among its most

effective medications.” Galen said: “A sick person finds comfort in the breezes of his homeland just as an orchard recovers its bloom through rain.” This is not the place to go into the reasons as to why souls long for their homeland, although we have treated this question in our two books *Sirr al-Hayat* and *Tibb al-Nufus*.

989. Were it not for scholars recording their ideas across the ages, science itself would have disappeared, both its principles and its conclusions. For every science is derived from history, every wisdom is deduced from it, jurisprudence is inferred from it, eloquence is learnt from it, the people of analogy build their conclusions upon it, theologians use it in argument, the knowledge of mankind is taken from it, wise proverbs are found in it, noble morality is abstracted from it, the arts of government and war are extrapolated from it, and every charming or wondrous fact is picked up from it. History is a science [*ilm*] enjoyed by both the learned and the ignorant, found pleasing by both irrational and rational persons, is comforting and attractive to both the elite and the commoners, and is found worth narrating by both Arabs and non-Arabs. Furthermore, it can be attached to any speech, adorn any assembly, embellish any occasion and is necessary in any meeting place. The excellence of history and its superiority to all other sciences is self-evident and its noble status can be comprehended clearly by any intellect. Only a person who has devoted himself totally to knowledge, who has understood its true significance, tasted its sweet fruits and experienced both its superiority and its joy, can patiently pursue it, fathom its contents with certainty, and understand its comings and goings.

990. Wise men have said: “A book is the most treasured of all things, the most splendid necklace, the most companionable of friends and the most valuable of possessions. If you so wish, its maxims can divert you

and its charming tales can amuse you; if you so wish, its sermons can depress you or, if you so wish, you may marvel at its numerous benefits. A book brings together for you the first and the last, the incomplete and the complete, the present and the absent, the vanished and the existent, a form and its opposite, and a type and its contrary. It is a dead object that speaks for the dead and gives expression to the living. It is a genial companion who comes to life when you are active and sleeps when you sleep, and utters only what you desire him to say. We know of no neighbor more affectionate, no intimate comrade more just, no companion more obliging, no teacher more considerate, and we know of no friend who is more evidently satisfying, or less mean, or more beneficial, or more laudable in morality, or less quarrelsome, or more pleasurable, or less backbiting, or more communicative, or quicker in reward or less troublesome than a book. If you look into it, it will prolong your enjoyment, sharpen your intellect, reinforce your understanding and deepen your knowledge. You will learn from it in one month what you will not learn from the lips of men in an eternity. It will spare you the hardship of soliciting help or submitting to one whom you surpass in theoretical understanding or in producing detailed knowledge. A book is a teacher who does not grow tired of you, and if you suspend his wages, will not suspend his benefits. He will obey you by night as he does by day, will obey you when you travel as he will when you settle down.” The Almighty has said: {Read, in the name of your Lord! He who created! He created man from a blood clot. Read! Your Lord is most bountiful. He taught with the pen. He taught man what he knew not.} God thus describes himself as having taught by the pen just as he describes Himself as most bountiful. `Abdullah ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn `Abdullah ibn `Umar ibn al-Khattab used to avoid the company of people and lived in a graveyard. He was never seen without

a book in his hand which he was reading. When asked about this he replied: "I never encountered a more eloquent preacher than a graveyard, nor anything that gives more joy than a book, nor anything safer and out of harm's way than solitude." He was told: "But much has been said against solitude." He answered: "How corrupting is solitude for an ignorant person!" A poet recited concerning one who collects books but knows nothing about their contents:

*Like loads carried during travels, they know not its value
Any more than the camels.*

*By your life! What does a camel know when it sets out with its loads,
Or if the merchandise itself is lost?*

Chapter 41

An account of the disputes among people as to the reason why Yemen, Iraq, al-Sham and Hijaz were called by these names

991. Disputes have arisen among people as to why Yemen was called thus. Some have claimed that it was called Yemen because it is to the right (*yamin*) of al-Ka`ba, i.e. travelling right. Al-Sham was called such because it is to the north (*shamal*) of the Ka`ba. Al-Hijaz was thus called because it is a barrier (*hajiz*) between Yemen and al-Sham, and is similar to what the Almighty has informed us regarding the barrier between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean as in the Qur'anic verse: {And built a barrier between the two seas}. Iraq was so called because the waters like the Tigris and the Euphrates and other rivers flow into it, the name being derived from the two cross pieces (*`iraqayy*) of the bucket and the water skin.

992. Some claim that Yemen is called thus because of its good fortune (*yumn*), and that al-Sham was called so because of its bad luck (*shu'm*), a view attributed to the grammarian Qutrub and others. Some others argue that Yemen acquired its name when, after the dispersal of

mankind from Babylon, some people headed to the right (*tayamana*) of the sun, which is the Yemen, while others headed to its left (*tasha'ama*), whence the two names. We shall later on treat of the dispersal of these tribes from the land of Babylon and quote some of the poetry they recited as they marched through the earth and chose their places of settlement. It is also said that al-Sham became known as such because of the moles (*shamat*), black and white, to be found in its land, as too in its soil, its districts, and its species of plants and trees. This is the view of al-Kalbi. Al-Sharqi ibn al-Qutami* said that al-Sham acquired its name from Sam son of Noah since he was the first to settle in it and live there. But when the Arabs settled in it they thought it an evil omen to say "Sam" so they changed it to "Sham". Some have claimed that Samarra was so called in reference to Sam, and further asserted that the first Abbasid caliph to reside in that city called it by this name and that it "is a joy to the beholder."* Other views concerning the origins of the names of these regions are also found which we have set forth in our earlier works.

Chapter 42

An account of the Yemen, its genealogies and the views of people regarding this subject

993. People differ as regards the genealogy of the Yemen. Hisham ibn al-Kalbi*, transmitting from his father, as well as al-Sharqi ibn al-Qutami, both agree that Qahtan ibn al-Hamaisa` ibn Nabt is to be identified with Nabit ibn Isma`il ibn Ibrahim, God's friend. Their assertion is based on a diversity of historical reports. Among them, for example, is the saying of the Prophet, transmitted by Hisham from his father from Ibn `Abbas, and further transmitted by Haitham from al-Kalbi from Abi Salih, that the Prophet once passed by young Ansari* lads competing in archery and said to them: "Shoot your arrows, O

progeny of Isma`il, for your ancestor Isma`il was an archer. Shoot and I back Ibn al-Adra`", he being a man from Khuza`a. The lads laid down their bows and arrows and said: "Prophet of God, whomever you back will surely win the contest." The Prophet replied: "Shoot and I back you all."

994. Al-Mas`udi said: All the descendants of Qahtan, such as Himyar and Kahlan, reject the above view and know nothing about it. Some of them allege as regards their genealogy and certain pedigree that Qahtan is an Arabization of Yuqtan, and Yuqtan thus became Qahtan. Ibn al-Kalbi relates that the name of Yuqtan in the Torah is al-Jabbar ibn `Abir ibn Shalikh ibn Arfakhshad ibn Sam ibn Noah.

995. What is quite clear regarding Yemeni genealogies; what both Kahlan and Himyar, the two sons of Qahtan, believe in word and deed up till today; what the contemporary generation relates from past generations; what the young relate from the old; what I myself found in ancient histories of the Arabs and other nations; what I myself learnt from most old men who are descended from Qahtan and from the tribes of Himyar and Kahlan in Yemen itself or in the coastal strips and highlands, or in Hadramawt, al-Shihr, al-Ahqaf, Oman and other regions, is the following: The correct genealogy of Qahtan is that he is Qahtan ibn `Abir ibn Shalikh ibn Salim, Salim being Qainan ibn Arfakhshad ibn Sam ibn Noah. `Abir had three sons: Faligh, Qahtan and Malkan. Many people claim that al-Khidr* is a descendant of Malkan. Qahtan fathered 31 males whose mother was Hayy bint Ruq ibn Fazara ibn Munqidh ibn Suwaid ibn `Us ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Noah. Qahtan fathered Ya`rub ibn Qahtan and Ya`rub was the father of Yashjub. Yashjub fathered two sons, `Abd Shams who is Saba' ibn Yashjub, called Saba' because he led many into captivity (*saba*). Saba' fathered Himyar ibn Saba' and Kahlan ibn Saba'. All who remain are the

descendants of these two, i.e. Himyar and Kahlan. This is the agreed-upon version among their experts and held to be certain by them.

996. Al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy al-Ta'i* was also one who denied that Qahtan was a descendant of Isma`il. Isma`il spoke the language of Jurhum because he had previously spoken Syriac like his father Abraham. But when Abraham settled him and his mother Hajar in Mecca, as related above, Isma`il married into Jurhum, and grew into manhood so spoke its language and copied its speech in his daily dealings. The tribe of Nizar refuse to accept that Isma`il grew up speaking the Jurhum tongue and assert that the Almighty granted him the Arabic language. This is because Abraham left him behind with his mother when Isma`il was sixteen, some say fourteen, years old, in what is called in the Qur'an {in a valley where no vegetation grows} and no one to keep them company. God protected them and caused the well of Zamzam to gush forth for them and taught Isma`il this Arabic language. The Nizar tribe add: "The language of Jurhum is not Arabic and we have found the language of the descendants of Qahtan to be different from the language of the descendants of Nizar ibn Ma`add. This requires us to refute those who claim that Isma`il first spoke the language of Jurhum. If Isma`il had spoken Arabic because of the fact that he grew up among the Jurhum, it would mean that his tongue would have been like theirs or like some other tribe who settled in Mecca."

997. The Nizaris add: "We find that Qahtan spoke Syriac but that his son Ya`rub spoke a different language. Yet Ya`rub is not higher in esteem with God than Isma`il, nor is Qahtan higher in status than Abraham, the friend of the All-Merciful, to the end that Isma`il would be denied the privilege of being the first to speak Arabic, a privilege granted to Ya`rub ibn Qahtan." The descendants of Qahtan and Nizar

have engaged in lengthy debates and arguments regarding this topic which our present work cannot cover in detail, as it concerns competing and boasting between them about prophets and kings and so forth. We made mention in general of the arguments advanced by the two sides, ancient and modern, and also the debates between blacks and whites, Arabs and non-Arabs, and the controversies surrounding the Shu`ubiyya movement in our work *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

998. Al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy claimed that Jurhum was the son of `Abir son of Saba' son of Yuqtan, who is Qahtan, and interpreted the Prophet's remarks to the Ansari lads namely, "Shoot your arrows, O progeny of Isma'il", to mean that the Prophet traced their lineage to Isma'il through their maternal descent and what they inherited through Isma'il's female line. This is because the Prophet does not deny a confirmed genealogy nor trace a people's genealogy through anything but the paternal line, and the Muslim community at large have transmitted this in word and deed. It is related from the Prophet that a person from the tribe of Murad asked him about Saba' and whether he was a man, woman, valley or mountain, and answered as follows: "Saba' was a man who fathered ten children. Five of them went north and five went south." Those who went north were the tribes of Lakhm, Judham, `Amila and Ghassan while those who went south were Himyar, the Azd, Madhhij, Kinda, the Ash`aris, and Anmar who are Bajila and Khath`am. Abu'l Mundhir Hisham ibn al-Kalbi stated that Anmar is Anmar ibn Iyad ibn `Amr ibn al-Ghawth ibn Nabt ibn Malik ibn Zaid ibn Kahlan ibn Saba'.

999. Al-Mas`udi said: There is a dispute regarding the genealogy of Anmar. Most genealogists assert that Anmar, Iyad, Rabi`a and Mudar were the sons of Nizar ibn Ma`add ibn `Adnan, and that they entered Yemen and were considered to belong to it. The saying of the Prophet

we quoted above about those who turned north and south is a saying transmitted by a single authority and not by a multitude, and so cannot be considered unquestionable and fully authentic. People have expressed many views about this subject. Thus, Hisham al-Kalbi transmitted from his father that all the progeny of Saba' used to be called the Saba'ites and had no other tribes to unite them except Saba'. Later in this book we shall narrate the story of `Amr ibn `Amir Muzaiqiya, along with the story of Tarifa the soothsayer and of `Imran the soothsayer, the brother of `Amr ibn `Amir. We shall also, God willing, narrate the history of the great dam of `Arim and the flood and what these two soothsayers predicted regarding the dam and the great flood, the dispersal of the tribes from the city of Ma'rib, and the tribes that headed to Oman, Shanu'a, al-Sarat, al-Sham and other regions on earth.

Chapter 43

An account of the Yemen, its kings such as the Tubba` and others, their conduct and their length of years

1000. The first king of the Yemen is considered to have been Saba' ibn Yashjub ibn Ya`rub ibn Qahtan, whose name was `Abd Shams. Earlier on in this work, and in our other works, we stated why he was called Saba' as was reported, and God knows best. He reigned for four hundred and eighty-four years and was succeeded by his son Himyar ibn Saba' ibn Yashjub ibn Ya`rub, who was the most courageous knight and most handsome man of his age. He reigned for fifty years, some say more, some less. He was known as the "crowned one", having been the first king of Yemen to place a golden crown on his head.

1001. Next came his brother Kahlan ibn Saba', who lived long and whose reign was stable and orderly. He reigned for three hundred years, though some say less. After his death, kingship passed to the

descendants of Himyar, following a struggle for power between the progeny of Kahlan and that of Himyar, the history of which would be too long to narrate here. The next king was Abu Malik ibn `Amr ibn Saba', whose reign grew long and whose justice and good deeds were widespread. He reigned for three hundred years. However, it is said that the next king after Kahlan was al-Ra'ish ("Go-Between") whose name was al-Harith ibn Shaddad. Next came al-Jabbar ibn Ghalib ibn Zaid ibn Kahlan who reigned for one hundred and twenty years. Following him was al-Harith ibn Malik ibn Ifriqus ibn Saifi ibn Yashjub ibn Saba' who reigned one hundred and nearly forty years. It is said that this king was the father of Abraha son of al-Ra'ish, known as *Dhu Manar* ("Torch-bearer").

1002. Next came al-Ra'ish ibn Shaddad ibn Miltat who reigned for one hundred and twenty-five years. He was followed by Abraha ibn al-Ra'ish, known as *Dhu Manar*. He reigned for one hundred and eighty years. Following him was Ifriqus ibn Abraha who reigned for a hundred and sixty-four years. He was succeeded by his brother al-`Abd ibn Abraha, known as *Dhu'l Adh`ar* ("He of the terrors") who reigned for twenty-five years. Next came al-Hadhad ibn Shurahbil ibn `Amr ibn al-Ra'ish. There is some dispute regarding the length of his reign: some say ten years, some seven, some six. Then came Tubba` the First who reigned for four hundred years. Many people say that Balqis murdered him but others say otherwise, though what we stated is the better-known version.

1003. Next came Balqis bint al-Hadhad. There is a curious report about her birth which is mentioned by historians. It is related that her father, while out hunting, fancied that he saw two snakes, one black, the other white. He ordered the black one to be killed. There then appeared before him an old and a young *jinni*, and the old gave him his daughter

in marriage but imposed certain conditions on al-Hadhad. The *jinni*'s daughter became pregnant with Balqis. Al-Hadhad then broke his word so his *jinni* wife vanished. This is all to be found in an amusing report in a book on the history of the Tubba`s. We merely reproduce such reports as we found them in historical works and in conformity with what religious law and obedience to it require. It is not our intention in this matter to describe the views of those who hold that the world is eternal, for these hold such reports to be impossible and unacceptable. In this book, we report the views of those who hold that the world is created and others who obey the religious law and accept the existence of the *jinn* and the stories about demons. This is in accordance with the divine book revealed to the Prophet and in consonance with the proofs that prove him to be truthful, added to which is the inability of mankind to produce anything resembling this Qur'an, {which no falsehood can blemish, adding or subtracting}.

1004. Balqis reigned for one hundred and twenty years. Her story with Solomon son of David is reported in the Qur'an together with the story of the hoopoe and how he spied on her realm. Solomon ruled the Yemen for twenty-three years then kingship returned to Himyar. Their next king was Yasir ibn `Amr ibn Ya`fur who reigned for thirty-five years and was succeeded by Shammir ibn Ifriqus ibn Abraha, who reigned for fifty-three years.

1005. Next came Tubba` *al-Aqran* ("the horned") ibn Shammar who reigned for one hundred and sixty-three years. Next came Malkikarib ibn Tubba` who reigned for one hundred and twenty years. He led his people eastwards, towards Khurasan, Tibet, China and Sijistan. Next came Hassan ibn Tubba`, who at first established order but then quarrels and conflicts erupted in his realm; he reigned for twenty-five years until he was killed. Next came his brother `Amr ibn Tubba` who

had killed Hassan, the king before him, and reigned for sixty-four years. It is said that he was denied sleep for having murdered his brother. Next came Tubba` ibn Hassan Abu Karib, the king who marched on Yathrib* from the Yemen and waged war on the Aws and Khazraj. He wanted to destroy the Ka`ba but was prevented from doing so by the Jewish rabbis, so instead he covered it with Yemeni matting made of palm leaves then turned back to Yemen, having converted to Judaism, the religion which came to dominate the Yemen. The Yemenis thus abandoned idol worship. He reigned for about one hundred years.

1006. Following a period of conflict and struggle regarding kingship, the next king was `Amr ibn Tubba`. He was deposed and the Yemenis set up Marthad ibn `Abd Kalal. The Yemen experienced a period of violence and civil wars. Marthad's reign lasted forty years. Next came Wali`a ibn Marthad who reigned for thirty-nine years. Next came Abraha ibn al-Sabbah ibn Wali`a ibn Marthad. He is called *Shaibat al-Khair* ("virtuous greyhairs") and reigned for ninety-three years, some say less. He was a learned scholar who left behind written works on moral conduct. Next came `Amr ibn Dhi Qaifan, who reigned for nineteen years. He was followed by Lakhni`a *Dhu Shanatir* ("of the fingers"), who did not belong to the royal line. He seduced the young men of the royal house and required them to act like women, and spread corruption and homosexuality in Yemen, though he acted justly towards his subjects and was fair to those treated unjustly. He reigned for thirty years, though some say twenty-nine. He was killed by Yusuf *Dhu Nuwas* ("dangling locks"), a royal prince, who was afraid for himself and too dignified to accept the king's sexual advances. The next king was thus Yusuf Dhu Nuwas ibn Zur`a ibn Tubba` the Younger ibn Hassan ibn Tubba` Abu Karib.

1007. We have narrated his [i.e. Yusuf Dhu Nuwas's] history already in this book and how he acted with the People of the Trench and how he burnt them in the fire. They are those whom God mentions in the Qur'an as follows: {Perish the People of the Trench, with its fire and its faggots}. It was to fight him that the Abyssinians crossed over from the districts of Badi` and Zaila`, the Abyssinian coastline as already mentioned, to the district of Ghalafiqā on the coast of Zabid in Yemen. After lengthy wars, Yusuf finally drowned himself, fearing shame. His reign lasted two hundred and sixty years, though some say far less.

1008. The story of the Abyssinian invasion begins as follows. When the Negus [*Najashi*] king of Abyssinia learnt what Dhu Nuwas had done to the followers of Christ and how he was torturing them in all manner of ways and burning them, he sent against him an Abyssinian army led by Aryat ibn Adkham, who ruled the Yemen for twenty years. Then Abraha *al-Ashram* ("slit-nose") Abu Yaksum rebelled against him and killed him, becoming king of the Yemen. When the Najashi heard the news, he was enraged and swore by Christ he would clip his forelock, shed his blood and invade his land, i.e. the land of Yemen.

1009. When Abraha heard this, he clipped his forelock and placed it in an ivory box, drained some of his blood into a bottle and put some soil of the Yemen in a skin bag and dispatched the lot to the Negus, king of Abyssinia. To these he added numerous gifts and presents, then wrote to him confirming that he was his slave and swearing by the Christian religion that he was his obedient servant. He wrote that he had heard that the king had sworn by Christ to "clip my forelock, shed my blood and invade my land. I have sent my forelock so the king can clip it with his hand, my blood in a bottle so he can spill it, and a skin bag from the soil of my land which the king can stamp on with his foot. So let the king stifle his anger against me for I have released the king from his

oath as he sits on his throne.” When all of this reached the Negus, he approved of his actions, admired his reason, and forgave him. All these events took place during the reign of Qubadh, king of Persia.

1010. Abraha Abu Yaksum is the one who led the elephant and its companions against Mecca, aiming to destroy the Ka`ba. This took place in the fortieth year of the reign of Kisra Anushirwan. Abraha turned aside and headed to Ta`if* where the tribe of Thaqif sent Abu Righal with him to show him the easy road into Mecca. Abu Righal died at a place on the road halfway between Ta`if and Mecca, called al-Mughammas, and his tomb afterwards became a place at which stones were hurled. This has become a proverbial saying among the Arabs. Thus Jarir ibn `Atiyya ibn al-Khatafa* recited the following line about al-Farazdaq*:

*When al-Farazdaq dies, pelt his grave with stones,
As you pelt the tomb of Abu Righal.*

1011. Al-Mas`udi said: It is stated that the Prophet Salih had sent Abu Righal to collect the alms-tax but that he disobeyed his orders and acted dishonestly. A man called Thaqif, who is Qasiyy ibn Munabbih, assaulted him and killed him in a savage manner because he had acted so badly towards the people of the Sanctuary. Thus, Ghailan ibn Salama recited the following verse which recalls the savagery that their ancestor Thaqif perpetrated upon Abu Righal:

We are Qasiyy and our ancestor acted cruelly (qasa).

1012. Regarding the same event, Umayya ibn Abi`l Salt al-Thaqafi recited:

*They [Thaqif] drove off their land all the tribes of `Adnan
And overcame all tribes.*

*They killed the chieftain Abu Righal in Mecca,
As he drove his girthed camels.*

Concerning the same incident, `Amr ibn Dirak al-`Abdi recited:

What would you say if I sever my connections with Qays,

And ally myself with the Mazun against Tamim?

Would I be more criminal than Abu Righal,

Or more unjust in judgment than Sodom?

Miskin al-Darimi recited:

Pelt his grave with stones every year,

As people pelt the grave of Abu Righal.

1013. Later in this book we shall narrate the story of the Abyssinians and their advance upon Mecca, their arrival at the Sanctuary and what happened to them afterwards. On the road from Iraq to Mecca, between al-Tha`labiyya and al-Habir, near al-Bitaniyya, there is a place known as the “Tomb of the `Ibadi” at which passersby hurl stones up till today, as was the case with the tomb of Abu Righal. There is a curious story attached to that `Ibadi which we mentioned in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *Hada'iq al-Adhhan fi Akhbar Al Bait al-Nabiyy*.

1014. Abraha reigned over Yemen for forty-three years until he died. He had returned from the Meccan Sanctuary having lost his fingers and with his limbs hacked after God sent against him the {feathered flocks of birds}. The people of the elephant arrived in Mecca on Sunday, the 17th of Muharram, in the year 882 of the Alexander era or the year 216 of the Arab era, which commences with the Pilgrimage of Treachery. We shall later on in this work, and in its appropriate place, cite a summary history of the world and of prophets and kings in a separate chapter devoted to this topic.

1015. Following Abraha al-Ashram was his son Yaksum whose ravages extended throughout the Yemen. He reigned for two years then died. He was succeeded by Masruq ibn Abraha whose tyranny and harm spread to all the people of the Yemen, and exceeded even the harm done by his

father and brother. His mother was from the clan of Dhi Yazan. Saif ibn Dhi Yazan had sailed to Caesar [Byzantine Emperor] to seek his help and remained at his gate for seven years. Caesar refused to help him, saying: "You are Jews and the Abyssinians are Christians, and it is not licit that we help the religiously deviant against the religiously orthodox." Saif then departed to seek the help of Kisra Anushirwan [Persian Shah], to whom he claimed to be related, and asked for his aid. Kisra said to him: "What tie of kinship do you claim with me?" He answered: "O king, it is my white skin as opposed to the black, for I am nearer to you than they are." Anushirwan promised to help him but was then preoccupied with the wars against the Byzantines and other nations.

1016. Saif ibn Dhi Yazan died, so his son Ma`dikaib ibn Saif came to the Persian king's gate and shouted. When asked about this he said: "I have an inheritance to be demanded from the king." Standing in the presence of Anushirwan, he was asked about that inheritance and replied: "I am the son of the venerable old man whom the king promised to aid against the Abyssinians." Anushirwan dispatched Wahriz, Governor of the Dailam province, with him along with criminals released from prison, and said: "If they conquer, it is to our advantage, and if they are killed it is also to our advantage. In either case, we win." So they went on board boats in the Tigris with their horses, equipment and slaves, and sailed down to Ubulla, near Basra, which is a harbor on the sea. At that time there was no Basra or Kufa, these being Muslim cities. They then boarded sea-worthy ships until they arrived at the coast of Hadramawt, at a place called Mathwab, where they disembarked. Some had been taken ill on the voyage. Wahriz then ordered them to burn the ships in order to emphasize to

them that death awaited them and there was no escape route, and in order to get them to exert their utmost in fighting.

1017. Regarding this incident a man from Hadramawt recited:

*In Mathwab there are now a thousand coats of mail,
From the people of Sasan and the followers of Mihrasan,
To drive the blacks out of Yemen,
Pointed in the right way by Dhu Yazan.*

These verses occur in a long ode.

1018. News of that expedition reached Masruq ibn Abraha, the Yemeni king, who led against them an army of one hundred thousand Abyssinians and others such as Himyar, Kahlan and other inhabitants of the Yemen. The two armies then faced each other. Masruq was mounted on a huge elephant and Wahriz said to his followers: "Charge them with boldness and clad yourselves with patience." Wahriz then observed king Masruq as he dismounted from the elephant and mounted a camel, then dismounted from the camel and mounted on a horse then disdained to fight the Persians on a horse, feeling contempt for sailors, and called for a donkey upon which he rode. Wahriz said: "He has lost his kingship by moving from larger to lesser." Between the eyes of Masruq dangled a red ruby attached to his crown by a golden hook and glowing like fire. Wahriz shot him with an arrow as did his followers, then said to his followers: "I shot the son of the she-donkey so look out and tell me: if his people gather around him and do not disperse it means he is still alive. If they gather around then disperse he is dead." They looked and saw them gathering around him then dispersing, and told Wahriz. He said: "Charge them and be bold." They charged boldly and the Abyssinians were routed and put to the sword. The head of king Masruq, with the heads of his intimate companions, was raised high, and some thirty thousand of them were killed.

1019. Anushirwan had imposed certain conditions on Ma`dikarib, among them that Persians could marry Yemeni women but Yemenis were forbidden to marry Persian women. Regarding this matter, a poet recited:

*That they can marry their women,
But Yemenis could not marry Persian women.*

Ma`dikarib was also to pay him a tribute. So Wahriz placed a crown he had on Ma`dikarib's head, together with a short silver garment which he made him wear, then established him firmly on the throne of Yemen. He wrote to Anushirwan announcing his victory, then left behind him in Yemen a group of his followers. So the total number of years of the Abyssinian rule over Yemen was seventy-two years. Masruq had reigned for three years before he was killed by Wahriz. This event took place in the forty-fifth year of the reign of Anushirwan.

1020. Regarding the Persian expedition to Yemen and their victory over the Abyssinians, a descendant of the Persians recited:

*We sailed the seas till we delivered Himyar
From the calamity of the blacks.
Raging lions we were, from the descendants of Sasan,
Who guard their womenfolk with their spears,
And with cutting swords that glitter, like lightening,
As they strike heads.
We killed Masruq when he went astray,
And when the Abyssinian tribes gathered around him.
We split open a ruby between his eyes,
With an arrow from the Sasanid hero,
Wahriz, the Dailamite, who, when he saw him,
Faced him boldly, unmoving.
We conquered the land of Qahtan by force,*

Then marched to the peaks of Ghumdan,
Where we enjoyed every pleasure, and made Qahtan
Beholden to us.*

1021. Regarding this incident also, Abu `Ubada al-Buhturi* recited a few verses, in praise of some Persians, where he mentions the favors done by the Persians to his ancestors, he being from Qahtan:

*What say you to doing a favor, for which thanks can only increase,
And a gracious act, to be remembered for all time?*

*If you do so, it will not be your first act of grace,
Nor the first favor you ever did to the Yemen.*

*That was the time when your ancestor Anushirwan,
Erased the stigma of humiliation from Saif ibn Dhi Yazan.
For he still has horsemen fighting with blows and thrusts,
To defend San`a and Aden.*

*You are the descendants of him who bestowed favors, the generous one,
And we are those who, because of you,
Won the distinction of excellence and gratitude for favors.*

1022. Arab delegations then journeyed to Ma`dika'rib to congratulate him on having been restored to the throne. The Arab nobles and chieftains included `Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim ibn `Abd Manaf, Umayya ibn `Abd Shams ibn `Abd Manaf, Khuwailid ibn Asad ibn `Abd al-`Uzza ibn Qusayy, and Abu Zum`a, grandfather of Umayya ibn Abi al-Salt al-Thaqafi---some say it was his father Abu al-Salt. They entered into his presence while he was seated in the topmost chamber of his palace, known as Ghumdan, in San`a. They found him daubed in amber, with black musk appearing in the parting of his hair and his sword in his hand. To his right and left sat kings and royal princes and sons of Yemeni chieftains. The orators then held forth and the chieftains made their speeches.

1023. `Abd al-Muttalib spoke first and said: “O king, God in His majesty has elevated you into a high, difficult to reach, unassailable, exalted, and glorious station. He has caused you to have a pedigree of fragrant stock and splendid stem. This has taken root and spread its branches in the noblest soil and the sweetest homeland, since you, may you be free from all curses, are the chief of all the Arabs and the season of spring that brings forth fertility and prosperity. You, O king, are the pinnacle of the Arabs to whom they pay obeisance, the pillar around whom they rally and their place of refuge that shelters its subjects. Your predecessors are the best of predecessors and you are, for us, their best successor. The memory of your predecessors will never fade and none whom you succeed will ever die. O king, we are the inhabitants of God’s Sanctuary and the guardians of His House. What brought us here was our joy that the sorrow which afflicted us grievously is now dissipated. We are a delegation that offers its congratulations and not one that comes to condole.” The king said to him: “Who are you, O speaker?” “I am `Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim ibn `Abd Manaf,” he answered. The King Ma`dakarib ibn Saif said: “Are you the son of our sister?” “Yes,” he responded. The king said: “Bring him closer.” He was brought near and the king leant forward and said to `Abd al-Muttalib and the delegation: “Greetings and welcome! A she-camel and a saddle! Let your camels lie down with ease! A kingdom of great importance and grants most generous! The king has heard your speech, recognized your kinship to him and accepted your entreaty. You are the people of night and the people of day. You will be treated with honor if you stay and receive gifts when you depart.”

1024. Abu Zum`a, the grandfather of Umayya ibn Abi al-Salt al-Thaqafi, then rose and recited an ode which began as follows:

Let the likes of Ibn Dhi Yazan pursue revenge,

*For years and years plowing through the seas,
Until he brought with him the sons of the free:
You would imagine them in darkest night to be mountains.
How splendid a group they were, as they marched forth;
You have never seen their like among men.
You set lions against black dogs, which fled in defeat,
Scattered throughout the earth.
So drink in good health, your crown set high,
Atop Ghumdan, your lawful abode.
Spread the musk, now that their night has been driven away,
And sleep most soundly in your garments.
These are noble deeds, not wooden bowls of milk,
Mixed with water, and turned afterwards into urine.*

1025. Ma`dikarib son of Saif ibn Dhi Yazan held many conversations with `Abd al-Muttalib and revealed to him certain future events to do with the Prophet and his coming, and brought `Abd al-Muttalib glad tidings, informing him about present and future events. He then welcomed the whole delegation and they departed. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman* we narrated that history in full, making it unnecessary for us to repeat it here.

1026. Al-Mas`udi said: Ma`dikarib son of Saif ibn Dhi Yazan was now firmly established as king of the Yemen. He employed Abyssinian slaves who were spearmen and who used to march in his company, wielding their spears. One day he left his palace called Ghumdan in the city of San`a and when he reached the open country outside the city the Abyssinian spearmen turned their spears on him and killed him. His reign lasted four years. He was the last Yemeni king from Qahtan. There were thirty-seven Qahtan kings who reigned for a total of three thousand one hundred and ninety years.

1027. Al-Mas`udi said: When `Ubayd ibn Shariya al-Jurhumi* visited Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan, the latter asked him about the history of Yemen, its kings and the years of their reigns. `Ubayd stated what we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, namely, that the first king of the Yemen was Saba' ibn Yashjub ibn Ya`rub ibn Qahtan who reigned for one hundred and eighty-four years. He was followed by al-Harith ibn Shaddad ibn Miltat ibn `Amr for one hundred and twenty five years; then Abraha ibn al-Ra'ish, Dhu Manar, for one hundred and thirty three years; then Ifriqus ibn Abraha for one hundred and sixty four years; then his brother al-`Abd ibn Abraha for forty five years; then al-Hadhad ibn Shurahbil ibn `Amr, Dhu al-Sarh, for one year; then Balqis bint al-Hadhad for seven years; then Solomon son of David for twenty-three years, as we mentioned above regarding Balqis; then Arkhubu`am son of Solomon, for one year.

1028. Kingship then returned to Himyar. Following Arkhubu`am son of Solomon came Yasir Yun`um ibn Ya`fur ibn `Amr, *Dhu al-Adh`ar*, for thirty-five years; concerning his being called *Dhu al-Adh`ar* ("he of the terrors") a report is narrated which reason rejects and the heart refuses to admit that such a thing can exist in this world, although it is possible for God to create. That report goes as follows: He was called by that name because he belonged to a people who lived in the furthest deserts of the Yemen and Hadramawt, and who had a disfigured appearance and astonishing forms, with their faces placed in their chests. When the Yemenis saw this sight it terrified them (*adh`arahum*) and they were gripped with terror, so he was called *Dhu al-Adh`ar*. Other versions are also narrated but God knows best how this came about.

1029. The next king was `Amr ibn Shammar ibn Ifriqus who reigned for fifty three years; then came Tubba` al-Aqran ibn `Amr, who is Tubba` the Elder, for one hundred and fifty three years; then his son Malkikarib

ibn Tubba` for thirty five years; next came Tubba` ibn Malkikarib ibn Tubba`, known as Tubba` Abu Karib As`ad ibn Malkikarib, for eighty four years; then Kilal ibn Mithwab for seventy four years; then Tubba` ibn Hassan ibn Tubba` for three hundred and twenty six years; then Marthad for thirty seven years; then Abraha ibn al-Sabbah for seventy three years; then Dhu Nuwas Zur`a, whose name is also given as Yusuf or else as Gharib ibn Qatan, for eighty nine years; then came Lakhni`a, known as Dhu al-Shanatir, for eighty four years. This comes to a total of one thousand nine hundred and twenty-seven years. What we have set down here is the version of `Ubayd ibn Shariya as to the order of their kings and the differences in their regnal years. We have done so in order to cover all the disputed versions of these histories. From God comes success.

1030. When, as already mentioned, the Abyssinians killed with their spears Ma`dikarib ibn Saif in the open country, there lived in San`a a deputy of Wahriz with a group of Persians whom Wahriz had put at the disposal of Ma`dikarib. So the deputy rode out and killed the Abyssinian murderers and restored order to the city. He then informed Wahriz of what had happened. Wahriz at the time was one of the Persian king's courtiers in Mada'in, in the land of Iraq. Wahriz informed the king who dispatched him by land with four thousand Persian knights and commanded him to restore order to the Yemen and to spare not one single remaining Abyssinian and not even anyone with curly woolen hair who was connected to them in kinship. Wahriz arrived in Yemen and resided in San`a. He left not a single black man or any of their kin alive. Anushirwan then appointed Wahriz as king over the Yemen and he eventually died in San`a.

1031. Succeeding Wahriz was his son al-Nushajan who died in San`a. He was followed by a Persian called Subhan; next came Khurrazad who

reigned for six months; next came a son of Subhan; he was followed by al-Marwazan, a member of the Persian royal house; next came Khurrakhusru, who was born in Yemen; then came Badhan ibn Sasan. 1032. Al-Mas`udi said: These were all the kings who ruled the Yemen from among Qahtan, the Abyssinians and the Persians. Yemen was also ruled by a descendant of Abraham, friend of God, who is counted as a Yemeni king. His name was Hunaiba ibn Umair ibn Badal ibn Abraham, God's friend. He was a king of great importance in Yemen and reigned for many years. He was mentioned by Imru'ul Qais* in his poetry. The kings of Yemen, like the Al Dhu Sihr, the Al Dhu Kila`, the Al Dhu Asbah and the Al Dhu Yazan, used to reside in Zafar, except for a few who resided elsewhere. On the gate of Zafar was inscribed, in ancient script and on a black stone, the following verses:

The day Zafar was built, it was asked:

To whom do you belong? To Himyar the virtuous, it replied.

Later, it was asked the same question and replied:

My masters are the wicked Abyssinians.

Later, it was asked that question and replied:

My masters are the free born Persians.

Later it was asked that question and replied:

My masters are the traders of Quraish.

Later it was asked that question and replied:

My masters are the Himyar, the magicians.

A little time only will its people remain in it,

For since its foundation it was destined to be ruined,

By lions invading it from the sea,

Who will torch its topmost towers.

This inscription comes in a report regarding the kings who would come to rule the city and belongs to a period before they came to rule it. The

kings mentioned then ruled it in succession, and it is to be expected that the future will bring about that fire that will torch their topmost buildings. According to the people of the Yemen, their homeland will be invaded by the Abyssinians at the end of time, following a period of turmoil and apocalyptic events. When the Prophet was sent forth by God, Yemen was ruled by Persian governors and Islam triumphed, for which God be thanked. We have narrated the history of the above-mentioned kings, their conduct, their journeys throughout the earth, their wars and what they built on all their travels in our book *al-Awsat*, which makes it unnecessary to repeat that history in this book.

1034. The Yemen is a long and wide land. Its frontier, from the side of Mecca, is a place called Talhat al-Malik, a distance of a seven-day journey (*marhala*) to San`a. From San`a to Aden, the last Yemeni province, is a nine days' journey. A *marhala* is the equivalent of five to six *farsakhs*. The second frontier extends from Waha valley to the deserts of Hadramawt and Oman, a distance of twenty *marhalas*. The third frontier is the Sea of Yemen which, as already mentioned, is the Red Sea and the Seas of China and India. The total area of the Yemen is thus twenty *marhalas* by sixteen. The titles attached to Yemeni kings such as Dhu Yazan, Dhu Nuwas, Dhu Manar and so forth, are all derived from certain sites or certain acts, policies, wars and so forth associated with their names. They are attributes that distinguish them from others and set apart each king from the rest.

1035. Now that we have treated in summary form the history of Yemen and its kings, let us turn to speak of the kings of al-Hira from the dynasty of Banu Nasr and others, since they are connected to the Yemen, then follow this up with the kings of al-Sham who came from the Yemen and elsewhere.

Chapter 44

An account of the kings of al-Hira from the Banu Nasr and others

1036. When Jadhima *al-Waddah* (“the resplendent”) was murdered by al-Zabba’ bint `Amr ibn Zarb ibn Hassan ibn Udhaina ibn al-Samaida` ibn Hawbar, he had been king over the eastern regions of al-Sham up to the Euphrates and was appointed by the Romans. He resided at a place called al-Madiq between the districts of Khanuqa and Qirqisiya. As for al-Zabba’, she succeeded her father to the throne and seduced Jadhima till she was able to murder him. Jadhima reigned for ninety-five years during the period of separate principalities (*Muluk al-Tawa’if*), then for twenty-three years during the reigns of Ardashir son of Babik and Sabur *al-Junud* (“of the soldiers”), so his reign totaled one hundred and eighteen years. Jadhima was known as Abu Malik, and concerning him a pre-Islamic poet, Suwaid ibn Abi Kahil al-Yashkuri recited the following verses:

*If I taste my death, it was tasted before me by
Tasm of `Ad and Jadis, of evil deeds,
As too by Abu Malik, that old man,
Treacheroously murdered by the daughter of `Amr.*

1037. The king before Jadhima was his father, who was the first king of al-Hira as is reported, and God knows best. His full name was Malik ibn Fahm ibn Daws ibn al-Azd ibn al-Ghawth ibn Nabt ibn Malik ibn Zaid ibn Kahlan ibn Saba’ ibn Yashjub ibn Ya`rub ibn Qahtan. He had marched out of Yemen with the progeny of Jafna ibn `Amr ibn `Amir Muzaiqiya. The Jafna group headed to al-Sham while Abu Malik left them and headed to Iraq where he ruled over Mudar ibn Nizar for twelve years. Jadhima his son then succeeded, as mentioned. After Jadhima came his nephew `Amr ibn `Adiyy ibn Nasr ibn Rabi`a ibn al-Harith ibn Malik ibn Ghanm ibn Numara ibn Lakhm, who was the first king to reside in al-Hira and take it as his capital. To him are related the

Nasrid kings, the kings of al-Hira. `Amr ibn `Adiyy, the nephew of Jadhima, reigned for one hundred years.

1038. Al-Mas`udi said: Several historians and experts on Arab history and epic have stated that Jadhima was the first king from Quda`a and that he was Jadhima ibn Malik ibn Fahm al-Tanukhi. He is reported to have said one day to his intimates: "It has reached me that a youth from Lakhm, from my Iyad uncles, is a person of charm and education. If I send to summon him here and make him my cup-bearer and personal companion, this would be a sound idea." His intimates replied: "This is indeed a sound idea of the king's so let the king summon him". He did so and when the youth arrived the king asked him: "Who are you?" The youth replied: "I am `Adiyy ibn Nasr ibn Rabi`a," so the king put him in charge of his court.

1039. Riqash bint Malik, the king's sister, fell in love with him and said to him: "O `Adiyy, when you give the courtiers to drink, mix it with water for them but serve it pure to the king. Once the wine gets to his head, ask him for my hand in marriage and he will marry you to me and you can call the people present to witness this." The youth did so, asked for her hand, was given permission to marry her, got the people to witness this, and went off to tell her. She said: "Come now to your bride" and he did so. The following morning, he appeared at court daubed with perfume. Jadhima asked: "What are these traces upon you, O `Adiyy?" "The traces of a wedding night," he responded. "What wedding night?" "The wedding night of Raqash," he answered. Jadhima snorted and bent his head downwards so `Adiyy picked himself up and ran. Jadhima sped after him but could not find him. Some say, rather, that he killed him.

1040. Jadhima then sent his sister Raqash the following verses:

Tell me, and speak the truth,

Did you fornicate with a free man or a half-caste?

Or with a slave whom you deserve?

Or with a some low-born, whom you merit?

Raqash responded:

It was you who gave me in marriage, and I was unaware,

And women came to adorn me.

The fault lies in your drinking pure wine,

And your excessive indulgence in dalliance and shameful behavior.

Then she added: "Rather, you married me to a pure-bred Arab with a fine pedigree but did not allow me to decide for myself whom to marry nor could I control my own affairs."

1041. Jadhima then removed her to his own palace and locked her up. She became pregnant and delivered a boy she named `Amr. She nursed him until he grew up then she adorned him, perfumed him and dressed him in a luxurious garment and made him visit his uncle. His uncle liked him and showed him love and affection. As the king came out in a year when grasslands were abundant and the earth produced a lot of truffles, a mat was laid out for him in a meadow. `Amr left with some youths to gather truffles. Whenever the youths found a tasty truffle they would eat it but whenever `Amr found one he would hide it. They then began to race and `Amr outran them saying, in verse:

These are the truffles I gathered, and their goodness is in them,

But every other gatherer had his hand in his mouth.

1042. Jadhima made him an inseparable companion and preferred him above others. The *jinn* then caused `Amr to disappear and Jadhima looked for him all over and for a long time, but no trace of him was found so he abandoned the search. Then two men, called Malik and `Aqil, sons of Falij, or Farij, travelled in order to present a gift to the king. They camped near a spring with a slave girl called Umm `Amr,

who set up a cauldron and made ready some food for them. As they were eating, a man with disheveled hair, long fingernails and wretched appearance approached and sat down like a stray dog. He stretched his hand and the slave girl handed him some food. He ate but was not satisfied so stretched his hand again and the slave girl said: “Give a slave a leg and he’ll ask for an arm,” coining a proverb. She then handed a drink to her two companions but stopped thereafter. So `Amr ibn `Adiyy recited the following verses:

*You deflected the cup from us, O Umm `Amr,
Though the cup should have been passed round to the right.
Your companion, Umm `Amr, is not the worst of the three,
He whom you did not give to drink.*

1043. The two men asked him: “Who are you?” He answered: “If you do not know me you must surely know my pedigree. I am `Amr ibn `Adiyy.” They rose, kissed him, washed his hair, cut his nails, clipped his hair and dressed him in their best clothes, and said to him: “We could not possibly offer the king a gift more precious to him or one he is more eager to obtain than his nephew whom God has now restored to him.” So they departed with him and when led to the king’s gate, they announced the happy news to him.

1044. The king was delighted to see him then sent him off to his mother. He turned to the two men and said: “What reward do you judge appropriate?” They responded: “Simply to be your boon companions as long we or you are alive”. “Done,” said the king. So they became the well known boon companions of Jadhima, and they are the ones meant in the verses spoken by Mutammim ibn Nuwaira al-Yarbu`i when he mourned his brother Malik, killed by Khalid ibn al-Walid ibn al-Mughira* in the Battle of Bitah, where he says:

We were for long like the two boon companions of Jadhima,

Until it was said that they will never be parted.

When we parted company, it was as if Malik and I,

Having consorted for so long, had never spent a single night together.

Abu Khirash al-Hudhali*, addressing a woman, recited:

Don't you know that, before us,

The two boon companions, Malik and `Aqil, also parted company?

1045. The mother of `Amr then took charge of him and sent him servants to help him bathe. When he emerged from the bath she dressed him in the finest of royal robes and tied a golden chain around his neck in fulfillment of a vow she had taken. She then ordered him to visit his uncle who, when he saw his beard and the chain round his neck, said: “`Amr has grown too old for a neck-chain”. `Amr then remained with his uncle and assumed most of his responsibilities.

1046. Al-Zibba’* bint `Amr ibn Zarb ibn Hassan was queen of al-Sham and al-Jazira and belonged to a clan of the Amalekites from the tribe of Salih. However, some people assert that she was a Roman who spoke Arabic and whose cities lay on the eastern and western banks of the Euphrates, now in ruins. It is mentioned that she had cut canals into the Euphrates and made them flow through her cities. She used to raid the tribes with her soldiers. It is said that Jadhima al-Abrash asked her to marry him and she wrote back: “I will do so and a person like you is to be desired. If you wish, you can come to me.” She was a virgin.

1047. Jadhima then collected his courtiers and asked for their advice. All of them advised him to go to her except Qasir ibn Sa`d who was a follower of his from the tribe of Lakhm. Qasir advised him not to go and instead to write to her, arguing that if she was sincere she would come to him; otherwise he might fall into a trap. Jadhima ignored his advice and took the advice of his other companions. He travelled until he reached a place called Baqqa, below Hit and near al-Anbar, where he

summoned them all once more to seek their advice. They urged him to proceed, agreeing with his own wish in the matter but Qasir advised him to withdraw. Jadhima said: "In Baqqa, the die is cast", coining a proverb. When Qasir saw that Jadhima was determined to proceed he said: "The advice of Qasir has been disobeyed", coining a proverb.

1048. Jadhima continued on his journey until he came within sight of her capital in a place below al-Khanuqa. When he saw her army lined up in front of the city he was afraid and said: "O Qasir, what is your opinion? For I have left sound advice behind me in Baqqa. Advise me." Qasir said: "If these regiments meet you and greet you with a royal greeting then disperse before you, the woman is sincere. If they surround you on both sides and from behind, these people intend to do you harm, both themselves and their soldiers. So mount this mare called al-`Asa for she cannot be pursued or surpassed." This was a mare which strode by his side. The people then met and surrounded him but Jadhima did not mount on the mare. So Qasir mounted on that mare, circumvented the horsemen and galloped away. Jadhima turned around, saw Qasir mounted on al-`Asa galloping ahead of their horsemen until he disappeared from sight and said: "He whom al-`Asa carries has done no wrong."

1049. Jadhima was then brought into the presence of al-Zabba'. She received him, baring her large private parts, and asked: "O Jadhima, what sort of bridal tackle do you see before you?" He answered: "I see the tackle of a nasty slave girl with no sense of shame." She said: "By God, this is not because I have none to comfort or console me but it is a habit I have not forgotten." She then had him placed on a leather mat and called for a golden bowl, cut the veins of his arms and let him bleed until he became weak and struck his arm from which a drop of his blood splashed on a marble prop. It had been said to her that if any of

his blood was to fall outside that bowl, revenge would be sought for his killing. So she said: “O Jadhima, let none of your blood be wasted. I merely asked to see you because I heard that your blood cured possession by the *jinn*.” Jadhima responded: “Why should you feel sorry for the blood of a man whose own people allowed it to be shed?” Concerning this incident, al-Ba`ith recited:

*He is from the tribe of Darim, those whose blood
Cures madness and possession by the jinn.*

She then drained all his blood and placed it in a glass bottle.

1050. There are other versions of this tale which go as follows: Jadhima entered her place where he found her with only female slaves and with her seated upon a throne. She said to her slaves: “Take the hand of your master.” She then called for a leather mat and seated him on it and he realized that her intentions were evil. She exposed her private parts and was found to have tied her pubic hair all the way behind her and said: “Do you see the private parts of a bride?” Jadhima responded: “Rather the private parts of a slave woman with a prominent clitoris.” She said: “By God, this is not because I have none to comfort or console me but it is a habit I have not forgotten.” She then ordered the veins of his arms cut and his blood flowed into the leather mat lest it spoil her throne. Jadhima said: “There is no need for you to feel sorry for the blood of a person shed by his own people.”

1051. Meanwhile, Qasir fled to safety and brought news of what had happened to `Amr ibn `Abd al-Jinn al-Tanukhi in al-Hira, who was afraid. Qasir said to him: “Go and seek revenge for the blood of your cousin or else the Arabs will curse you.” `Amr took no notice. Qasir then approached `Amr ibn `Adiyy and said: “Shall I mobilize the troops for you on condition that you take revenge for your uncle?” `Amr assured him he would do so. So he sent him the best soldiers, having

promised them much wealth and booty, and many soldiers joined him. Qasir then met al-Tanukhi and when he and his men feared they would be killed al-Tanukhi acquiesced, and `Amr ibn `Adiyy obtained what he needed.

1052. Qasir then said to `Amr ibn `Adiyy: “Consider what you promised me as regards al-Zabba’.” `Amr replied: “What can we do against her when she is more unreachable than an eagle’s nest?” Qasir said: “If you refuse to move against her I shall cut my nose and ears and shall practice my utmost trickery to kill her. So help me and may no blame fall on you.” `Amr replied: “You know best and I am bound to help you.”

1053. So Qasir cut off his nose, hence the saying: “For some reason Qasir cut off his nose.” Qasir then departed. Entering into her presence, she asked: “Who are you?” He answered: “I am Qasir. I swear by the God of the east there never was on the face of this earth a man who was more sincere in his advice to Jadhima or more treacherous to you than myself. This was so until `Amr ibn `Adiyy cut off my nose and ears, so I realized I could not possibly be with anyone who is more hateful to him than you.” She said: “I agree to accommodate you, O Qasir, and we shall employ you in our commercial activities.” She then gave him some money to trade with.

1054. So he came to the state treasury of al-Hira and removed what was in it by order by `Amr ibn `Adiyy, and carried the money back to her. She was delighted by this act and gave him more money. He then said to her: “There is no king or queen who has not dug tunnels in their cities as a provision against dangers.” She replied: “As for me, I have done so. I have dug a well built subterranean passage from under this throne of mine so that I can come out from under the Euphrates and reach the throne of my sister Ruhaila.” Qasir memorized that information. He

then journeyed to `Amr, and `Amr rode out with two thousand men on one thousand camels, all hidden inside saddlebags, and marched towards her realm.

1055. Qasir rode ahead of the caravan and said to her: “Go up to the wall of your city and look at the wealth coming to you and tell your gateman not to inspect any of my bundles for I have brought you wealth in gold and silver.” The queen had grown to trust him and did not fear him, so she climbed to the top of her walls as instructed. When she saw how slowly the camels were marching she recited the following verses:

Why are the camels walking so slowly?

Are they carrying stones or iron?

Or is it heavy and blunt copper?

Or men, squatting and crouching?

1056. The caravan entered the city until, as the last camel was going in, a gateman lost patience and poked with a sharp stick in his hand a man’s side, who farted. The gateman said: *bashta basaqā*, which means “There is evil in these saddle-bags.” The men then leapt out of the saddlebags brandishing their swords and Zabba’ ran off to her tunnel. At the entrance of the tunnel she saw Qasir with his sword drawn and turned back to encounter `Amr ibn `Adiyy who struck and killed her. Some say that she sucked her ring which contained a rapid poison, saying: “With my own hand rather than with `Amr’s”. The city was destroyed and female captives were taken away. Regarding her and Qasir much poetry has been composed, as for instance in the line of al-Mutalammis*:

Among those seeking revenge was Qasir, who cut off his nose,

And Baihas, who sought death with his sword.

There is plenty of poetry regarding that event.

1057. Al-Zabba' would rarely go up against any fortress without braiding her pubic hair from behind and pulling at it, thus uprooting it. She even did this with Marid, the fortress of Dumat al-Jandal and with al-Ablaq, two mighty fortresses. About them she said: "Marid has grown insolent (*tamarrada*) and al-Ablaq has grown proud" coining an adage. These two fortresses are frequently mentioned by the Arabs in their poetry. Thus, al-A`sha* recited:

*His residence is in al-Ablaq, in Tayma', which has no equal,
A fortress of great strength and a neighbor who commits no treachery.*

1058. Jadhima al-Abrash was called *al-Waddah* ("the resplendent") because he suffered from leprosy but acquired that honorific name as a sign of the great respect in which he was held.

1059. Al-Mas`udi said: This, then, is how `Amr ibn `Adiyy began his reign and the events of his life. When he died, and we already mentioned that he reigned for a hundred years, his son Imru`ul Qays succeeded and reigned for sixty years. Then came `Amr ibn Imru`ul Qays, known as the "one who burned the Arabs", for twenty-five years. His mother was Marya al-Birriyya, sister of Tha`laba ibn `Amr, a king of Ghassan*. The next king was al-Nu`man ibn Imru`ul Qays, known as "the killer of the Persians", who reigned for sixty-five years. His mother was al-Haijmana bint Salul from the tribe of Murad---some say from Iyad. Then came al-Mundhir ibn al-Nu`man ibn Imru`ul Qays, for twenty-five years. His mother was al-Farasiyya bint Malik ibn al-Mundhir from the House of Nasr.

1060. The next king was al-Nu`man ibn al-Mundhir, hero of the Battle of Halima. It was he who built the palace of al-Khawarnaq and used battle-squares. He reigned for thirty-five years. His mother was Hind bint Zaid Manat from the Ghassan tribe. The next king was al-Aswad ibn al-Nu`man, who reigned for twenty years. His mother was HIRR bint

al-Nu`man, a daughter of al-Haijumana from the House of Nasr. Then came al-Mundhir ibn al-Aswad ibn al-Nu`man, for thirty-four years. His mother was Ma` al-Sama` bint `Awf ibn al-Nimr ibn Qasit ibn Hinb ibn Afsa ibn Du`ma ibn Jadila ibn Asad ibn Rabi`a ibn Nizar. She was called *Ma` al-Sama`* (“Water of Heaven”) because of her beauty and loveliness. Next came `Amr ibn al-Mundhir, for twenty-four years. His mother was Halima bint al-Harith from the family of Ma`dikaib. 1061. The next king was al-Mundhir ibn `Amr ibn al-Mundhir, for sixty years. His mother was a sister of `Amr and Qabus from the House of Nasr. The next king was Qabus ibn al-Mundhir, for thirty years. His mother was Hind bint al-Harith from the family of Mu`awiya ibn Ma`dikaib. The next king was al-Nu`man ibn al-Mundhir, for twenty-two years. He was the one addressed as “May you be free from all curses”. His mother was Salma bint Wa`il ibn `Atiyya, from the tribe of Kalb.

1062. Several historians have related that al-Nabigha* one day sought permission to enter into the presence of the above-mentioned al-Nu`man and the chamberlain said to him: “The king is drinking wine.” Al-Nabigha said: “This is indeed a time of joy which the hearts accept when they are entertained by the sweetest of wine and music. If the imaginative power of this worthy poet comes easily to him to produce his finest talent, you shall share whatever I gain.” The chamberlain replied: “All my efforts will not suffice to thank you. So how can I possibly aspire to what you describe, when my fear of being too overbearing prevents me from doing so? What is the reason for your offer?” Al-Nabigha said: “Who is drinking with him?” The chamberlain replied: “Khalid ibn Ja`far al-Kilabi, his boon companion.” Al-Nabigha said: “Will you relay to Khalid what I tell you?” “Tell him what?” Al-Nabigha answered: “Tell him: ‘Your elevated status obliges you to

fulfill your promise to those who follow you, and you know how thankful I can be”.

1063. When Khalid rose to answer the call of nature as is usual from the effects of drinking, the chamberlain stood in his way and said: “O Abu’l Bassam, may you enjoy your latest gift.” “What might that be?” said Khalid, so the chamberlain gave him the message. Khalid returned to the party smiling. He was a man of subtlety who approached matters calmly and intelligently, and he recited the following verse:

*Except for someone like you, or someone you outstripped,
As in a horse race, when he reaches the goalpost.*

I swear by Allat*, it is as if I am looking at the kings of Dhi Ru`ain when their glorious lineage is spread out in a racecourse to emphasize their great lineage and the virtues of their ancestors. May you be free from all curses, you are the swiftest in that racecourse, and have outstripped them and won the race, while they ended the race, their efforts in vain.” Al-Nu`man said: “Your description is more telling than al-Nabigha when he strings his poetry together.” Khalid said: “There is nothing I can say in your praise that does not fall below what your honorable station deserves. Had al-Nabigha been with us, he and I would have vied in this matter.”

1064. Al-Nu`man then ordered al-Nabigha to be admitted so the chamberlain came out and al-Nabigha asked him: “What news do you bring me?” He answered: “The veil has been lifted and the doorkeeper has received his orders. Enter.” Al-Nabigha entered and stood erect before the king, greeted him with the royal greeting and said: “May you be free from all curses, are you to be the subject of a contest in boasting, when you are the leader of all the Arabs and the pinnacle of noble birth? I swear by Allat that your yesterday is more auspicious than his today, your behind is prettier than his face, your left hand is more generous

than his right, your mere promise is preferable to his gift, your slave is nobler than his tribe, your very name is more celebrated than his entire worth, your soul is more noble than his best actions and your day is more honorable than his eternity.” Then he recited:

Your noble qualities are grown too great, and without equal,

Whether in your courage or generosity,

Be they known directly or by repute.

Crowned in glory, above his head,

And in battle a lion, with a face like the moon.

Al-Nu`man’s face glowed with pleasure and he ordered al-Nabigha’s mouth to be filled with precious stones, saying: “Thus should kings be praised.”

1065. Al-Nu`man had killed `Adiyy ibn Zaid al-`Ibadi, who used to write on behalf of Kisra Abrawiz in Arabic and translate for him when Kisra was visited by delegations of Arab chieftains. Al-Nu`man had killed him because of a grudge he held against him. The story is too long to relate here. Following `Adiyy’s death, his son Zaid ibn `Adiyy succeeded to his father’s office. Zaid described to Kisra Abrawiz the beauty of the women of the al-Mundhir family, so Kisra wrote to al-Nu`man commanding him to send him his sister. When al-Nu`man read Kisra’s letter he said to the messenger, who was Zaid ibn `Adiyy: “Does Kisra not have enough cows with beautiful eyes in the Sawad that he reaches out to Arab maidens?” Zaid said: “The King wanted to honor you, may you be free from all curses, by marrying into your family. Had he known this would distress you, he would not have proposed what he did. I shall go to him and put all this in a good light, and offer him an excuse on your behalf which he will accept.” Al-Nu`man said: “Do so, for you know how Arabs find it scandalous and detestable to give their daughters in marriage to the Persians.”

1066. Zaid then returned to Kisra and informed him that al-Nu`man had refused his offer, then proceeded to put the reference to the cows of the Sawad in the worst possible light and to enrage Kisra against al-Nu`man. Kisra asked: "What are the *maha* (cows)?" "Cows," replied Zaid. Kisra said: "Many a slave has, through insolence, committed an even greater crime." When al-Nu`man heard these words of Kisra, he was terrified. He fled till he reached the territory of the Tay' tribe, with whom he was connected by marriage. Then he left them and sought refuge with the clan of Rawaha ibn Rabi`a ibn Mazin ibn al-Harith ibn Qutai`a ibn `Abs, who said to him: "Stay with us and we shall protect you as we protect ourselves." He thanked them warmly then left them and decided to go to Kisra to see what he might do to him.

1067. Regarding this event, Zuhair ibn Abi Sulma* recited:

*Have you not seen how al-Nu`man was safe from the evils of Time,
If only one can truly be saved from them.*

A reign of twenty years was upset

By a single day's error.

Never have I seen one who lost his throne,

So bereft of a friend to succor or comfort him,

Except for a clan of Rawaha who remained loyal to him:

They were people who shunned shameful deeds.

They marched until they camped at his gate,

With their young camels and noble horses.

He thanked them and praised them,

And bade them farewell, never to meet again.

1068. Al-Nu`man then travelled until he reached al-Mada'in. Kisra had lined up eight thousand maidens in two rows, all dressed in gay colors. When al-Nu`man was in their midst, the maidens said to him: "Is there not amongst us one who suffices for a king as a substitute for the cows

of al-Sawad?” Al-Nu`man realized that he would not escape with his life. Zaid then met him and al-Nu`man said to him: “It is you who did this to me! I swear to God, if I escape this misfortune, I will give you to drink from the same cup I gave your father.” Zaid replied: “Be gone, little Nu`man, for I have prepared a post on which to tie you, that even the most energetic colt cannot cut.” Kisra had him imprisoned in Sabat, a town near al-Mada’in, then ordered that he be thrown beneath the legs of elephants. Some, however, claim he died in his prison in Sabat.

1069. Much poetry has been composed about that event. For instance, there is a poem by al-A`sha which runs as follows:

*Nor did al-Nu`man escape death. The day I met him,
In his days of joy and glory, he was dispensing stipends,
Giving to some and withholding from others.
The tribute of al-Sailahun was being paid to him;
Sarifun and its canals belonged to him, as also the palace of al-
Khawarnaq.
He was passing judgment on people, night and day,
As they listened in silence, while the death sentence was uttered.
Such a man was he, yet he could not save himself from death,
Until he died in Sabat, torn to pieces.*

1070. When al-Nu`man decided to surrender himself to Kisra, he passed on his journey by the clan of Shaiban ibn Tha`laba, and deposited his armor and his children with Hani’ ibn Mas`ud al-Shaibani. When Kisra killed al-Nu`man he sent word to Hani’ demanding that he give up what Nu`man had left with him. Hani’ refused and declined to betray the trust. This was the cause of the outbreak of the war known as Dhi Qar*. We have already narrated that event in our book *al-Awsat*, so we need not repeat it here.

1071. When Huraqa, daughter of al-Nu`man ibn al-Mundhir, used to go to church, the road would be covered with studded and embroidered silk and brocade. She and her female attendants would walk on this road until she prayed in her church then would walk back to her house. When al-Nu`man was killed, the days grew very hard for her, reducing her from splendor to wretchedness. When God had defeated the Persians and Rustam was killed, Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas* arrived in al-Qadisiyya as its governor. Huraqa with some attendants and women of her family and their slave girls, all dressed alike, came to see Sa`d. They were all dressed in tattered haircloth like nuns, and sought to obtain a gift from him. As they stood before him, Sa`d failed to recognize them and asked: "Is Huraqa among you?" "Here am I," she answered. "Are you really Huraqa?" he asked. "Yes", she answered, "Why do you keep asking me this question? This world is a world of change and never stays the same. It carries its people from one condition to another. We used to be kings of this region, its tribute was brought to us and its people obeyed us as long as we ruled over them. When that state of affairs came to an end and passed away, the scream of Time fell upon us, dispersing our unity and scattering our community. Such is Time, O Sa`d. There are no people who live long in happiness but Time will follow this up with grief." She then recited the following verses:

We once ruled people, and ours was to command,

When, lo and behold, we became like subjects.

Fie on a world whose joys do not last!

A world that by turns overwhelms us and does what it pleases.

1072. As she stood before Sa`d, `Amr ibn Ma`dikaarib entered. He had frequently visited her father in pre-Islamic days. When he saw her, he said: "Are you Huraqa?" "Yes," she replied. He said: "What calamity

fell upon you, putting an end to your laudable qualities? What happened to your unbroken life of luxury and the power of your wrath?” She replied: “O `Amr, Time has its moments of aggression, of stumbling, and of grief. It causes kings and their princes to fall, reducing them to misery after their glory, making them dependents when once they were mighty, and humiliating them when once they were proud. This is an eventuality we had anticipated. When it took place, we were not surprised.” Sa`d treated her with due honor and gave her a generous gift. When about to depart, she said to him: “Let me greet you with a greeting used by our kings to one another: ‘May you never find yourself in need of a vicious man, and may a virtuous man never be deprived of a blessing without you being the cause of restoring it to him.’” She then left his presence. When the women of the city met her, they asked her: “How did the governor treat you?” She replied in verse:

He safeguarded what is owed to me of respect, and treated me with honor:

It takes a noble person to act nobly to another like him.

When we come later on in this work to the history of Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufian, we shall mention the story of Hind daughter of al-Nu`man and her encounter with al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba*.

1073. Al-Mas`udi said: These then were the kings of al-Hira up to the coming of Islam, when God caused his religion to triumph and to humiliate the unbelievers. All the kings we named were the descendants of `Amr ibn `Adiyy, nephew of Jadhima al-Abrash, as already explained at the beginning of this chapter. When Islam appeared, the king of Persia was Kisra Arawiz son of Hurmuz. Kisra had appointed Iyas ibn Qabisa al-Ta`i as king over the Arabs of al-Hira, and Iyas reigned for nine years. When six years and eight months had passed of his reign, the Prophet was sent by God. Then a group of Persians came

to rule al-Hira, but there were kings over al-Hira before `Amr ibn `Adiyy, as already mentioned. So the number of kings of al-Hira was twenty-three, from the House of Nasr as well as other Arabs and Persians. The total number of years of their reigns was six hundred and twenty-two years and eight months. It has been said that the period spanning the beginning of al-Hira's construction and until its ruin, when the city of Kufa was built, was five hundred and thirty some years.

1074. Al-Mas`udi said: The buildings of al-Hira continued to fall into ruin from the time we mentioned until the beginning of the reign of the caliph al-Mu`tadid when its ruin was total. Some Abbasid caliphs like al-Saffah, al-Mansur, al-Rashid and others used to reside in it for long periods of time because of its pleasant climate, pure air, healthy soil, and strong construction, and its proximity to the palace of al-Khawarnaq and to al-Najaf. Many monasteries were once found there with their monks who then departed to other countries as the city began to decay. It is now an uninhabited ruin with nothing in it but echoes and owls. Many people of insight who claim knowledge of future events assert that its prosperity will one day return, and that its ill-omened fate will vanish. The same will be true of Kufa.

1075. The kings of al-Hira mentioned above have histories, policies and wars whose chief aspects we have treated in detail in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, rendering it unnecessary to repeat them in this work.

Chapter 45

An account of the kings of al-Sham, both Yemenites, such as Ghassan, and others, and their history

1076. The first king of al-Sham from the Yemen was Faligh ibn Yaghur. The next king was Yutab who is Ayyub son of Zarah. God in the Qur'an mentioned his story, as transmitted by the Prophet, and what

has been preserved of his tale. Yemen was then conquered and its people dispersed throughout the earth. The first to settle in al-Sham was the tribe of Quda`a ibn Malik ibn Himyar. They attached themselves to the kings of the Byzantines who appointed them kings over the Arabs of al-Sham once they had embraced Christianity. The first Tanukh king was al-Nu`man ibn `Amr ibn Malik. Next came `Amr ibn al-Nu`man ibn `Amr, followed by al-Hawari ibn al-Nu`man. The above mentioned were the only Tanukh kings. Tanukh is Tanukh ibn Malik ibn Fahm ibn Taym Allat ibn al-Azd ibn Wabara ibn Taghlib ibn Halwan ibn `Imran ibn Alhaf ibn Quda`a ibn Malik ibn Himyar. There is a dispute regarding Quda`a: does it belong to Ma`add or to Qahtan? Quda`a itself rejects its lineage from Ma`add and alleges that it is from Qahtan, as already mentioned. Regarding the genealogy of Quda`a and its connection to Himyar other genealogical views than the one we expressed are also found.

1077. The tribe of Salih then entered al-Sham, overcame the Tanukh, embraced Christianity and was appointed to rule the Arabs of al-Sham by the Byzantines. The Salih are the progeny of Salih ibn Halwan ibn `Imran ibn Alhaf ibn Quda`a. The rule of Salih over al-Sham was well established whereas the tribes of Yemen dispersed following the incident of the dam of Ma`rib and the story of `Amr ibn `Amir Muzaiqiya. The tribe of Ghassan headed to al-Sham, they being the progeny of Mazin. This is because al-Azd ibn al-Ghawth ibn Nabt ibn Malik ibn Zaid ibn Kahlan ibn Saba' ibn Yashjub ibn Ya`rub ibn Qahtan was the father of Mazin, and the tribes of Ghassan are Mazin's descendants. Ghassan was in fact a watering place at which they used to drink. It is a watercourse between Zabid and Rima`, the valley of the Ash`ariyyun, in the land of Yemen. Regarding this, Hassan ibn Thabit al-Ansari* recited:

If you ask we respond: We are a noble people.

Al-Azd is our ancestor and our watercourse is Ghassan.

1078. Later on we shall mention the story of `Amr ibn `Amir Muzaiqiya, the story of the great flood, the dispersal over the earth and the history of the watercourse known as Ghassan. It is related that when `Amr ibn `Amir left Ma`rib, he camped at that watercourse until he died, having lived for eight hundred years: four hundred as a subject and four hundred as king.

1079. Ghassan then overcame the Arabs of al-Sham so the Byzantines appointed them to rule over its Arabs. The first king from Ghassan in al-Sham was al-Harith ibn `Amr ibn `Amir ibn Haritha ibn Imru`ulqais ibn Tha`laba ibn Mazin, who is Ghassan ibn al-Azd ibn al-Ghawth. The next king was al-Harith ibn Tha`laba ibn Jafna ibn `Amr [lacuna in text]. His mother was Marya “of the two earrings” bint Arqam ibn Tha`laba ibn Jafna ibn `Amr. It is also said that his mother was Marya bint Zalim ibn Wahb ibn al-Harith ibn Mu`awiya ibn Thawr, from the tribe of Kinda. She is the one mentioned by poets, and a group of Ghassanid kings are said to have been descended from her. The next king was al-Nu`man ibn al-Harith ibn Jabala ibn al-Harith ibn Tha`laba ibn Jafna ibn `Amr. Next came al-Mundhir Abu Shammar ibn al-Harith ibn Jabala ibn al-Harith ibn Tha`laba ibn Jafna ibn `Amr. The next king was `Awf ibn Abi Shammar, and he was followed by al-Harith ibn Abi Shammar who was king when God sent his Prophet.

1080. Several historians relate that Hassan ibn Thabit al-Ansari visited al-Harith ibn Abi Shammar the Ghassanid in al-Sham. At that time al-Nu`man ibn al-Mundhir al-Lakhmi, king of al-Hira, was his rival. When Hassan came to al-Harith, the latter said to him: “Son of a louse, it has reached me that you prefer al-Nu`man to me.” Hassan replied: “How can I possibly prefer him to you? By God, your backside is more

handsome than his face, your mother is nobler than his father, your father is more honorable than his entire people, your left hand is more generous than his right, your withholding of gifts is more beneficial than his generosity, the little from you is more than much from him, your tiny brook is more bountiful than his lake, your stool is more elevated than his throne, your rivulet is more abundant than his sea, your day is longer than his month, your month lasts longer than his year, your year is more advantageous than his eternity, your fire stick glows more brightly than his*, your soldiers are more powerful than his, and you are from Ghassan whereas he is from Lakhm, so how can I possibly prefer or compare him to you?” Al-Harith said to him: “Son of a louse, this speech can best be rendered in verse.” Hassan then recited:

*I was told that Abu Mundhir wishes to rival al-Harith the Younger:
Your backside is more handsome than his face,
Your mother is more noble than al-Mundhir.
And your left hand, even when awkward,
Is like his right hand helping a person in difficulty.*

1081. Al-Harith was succeeded by Jabala ibn al-Ayham ibn Jabala ibn al-Harith ibn Tha`laba ibn Jafna ibn `Amr ibn `Amir ibn Haritha ibn Imru`ul Qays ibn Tha`laba ibn Mazin, Mazin being Ghassan ibn al-Azd ibn al-Ghawth. Al-Harith was the king praised by Hassan ibn Thabit in numerous and well known poems.

1082. The realm of the kings of Ghassan was in the region of Yarmuk and Jawlan as also between the Ghuta of Damascus and its districts. Some Ghassanids settled in the region of al-Urdunn, in al-Sham. Jabala was the one who embraced Islam then apostasized, fearing shame and retaliation in kind from someone he had slapped. This was a well known incident mentioned in our earlier books together with the histories of the kings of Tanukh, Salih, Ghassan and others who reigned

in al-Sham. So too was the appeal addressed by the Prophet to al-Harith ibn Abi Shammar to embrace Islam where he invited him to the true faith. We have given an account of his history, his conversion to Islam and his dealings with the Prophet in our two works, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*.

1083. Al-Nabigha al-Dhubyani recited the following verses about his father:

*Here is a youth, handsome of face,
Who greets one with all good things,
And is quick to fulfill his word.
Whether it is al-Harith the Elder, or al-Harith the Younger:
Al-Harith is the best of mankind!
Then there are the two named Hind,
And an ancestor, quick to do good deeds.
Five of their ancestors: how to describe them?
They are the best who drink rain-water from clouds.*

1084. The total number of Ghassanid kings of al-Sham was eleven kings. There were other kings in al-Sham, as for instance in the district of Madib, in the land of al-Balqa', in the region of Damascus, or in Mada'in Lut, in the lands of al-Urdunn and Palestine. These latter were five cities, and the capital and major city among them was the city of Sodom [*Sadum*]. The title of each of their kings was Bara`. This is mentioned in the Torah where the names of the five cities are cited. We have omitted to mention this because in this work we have taken upon ourselves to be brief.

1085. The Arab tribes of Kinda and others like Qahtan and Ma`add all had many kings but we have decided not to mention them since they did not possess general or common titles such as "caliph", "Kisra", "Caesar" or "Najashi" and in order not to make this book any longer by

mentioning them. In our earlier works we mentioned all the Arab kings from Ma`add, Qahtan and other tribes who were called kings of certain kingdoms among ancient nations and kingdoms that lasted, both white and black in color, whose histories could be narrated or transmitted to us. In this work we merely mention those kings whose kingship or kingdom was widely known, doing so in order to abbreviate and abridge our account here but also to draw attention to their histories in our earlier works.

Chapter 46

An account of Arab nomads and the nomads of other nations, together with the reason for their living in deserts, and a brief history of the Arabs, and other matters relevant thereto

1086. We have already mentioned the progeny of Qahtan, and that of other extinct Arab tribes such as Tasm, `Ad, Jadis, `Imlaq, Jurhum, Thamud, `Abil, Wabar and others we have mentioned who have vanished from the face of the earth. Those among them who survived came to be included among Arabs who remain to this day, viz, Qahtan and Ma`add. We know of no other Arab tribe of the ancient period that has remained and can be pointed out on this earth except Ma`add and Qahtan. We have also mentioned their kings like the Tubba`s and Adhwa`, and their journeys throughout the earth, and who among them built monuments in east and west, or founded great cities like Ifriqis son of Abraha, who built cities in the west like the cities of Ifriqiya and Sicily, the agricultural lands he established and the buildings he built. We also narrated the journey of Shammar eastwards, his building the city of Samarqand, the Himyar population he left behind in that locality as well as in Tibet and China. This was mentioned in the verses of some of their poets, early and late, such as Di`bil ibn `Ali al-Khuza`i* in his ode where he answers al-Kumait* and boasts of their ancient kings and

their journeys throughout the earth. We have already mentioned in an earlier section of this work some of what he recited regarding this matter.

1087. Yemen had kings, early and late, who were not called Tubba` so long as the people of al-Shihr and Hadramawt were not their subjects. They deserved the title of Tubba` only when they ruled over these people. Whoever could not include the people of Hadramawt in his dominion was called king but not Tubba`. In the Quran, we find in the story of Quraish and their boasting of their strength and numbers the following verse {Are they better than the people of Tubba`?} This refers to the time when Tubba` entered the Sanctuary, and God sent darkness upon it. He was called Tubba` because of those who followed him (*tabi`ahu*). This is transmitted from `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas.

1088. Tubba` Abu Karib had journeyed in the earth, conquering kingdoms and humbling them, then marched into the land of Iraq during the period of separate kingdoms. Their head at that time was Jawdhar son of Sabur. Abu Karib met in battle a king of these separate kingdoms called Qubad, to be distinguished from Qubad son of Fairuz the Sasanid. Qubad was defeated and Abu Karib took over his realm, becoming king of Iraq, al-Sham, al-Hijaz and a large part of the east.

1089. Concerning that event and what he accomplished, Tubba` recited the following poem:

*That was the time when we turned our horses round from Zafar,
Then rode far upon them.*

*With our horses we plundered the realm of Qubad,
And the son of Aqlud came to me in chains.*

*We clothed the Sacred House that God made sacrosanct,
With embroidered drapes and costly fabrics.*

We remained at the House for ten days of that month,

And made a key for its door.

He also recited:

*I do not deserve to be called the Yemeni Tubba`
If my cavalry do not run through the Sawad of Iraq,
Or if the tribe of Rabi`a is not forced to pay me tribute,
Unless obstacles stand in my way.*

1090. The tribes of Nizar ibn Ma`add waged several wars and fought many battles against Tubba`. From among the Ma`dd, the tribes of Rabi`a, Mudar, Iyad and Anmar massed against him, recalled their common ancestor Nizar, forgave each other their blood-wit and revenge, and thus defeated him. Concerning this, Abu Du`ad al-Iyadi recited the following verses from an ode:

*We imposed a tribute on Tubba`:
The best of Yemeni drapes and a levy of gold.
Abu Karib fled; he was a coward and a cheating liar.*

1091. In our book *al-Awsat* we mentioned the lineage of Abraham, God's friend, and the progeny of Isma`il and how the line branched off to Nizar ibn Ma`add, and the further branching of the line from Nizar ibn Ma`add ibn `Adnan. We shall now in this place narrate the story of the four sons of Nizar with al-Af`a ibn al-Af`a al-Jurhumi, then follow this up with what we intend to treat in this chapter of our book, namely, the reason why nomadic Arabs lived in deserts, as also others who inhabited mountains, valleys and the wilderness.

1092. Some who narrate the history of the Arabs assert that Nizar ibn Ma`add had four sons: Iyad, Nizar's patronymic, Anmar, father of Bajila, and Khath`am---though some dispute this because a group of genealogists attach him to the Yemen while others describe Khath`am as the progeny of Anmar ibn Nizar---Rabi`a and Mudar. When Nizar was on the point of death, he summoned his sons, then called for an

aged slave woman, her black hair streaked with grey, and said to Iyad: “This slave woman and others like her of my property shall belong to you.” Then he summoned Anmar and called for a bag of gold coins as he sat in an assembly and said to him: “This bag of gold and other such things from my property shall belong to you and you shall also inherit the assembly.” He then took Rabi`a by the hand and made him enter a black tent of hair and said: “This dark horse and the black tent and such things from my property shall be yours.” He then took the hand of Mudar and led him into a red leather tent and said: “This tent and such things from my property shall be yours.” He added: “If you are confused about this division of my property, go and see Al-Af`a ibn al-Af`a al-Jurhumi---then king of Najran---and he will divide my property. Be content with his judgment.”

1093. Nizar died soon afterwards, and dividing the inheritance became a problem for his sons. So they rode out on their camels and headed towards the land of al-Af`a. When at a day and night’s distance from their destination in the land of Najran, and as they were crossing a desert, they saw the footprints of a camel. Iyad said: “The camel whose footprints you see is one-eyed.” Anmar said: “The camel has no tail.” Rabi`a said: “He has a distorted chest.” Mudar said: “He is prone to run away.” They were soon overtaken by a man hurrying along on a speedy camel. When he came alongside them he said: “Did you happen to see a runaway camel when travelling in this direction?” Iyad asked: “Is your camel one-eyed?” “Yes, he is,” replied the man. Anmar asked him: “Is your camel tail-less?” “Yes, he is,” replied the man. Rabi`a asked him: “Does your camel have a distorted chest?” “Yes, he does,” replied the man. Mudar asked him: “Is your camel prone to run away?” “Yes, he is,” replied the man. The man then said: “Where is my camel? Show me where he is.” They replied: “We swear we neither detected nor saw

your camel.” He replied: “You are holding my camel, for you have not erred a whit in describing him.” They replied: “We saw no camel of yours at all.” So he followed them to Najran.

1094. Dismounting at the gate of al-Afʿa, they sought his permission to enter and were granted permission. When they were inside the man shouted from outside the gate: “O king, these people stole my camel.” They swore they had not seen it. So al-Afʿa summoned the man and asked: “What is it that you claim?” He answered: “These people stole my camel and are now holding it.” Turning to the brothers, al-Afʿa asked: “What do you say?” They answered: “While on our journey to you we saw the footprints of a camel.” Iyad said: “He is one-eyed.” “How do you know?” said al-Afʿa. Iyad replied: “I saw him vigorously feeding on grass, devouring one patch and not touching the other, though the grass was abundant and in heaps. So I knew he was one-eyed.” Anmar said: “I saw him voiding his dung in lumps. Had he had a tail, he would have scattered his dung around, so I knew he was tailless.” Rabiʿa said: “I saw the traces of one foot to be firmly imprinted while the other was faint so I knew he had a distorted chest.” Mudar said: “I saw that he fed on one patch of ground then pass on, and did not feed on grass that was abundant and in heaps, then come to pasture that was less plentiful and feed on it, so I knew he was a runaway camel.”

1095. Al-Afʿa said: “These people have spoken the truth. They detected the traces of your camel but they do not possess it. Go and look for your camel.” Al-Afʿa then said to the brothers: “Who are you?” They told him their story and informed him of their lineage so he welcomed them warmly then said: “What is your problem?” They narrated to him the story of their father and al-Afʿa said: “How can you possibly need me when you are so perspicacious?” They replied: “Our father commanded

us to do so.” So he directed them to be lodged and instructed a servant of his in charge of his guesthouse to treat them with warm hospitality and provide them with the best accommodation, and be as kind as possible to them.

1096. He then summoned a page from among his servants who was a person of wit and intelligence and said to him: “I want you to monitor every single word they utter and inform me accordingly.” When they were settled in the guesthouse, the housekeeper brought them a honeycomb disc and they said: “Never have we seen or tasted honey purer or sweeter than this.” Iyad said: “You have spoken the truth, if only the bees had not made it in the skull of a tyrant!” The page remembered that remark. At lunchtime they were served with the grilled meat of a lamb. They ate it and said: “Never have we eaten a better grilled nor more tender or more fatty meal.” Anmar said: “You have spoken the truth. If only it had not been fed on the milk of a female dog!” Then they were served with wine and when they had drunk they said: “Never have we partaken of wine more delicate, more tasty, more pure or sweeter smelling than this.” Rabi`a said: “All this is true. If only the vine had not sprouted from a tomb!” Then they said: “Never have we been guests at a more generous place of rest or an abode more abounding with good things than the one provided by this king.” Mudar said: “True enough except that it belongs to other than his father.”

1097. The page then went and reported to al-Af`a all that they had said, and al-Af`a entered upon his mother and said: “Swear to tell me the truth. Who am I and who is my father?” She replied: “O son, what led you to ask me this question? You are the son of al-Af`a, the great king.” He said: “You must tell me the truth.” When he insisted she said: “Your father al-Af`a after whom you are named was an old and sick man, and I was afraid that kingship would depart from our royal house. A royal

prince had come to visit us and I called him to come to me. He came and I became pregnant with you.” He then sent word to the housekeeper to tell him about the honeycomb offered to the travellers and what its origin had been and he replied: “We were informed about a swarm of bees in the yard of a house so I sent some people to collect the honey and they told me that they fell upon decayed and ugly bones in that yard, and found that the bees had built their honeycomb inside a skull among these bones. They brought back such honey as I have never seen its like, and I offered it to our guests because of its excellent quality.” He then sent word to the keeper of his table to ask about the grilled lamb that was fed to the guests and the man said: “I told the shepherd to send me his best lamb and he sent it to me.” Al-Afʿa said: “Ask the shepherd about that lamb,” and he did so. The shepherd replied: “The lamb was the first born of my flock this year. Its mother died but the lamb survived. I had a female dog that had given birth, so the young lamb felt at ease among the puppies and would feed from the female dog along with its puppies. I found no lamb to equal it among my flock so I sent it to you.” He then sent word to the wine master to ask about the wine served to his guests and he replied: “The wine came from the grapes of a vine planed on the grave of your father and there is nothing like it among the Arabs.” Al-Afʿa said: “What are these people? They must be demons!”

1098. Al-Afʿa then summoned them and said: “What is your problem? Tell me your story.” Iyad said: “My father left me as my share of inheritance an aged female servant, her black hair streaked with grey, along with whatever is its like.” Al-Afʿa said: “Your father left you a flock of speckled sheep. They are yours together with their shepherds and the servant.” Anmar said: “My father left me a bag of gold and his assembly and whatever is their like.” Al-Afʿa said: “Your father left

you watered and irrigated land.” Rabi`a said: “My father left me a dark horse and a black tent and all that resembles them.” Al-Af`a said: “Your father left you dark horses and weapons and they are yours with the slaves that go with them.” He was thus called “Rabi`a of the Horse”.

Mudar said: “My father left me a red leather tent and whatever resembles it from his property.” Al-Af`a said: “Your father left you red camels and they are yours along with what resembles them.” So Mudar acquired the camels, the red tent and the gold, and was called “Mudar of the Red Objects.”

1099. The brothers now settled down with their maternal uncles, the Jurhum, in Mecca. A plague then afflicted them and the sheep and most of the camels died, leaving only the horses. So Rabi`a would mount his horses and go on raids in order to support his brothers. During those years Anmar lost all he possessed. Then prosperity returned and the rains fell, the camels returned to health, became lusty and fat and multiplied and grew in number, and Mudar took care of his brothers. As they were thus occupied, the herders came with their camels, dined at night and gave dinner to their shepherds. Mudar stood up to give instructions to his shepherds. Meanwhile Anmar was munching the flesh of a bone. In total darkness and without seeing anything, Anmar tossed the bone which pegged itself into Mudar’s eye, dislodging it. Mudar cried out: “My eye! My eye!” and his brothers busied themselves with him. Anmar then mounted on one of his best camels and headed for the land of Yemen. He and his brothers henceforth became enemies, as explained above.

1100. These then were the four sons of Nizar. All the progeny of Nizar descend from them, as outlined above. So Mudar “The Red” is called thus because of the red tent and so the tribe of Mudar boast in prose and verse of this fact. Rabi`a “of the horse” and Khath`am boast of their

chivalry and courage, their valor and their raiding because of the horse we mentioned. We already mentioned what happened to Iyad and his descendants and to Anmar, explaining the cause of hostility between the branches of their lineage and what genealogists have stated about his descendants.

1101. Each one of the four sons and their progeny is the subject of tales too many to mention in detail, such as the lands where they settled, the branching of their lineage and the order of succession of their generations. People have treated these subjects, though in our earlier works we too dealt with these histories in summary form, making it unnecessary to repeat them here. Let us now turn to the main topic to which this chapter is devoted, namely the reason why nomadic Arabs and other nomads of barbarous nations like the Turks, Kurds, Bajja and Berbers, chose to live in deserts or in the wilderness or in mountains, and why they did so.

1102. People have offered different reasons for why they did so. Many have asserted that the first generation of mankind to inhabit the earth remained for some time without building anything or founding cities and that their habitations consisted of things resembling huts and structures giving shade. Then some began to build dwellings and succeeding generations began to build buildings. However, a group remained attached to their earlier customs and inclinations by dwelling in huts and shady dwellings, travelling from place to place seeking herbage in tranquil and fertile lands, and leaving them when the lands became arid. This group of mankind simply followed in the footsteps of the ancients.

1103. Another group of people have argued that this all began when the waters of the flood, with which God destroyed the earth in the time of Noah, receded. The survivors from that flood dispersed, seeking the

most fertile and choicest regions, whereas others separated themselves from the rest and pursued herbage, settling in deserts. Still others settled in regions of their choice like the Nabat who built up the region of Babil and those who resided there, such as the progeny of Ham son of Noah, along with Nimrud son of Kan`an son of Sannajarib son of Nimrud the First son of Kush son of Ham son of Noah. This was when Nimrud was made king of the region of Babil by al-Dahhak, who is Biyurasf. Other examples include those who settled in the land of Egypt from among the children of Ham, as already mentioned in the chapter on Egypt and its history in this book, or those who settled in al-Sham from among the Canaanites.

1104. We could also cite the example of those tribes who settled in the deserts of the Berbers, namely, Hawwara, Zanata, Darisa, Maghila, Warfajjuma, Nafza, Kutama, Lawata, Muzata, Nafusa, Lamta, Sadina, Masmuda, Zanara, Ghumara, Qalama, Awraba, Utaita, Biyata, the Simjun clan, Arkana, who are part of Zanata, and the clans of Warkilan, Yasdurian, Awfas, Wartajan, Mathusa and Sanhaja.

1105. One could also mention those kinds of Abyssinians and others who settled in the forest known as the forest of `Afarim such as the Sun, Ra`win, `Awrafa, and Yaksum, as also others who did not settle in the forest but expanded their territory westwards.

1106. We stated above that the original land of the Berbers in particular was the land of Palestine, in al-Sham, and that their king was Jalut, a royal title, until the prophet David killed their king Jalut. Thereafter they had no king and they ended up in the western regions at a place called Lubiya and Maraqiya, where they spread out. Among them, the tribes of Zanata, Maghila and Darisa settled in the mountainous regions of those lands and also the valleys, residing in the land of Barqa.

Hawwara settled in the land of Iyas, which is the territory of Tripoli of the Maghrib, a word which means “three cities.”

1107. These territories once belonged to the Franks and Romans who, when the Berbers invaded their lands, emigrated to the islands of the Mediterranean where most of them came to settle in the island of Sicily. The Berbers meanwhile dispersed throughout the land of Ifriqiya, reaching the furthest Maghrib to a distance of some one thousand miles, and reaching a place called Qabusa. This is located at a distance of more than two thousand miles from the land of Qayrawan. Meanwhile, the Romans and Franks retreated into their cities and built up areas, having made treaties of peace with the Berbers. These latter chose to live in mountains, valleys, sandy wastes and deserts, and on the borders of wastelands and barren regions. From the Sea of Sicily and Ifriqiya coral is imported. These seas are connected to the Sea of Darkness known as the Ocean [*Uqiyanus*]. Other nations than those mentioned here inhabited other regions of the earth and built cities in east and west.

1108. The Arabs were of the view that journeying constantly through the earth and choosing suitable locations is a way of life more worthy of men of renown and pride, saying: “Let us be our own masters in the land and live wherever we want, for this is better than the alternative.” It is for this reason that they chose a nomadic way of life.

1109. Others have asserted that the ancient Arabs, whom God had imbued with such qualities as high-mindedness, lofty ideals and values, great self-respect, disdain of any shameful deeds, and avoidance of all disgrace, began to consider the question of settlement and the adoption of permanent homes. They pondered life in cities and buildings and judged it degrading and deficient. People of knowledge and discrimination among them said: “A land can sicken and be prone to

disease just like the body. It is thus necessary to choose locations in accordance with their degree of health, since the air might become insalubrious, causing harm to the bodies of their inhabitants and upsetting the temperaments of their residents.” The wise among them said: “Buildings and walled spaces restrict free movement on land, curtail wanderings, confine the spirit, and restrain the instinct of competing for honors. So there can be no good in enduring such a life.” They further claimed that shadows and buildings cause food to be blocked in the body, prevent wind from passing, stop it from receding and hinders the dirt it carries from disappearing. Accordingly, they preferred to live in the wilderness and among green pastures where they feared no restriction on their movement and no harm to afflict them, and where dirt was remote, the air was pure, and plagues did not exist. As their understanding became sharp in these localities and their mental faculties became free from blemish in moving from one locality to the next, their temperaments became healthy and their perceptions became acute. Their skin color became clear and their bodies were toughened. This is because the mind and the understanding are generated where the air itself is generated and the climate is formed. Such a life ensures freedom from bodily defects, ailments, illness and pain. Hence the Arabs chose to live in deserts and wildernesses, and because of this they are the strongest of mankind in resolution, the sharpest in understanding, the healthiest in bodies, the noblest of neighbors, the most ready to fulfill their sacred obligations, the most generous and the most perspicacious. This is all the result of what they acquired by living in a pure air and clean climate. The air in cities, on the other hand, is thick with pollution and clouded with dirt because of what rises up to it or is tossed around in its open spaces and quarters from uneven ground or swamps. The air will therefore contain all that rises up to it. City

people are then exposed to the dirt that accumulates, bringing diseases and ailments, and these gather together in their bodies and multiply in their hair and on their skin. So the Arabs have been preferred to the nomads of all other nations because of their choice of localities and places to inhabit.

1110. Al-Mas`udi said: This is why the Arabs were free from the violence to be found among the Kurds and other mountain dwellers from among uncouth nations and others who inhabit rugged high ground or sandy wastes. This is because nations that inhabit these mountains and valleys possess natural traits of character that correspond to their habitats, high lying or low, since there is no evenness or moderation in the land they inhabit. So the character traits of their inhabitants become rude and coarse.

1111. Al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy, al-Sharqi ibn al-Qutami and other historians relate that an Arab orator went on a delegation to visit Kisra Anushirwan, who then asked him about the Arabs, their wilderness habitat and their preference for a nomadic life. The orator replied: "O king, they owned the land but the land did not own them. They had no need to be protected by walls but relied instead on sharp swords and pointed spears as places in which to hide or as fortresses. He who among them owns a piece of the earth regards the whole earth as his domain. They are a people who journey to its choicest regions and head towards its most charming localities." The king asked: "How do they stand relative to the celestial spheres?" He answered: "They are under the two stars of Ursa Minor, the pinnacle of the Milky Way, the extremity of Capricorn, and thus lying to the east of the earth." The king asked: "What are their winds?" The man replied: "Most are oblique by night and they get the eastern wind when the sun is in transit." The king asked: "How many winds are there?" The man answered: "There are

four. If one veers, it becomes northeasterly or southeasterly. Between Canopus and the edge of dawn it is southerly. Opposite to these and what faces them in the west is northerly. What comes from behind the Ka`ba is the west wind and what comes from the opposite direction is the east wind.” The king asked: “What food do they mostly eat?” He answered: “Meat, milk, date wine and dates.” The king asked: “What are their character traits?” The man replied: “A high sense of honor, generosity, feeding guests, keeping faith with their neighbors, giving refuge to those who are fearful, fulfilling their obligations, and sacrificing themselves in a noble cause. They are the lords of the night and the lions of the thickets, they make the land prosper and are a source of comfort in the wilderness. They have become used to be satisfied with little and hate to abase themselves. They exact revenge, despise shameful deeds and protect those in need of protection.” The king said: “You have described the generosity and nobility of a nation, so it behooves us to welcome you warmly since you are one of them.”

1112. The Arabs chose localities on land to serve them as winter and summer quarters. Some settled in Najd, others in Tihama, still others in lowlands like the Ghawr of Bisan and Murra in al-Sham, in the districts of Palestine and al-Urdunn, and the tribes of Lakhm and Judham who resided there. All Arabs have springs of water around which they congregate and parcels of land they own and which they habitually visit such as al-Dahna’, al-Samawa, al-Taha’im, the highlands of the earth, the lowlands, the plains, and the depressions. You would hardly see an Arab tribe wandering very far from their customary watering places or famous springs like the springs of Darij, al-`Aqiq, al-Hab’a and similar water courses.

1113. As for the various kinds of Kurds, there is a dispute concerning their origin. Some believe they are descended from Rabi`a ibn Nizar ibn

Ma`add ibn `Adnan, and more directly from Bakr ibn Wa'il, and that they separated themselves in ancient times and took to the mountains and valleys for reasons that impelled them to do so. In these habitats they became neighbors of nations that lived in cities and built up regions such as non-Arabs or Persians. Accordingly, they lost their original language and their language became non-Arabic. Each group of Kurds has their own Kurdish language. Others claim they descend from Mudar ibn Nizar and more particularly from the progeny of Kurd ibn Mard ibn Sa`sa`a ibn Hawazin, and that they separated themselves in ancient days because of hostilities between them and the Ghassanids.

1114. Still others argue that they descend from Rabi`a and Mudar, took refuge in mountains as they sought water and pastures, and lost their Arabic tongue because of neighboring nations. Yet others assert that the Kurds are descended from the slave women of Solomon son of David. This was when his kingdom was taken from him and Satan, known as the "Body", copulated with Solomon's unbelieving slave women though God protected believing women from his sexual advances. The unbelieving women then became pregnant and when God restored Solomon to his kingdom and the pregnant women delivered, Solomon said: "Send these women away (*ikriduhunna*) to mountains and valleys". He then classified the children according to their mothers and they intermarried and multiplied. This was the origin of the Kurds.

1115. Some people maintain that Dahhak "of the many mouths"--- a figure mentioned earlier in this work, and who is claimed by both Arabs and Persians to belong to their nation---that from his shoulders two snakes issued that could only feed on human brains. He thus exterminated a large number of Persians. So there gathered together to wage war against him a great host led by Afridun, carrying aloft a leather banner that the Persians call *dirafsh kawiyan*. Afridun captured

al-Dahhak and chained him in Mount Damavand, as already mentioned. The vizier of al-Dahhak used to slaughter every day a ram and a man, mix their brains together and feed the two snakes that issued from al-Dahhak's shoulders, then expel whoever escaped to the mountains. Those who escaped then became wild and multiplied and this was how the Kurds came into being, bred descendants and were divided into clans.

1116. Neither the Persians nor ancient and modern historians dispute the authenticity of this account of al-Dahhak. The Persians recount strange stories, found in their books, about al-Dahhak and Satan, and further claim that Tahmurath, mentioned above among First Persian kings, is the prophet Noah. The word *dirafsh* in Pahlevi, or early Persian, means banner, short spear or flag.

1117. As for the Turks, we have already treated much of their history. Some have mistakenly claimed that the Turks are descended from Tuh son of Afridun. But this is an obvious mistake because Tuh was made governor of the Turks by Afridun and Salm governor of the Romans, so how could he be their governor if they were his descendants? What we mentioned above proves that the Turks are not descended from Tuh son of Afridun but Tuh does have a well-known progeny among the Turks. The most respected of Turkish races are the Tibetans, and they are from Himyar, who were settled there by some Tubba's, as we already mentioned.

1118. As regards our discussion of the Kurds, the best known account among people and the most authentic genealogy is that they are descended from Rabi`a ibn Nizar. Thus, the kind of Kurds called Shuhjan, who inhabited the two Mahs of Kufa and Basra, which are the districts of Dinawar and Hamadan, are all agreed that they are the descendants of Rabi`a ibn Nizar. As for the other kinds of Kurds such

as the Majurdan, who belong to Kankur and live in Adharbaijan, the Hadhbaniyya and Shurat, and those residing in al-Jibal like the Shadnjan, Lurriyya, Madanjan, Mazdankan, Barisan, Jalaliyya, Jabarqiyya, Jawaniyya, and Mustakan, along with those who settled in al-Sham such as the Dababila and others, the best known account of their genealogy is that they are descended from Mudar ibn Nizar. Among the latter are the Ya`qubiyya and the Juruqan, who are Christians and live beyond Mosul and Mount Judi. Among Kurds too there are groups who subscribe to Kharijite* views and renounce both `Uthman and `Ali.

1119. This then is a summary account of the nomads of the world. We omitted mention of the Ghuzz and Kharlukh, who are kinds of Turks that live in the lands of Gharsh, Bust and Bistam, beyond Sijistan, as also the groups known as Qufs, Baluj and Jatt who live in Kirman.

1120. As for the Arabs and their battle-days and wars, mention has been made of them in our previous works, where we discussed their history in the pre-Islamic period as well as in the Islamic, and where we recounted such battles as the Day of Hab'a, the war between Dhubyan and Ghatafan, the conflict between the `Abs and the other Arabs, both Nizaris and Yemenis, the war of Dahis and Ghabra', the wars between Bakr and Taghlib which included the war of the Basus and the battle-days of Kulab and Khazara, the death of Shas ibn Zuhair, the battle-days of Dhi Qar and Shi`b Jabala, and the deeds of Banu `Amir and others, the wars between al-Aws and al-Khazraj and those between Ghassan and `Akk.

1121. In what follows we shall recount, God willing, a summary history of the vanished Arabs and others and their dispersal on earth, and mention in brief their views and religious beliefs in the pre-Islamic period, and what they believed regarding such things as the ghouls, the

ghostly voices (*hawatif*), tracking, soothsaying, physiognomy, the echo (*sada*) and the bird called *ham* as well as other customs and beliefs.

Chapter 47

An account of the religions of the Arabs and their beliefs in the pre-Islamic period, their dispersal in the lands, together with reports about the men of the elephant, `Abd al-Muttalib, and matters related thereto

1122. Al-Mas`udi said: The Arabs of the Jahiliyya period were made up of several groups. Some believed in one God and accepted him as the creator and accepted the resurrection and the raising of the dead, and knew for certain that God rewards the obedient and punishes the disobedient. In this and in our previous works we made mention of those who summoned people to God and pointed to his signs in the period between Jesus and Muhammad such as Quss ibn Sa`ida al-Iyadi, Ri`ab al-Shanni and Bahira the monk, the latter two being from the clan of `Abd al-Qais.

1123. Among them too were some who who accepted the Creator and the creation of the world and were certain of the resurrection and of the life hereafter but denied prophets and devoted themselves to idol worship. These are the ones mentioned by God in the Qur'an and are quoted as saying: {We only worship them to bring us close in nearness to God}. These were the people who went on pilgrimage to the idols, visited them regularly, sacrificed camels to them, created rituals for them, and for their sakes declared certain acts licit and others illicit.

1124. Some Arabs accepted the Creator but denied the prophets and the resurrection, inclining to the views of those who believed in Eternal Time, and these are mentioned by God who speaks of their unbelief and blasphemy as follows: {They say: 'There is nothing but our present life.

We die, we live, and only Time destroys us.’} God answered them as follows: {Of this they have no knowledge. They are merely guessing}.

1125. Some Arabs inclined to Judaism or Christianity, and some persisted in their obstinacy and “mounted their high horse”. Others among them worshipped the angels claiming they were the daughters of God. They worshipped them in order that they might intercede for them with God. These are the ones mentioned by God as follows: {And they ascribe daughters to God! Glory be to him! But to themselves they have whatever they desire!} as also in another verse: {Have you considered al-Lat and al-`Uzza? And Manat, the third, the other? To you belong males and to God females? That indeed is a crooked way of sharing!}

1126. Among those who believed in the one God, accepted God’s promise and threat, and forsook blind imitation of ancestors was `Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim ibn `Abd Manaf. It was he who dug again the Well of Zamzam that had been covered with earth. This took place in the reign of Kisra son of Qubad. He extracted from the well two golden gazelles studded with pearls, precious stones and other ornaments together with seven *Qala`i* swords and five full coats of mail. From the swords he moulded a gate for the Ka`ba and he turned one of the two gazelles into golden plates on the gate while the other was placed inside the Ka`ba. `Abd al-Muttalib was the first to institute the custom of supplying food and water for pilgrims and was the first to offer sweet drinking water in Mecca and the first to cover the gate of the Ka`ba with gold.

1127. He had vowed that if God gave him ten male children he would dedicate one of them to God. When God bestowed ten sons upon him, he drew near to himself the one he loved most, `Abdullah, father of the Prophet. There is a long story about him and how he was the subject of a divination by arrows and was ransomed in return for one hundred

camels. When Abraha marched with the Abyssinians to the idols of the Meccan sanctuary, he camped at a place known as Janb al-Muhassab. `Abd al-Muttalib was brought to see Abraha who had been told that he was the lord of Mecca. Abraha showed him great respect and was in awe of him because the light of the Prophet was shining like a halo on his forehead. He then said to him: "Ask me, O `Abd al-Muttalib. What is your pleasure?" `Abd al-Muttalib refused to ask for anything except the return of some of his camels, so Abraha ordered them restored to him and said: "Why don't you ask me to go back where I came from?" He replied: "I am the master of these camels and the Sacred House has a master who shall protect it from you." `Abd al-Muttalib then returned to Mecca and recited the following verse:

*O people of Mecca, there has come to you
A king with elephants, their tusks covered in foam.*

1128. `Abd al-Muttalib then ordered the Quraish to take to the depths of valleys and the tops of mountains, to escape the harm to be done by the Abyssinians. He then shod the feet of the camels and set them to roam in the Sanctuary, reciting the following:

*O God, a man defends his home, so defend yours.
Let not their cross triumph,
Nor their cunning ever triumph over yours.*

1129. God then sent against them the birds called *ababil* that resembled hornets, which dropped on them stones made of *sijjil*, mud mixed with stones extracted from the sea, each bird carrying three stones, and God destroyed them. Earlier on, we mentioned the story of Abu Righal who pointed out to the invaders the road to Mecca and how he and they perished on that road.

1130. The Abyssinians then began to ask for Nufail ibn Habib al-Khath`ami, their guide for their return journey. Nufail meanwhile could

hear them talking and asking for him but he was terrified by the calamity that befell them and had left them to seek safety. So the Abyssinians were lost. Concerning this, Nufail spoke the following verses which begin as follows:

I beseech you, by your beauty, O Rudaina! Answer my greeting!

Your sight rejoices our eyes this morning.

If only you had seen, but you will not see,

What we saw at Janb al-Muhassab.

I thanked God when I saw birds flinging stones upon us.

Everyone was asking about Nufail,

As if I had a debt to pay to the Abyssinians.

Earlier in this book we mentioned what the Abyssinians did and the death of their chieftain.

1131. When God had driven them back from the Ka`ba, `Abd al-Muttalib recited the following verses:

O you who call out, you have made me hear you,

I am not deaf to your call.

The House has a Lord to protect it,

And whoever visits it with evil intentions is destroyed.

Tubba` sought to destroy it, with an army from Himyar,

With Qudam as their leading clan.

He turned back from it, and in the veins of his neck

Was a wound which he suffered with self-restraint.

When the horses of al-Ashram were being destroyed,

I said "That Ashram has been tempted by the Sanctuary."

We are God's clan, as we were in ancient times,

And still are, from the time of Abraham's covenant.

We destroyed Thamud, through sheer force,

And before it `Ad of Iram.

*God still uses us as proof of his might,
By which he repels calamities from us.*

1132. Al-Mas`udi said: Some members of certain sects, who adopt extremist positions that defy the judgement of reason and the constraints of sense, deduce certain things from this poem, especially where it refers to `Abd al-Muttalib's clan "in ancient times". These people further allude to a eulogy of the Prophet in verse recited by al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib. This poem occurs in a report transmitted by Quraim ibn Aws ibn Haritha ibn La'm al-Ta'i, who had come from Tabuk to the Prophet as an emigrant in order to embrace Islam. Quraim adds that he heard al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib say to the Prophet: "Prophet of God, I would like to eulogize you." The Prophet answered: "Recite, my uncle, and may God never let your teeth drop*."

1133. Al-`Abbas then recited:

*Before the world was created, you were pure in heavenly shades,
Installed in paradise, where leaves covered Adam and Eve's shame.
Then you descended to earth. No human are you,
Neither a foetus were you nor a clot of blood.
Rather, you were a sperm, as if riding in a ship,
That unfurled its sails and was made safe from drowning.
A sperm you were, moving from loin to womb:
When one world passed away another like it came into being.
When you were born, earth itself glowed with light,
And your light lit up the horizon.
We are now living in that light, that radiancy,
And the paths of righteousness are being traversed.*

1134. These extremists maintain that this report is found in books on the Prophet's life and expeditions where that eulogy by al-`Abbas is recorded, together with the Prophet's pleasure when he heard it and

how he regarded it as a favorable omen. Thus, this group of extremists took the two poems cited above as evidence to support their esoteric views, and went on to deduce very doubtful beliefs which basic rationality and the requirements of research hold to be unacceptable.

1135. Such beliefs are found among the authors of those extremist groups and their skilled advocates, and among such groups as the Muhammadiyya, `Ulyaniyya and other extremists. These authors include Ishaq ibn Muhammad al-Nakh`i, known as al-Ahmar, in his book called *Kitab al-Sirat*, which is mentioned by al-Fayyad ibn `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Fayyad in his book called *al-Qistas*, where he refutes *Kitab al-Sirat*. That book is further mentioned by `Abdullah ibn Muhammad, known as al-Nahiki, who also refutes that same work. These two authors who refuted that work belong to the Muhammadiyya group while the book itself accords with the views of the `Ulyaniyya. In our previous works we discussed at length the views of the groups known as the Muhammadiyya, `Ulyaniyya, Mughiriyya, Qadariyya and other extremist groups who believe in delegation (*tafwid*) and intermediaries (*wasa`it*) where we refuted their views in detail and the views of all who believe in the transmigration of souls in the various bodies of animals, and who also claim to be Muslims, together with the views of the Greeks, Indians, Dualists, Magians, Jews and Christians.

1136. We also mentioned the views of Ahmad ibn Habit, Ibn Manus and Ja`far ibn Mubashshir al-Qasabi and all who advanced bizarre views, both ancient and modern, up to the present day which is the year 332, together with those who innovated views derived from the principles of their predecessors or expressed strange opinions that agreed with earlier views. Examples of these include al-Husain ibn Mansur al-Hallaj*, the followers of Abu Ya`qub al-Mazabili, the followers of al-Shari`i and others who later on adopted positions that

differed from their principles such as Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Shalmaghani, known as Ibn Abi al-`Azaqir, and others who pursued the same path.

1137. We further outlined the difference between these groups and others who believe in cycles at this time and who are expecting the time of appearance*, and those who advance arguments regarding the night and the day, since these groups in fact reject transmigration or that souls can migrate into the bodies of animals. They argue that it is impossible for the Eternal to allow any of what the other groups have mentioned as regards loss of soul. Let us now return to the subject we had been discussing earlier since this discussion has carried us far from the subject of `Abd al-Muttalib.

1138. There is a dispute among people regarding `Abd al-Muttalib. Some argue that he was a believer and a monotheist, that he never ascribed partners to God, nor did any other of the Prophet's ancestors; that he was born of pure progeny; and that he was informed that he was born from legal wedlock and not fornication. Others maintain that he and other ancestors of the Prophet were polytheists except for one whose faith was sincere. This subject is a point of dispute among the Imamis, the Mu`tazilites, the Khawarij, the Murji'a and others who argue about delegation versus choice*. The present book is not intended as a work of polemic and so we will refrain from setting forth the arguments of each party. We have in point of fact set out in detail the views of each of these parties and the arguments they adduced in our books entitled *al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat* and *al-Istibsar*, where we described the views of people on the imamate, and also in our book entitled *al-Safwa*.

1139. `Abd al-Muttalib used to enjoin upon his children kindness to kin and feeding the poor, and would promise them paradise and threaten

them with hell, which is the act of one who expects his progeny to experience an after-life, a resurrection and a raising from the dead. He entrusted the task of supplying water and food to pilgrims to his son `Abd Manaf, who is Abu Talib, and made him promise to care for the Prophet. The name of Abu Talib is also a subject of dispute: some, as mentioned above, say that he was called `Abd Manaf while others say that his patronymic, i.e. Abu Talib, was in fact his first name and that when `Ali ibn Abi Talib wrote a letter dictated and addressed by the Prophet to the Jews of Khaibar, he wrote his name as “`Ali ibn Abi Tlib” omitting the letter “a”. In a line of verse composed by `Abd al-Muttalib, he mentions his injunction to Abu Talib to care for the Prophet as follows:

I entrusted him whose patronymic is Talib

To care for the son of one who passed away and will not return.

1140. Most Arabs, both those who survived and those who vanished, believed in the Maker and accepted the existence of the Creator.

1141. In the days of al-Namrud son of Kush son of Ham son of Noah there occurred the great storms which destroyed the tower of al-Namrud in Babylon, in the land of Iraq. People went to sleep speaking Syriac and woke up the next morning speaking seventy-two different languages. The place thereafter was called Babil. Among the progeny of Sam son of Noah there arose nineteen languages, among the progeny of Ham son of Noah sixteen and among the progeny of Yafith son of Noah thirty-seven, as mentioned at the beginning of this book.

1142. Those who spoke Arabic were Ya`rub ibn Qahtan, Jurhum, `Ad, `Abil, Jadis, Thamud, `Imlaq, Tasm, Wabar and `Abd Dakhm. Ya`rub ibn Qahtan ibn `Abir ibn Shalikh ibn Salim ibn Arfakhshad ibn Sam ibn Noah departed from Babil with the progeny who followed him and others, reciting the following verses:

I am the son of Qahtan, the great and most excellent chief.

O people, march on, as the first vanguard.

I am the first to speak the easy language,

The clearest tongue, unambiguous.

March slowly to the right of the sun.

He then settled in Yemen as already described in this book.

1143. After him marched `Ad ibn `Us ibn Aram ibn Sam ibn Noah who departed with his progeny and others, reciting the following verses:

I am `Ad, tall, and heading to the desert,

Sam is my ancestor, son of Noah, the righteous guide.

You have seen Ya`rub the man of Ziyad,

Leading out followers, both newly acquired and old.

He settled in al-Ahqaf, between Oman, Hadramawt and Yemen. They then dispersed in the land. Many of them, among whom was Jairun ibn Sa`d ibn `Ad, settled in Damascus, built it up as a city, collected columns of marble, erected its edifices and called it Iram of the Columns. A report transmitted from Ka`b al-Ahbar gives a different version of Iram of the Columns. At the present time, which is the year 332, this is the name of a place in Damascus, namely one of its markets close to the great mosque. It is called Jairun, and Jairun Gate is part of a vast structure that was once the palace of the king. It had amazing bronze gates some of which are still in place while others are found on the great mosque. In earlier sections of this book we related the story of the prophet Hud.

1144. After `Ad ibn `Us, Thamud ibn `Abir ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Noah departed along with his progeny and those who followed, reciting:

I am the courageous youth who called out to Thamud:

O people, depart and do not hesitate.

Perhaps we will catch up with the others who left before,

And overtake the hero who preceded us:

Son of our father Ya`rub, the praiseworthy,

And `Ad, and what a steadfast youth is he!

This group settled in al-Hijr. Earlier in this work mention was made of them and their prophet Salih, and that they settled in Wadi al-Qura between al-Sham and the Hijaz. Following Thamud, Jadis ibn `Abir ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Noah departed with his progeny and followers, and recited:

I am Jadis, marching along the path.

O Thamud, I offer my soul and die for you!

You called me and I headed towards you,

As the camels marched on and your form came into view.

We have already mentioned that this group settled in al-Yamama.

1145. Following Jadis, `Imlaq ibn Lawad ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Noah departed with his progeny and followers, and recited:

When I saw people confused in their tongues,

And those among us who spoke the first language had gone,

I at once marched out on camels left to find their own way,

Slowly, and to the right of the sun.

1146. This group settled on the confines of the Sanctuary and the Tihamas while some of them headed to Egypt and the Maghrib. We mentioned earlier that some of them became Pharaohs of Egypt. We also stated earlier the view of those who attached the Amalekites and others we have mentioned to `Is son of Isaac son of Abraham, God's friend, and claimed that this group is descended from `Is, as mentioned already by us. The Amalekites had many kings in early days at places on earth like al-Sham and elsewhere and we have narrated their histories, dominions and wars in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

1147. In an earlier place in this book we narrated the story of Yusha` son of Nun with al-Samaida` ibn Hubar, the king of the Amalekites, in Ayla. The remnants of the Amalekites had gone over to the Romans who appointed them lords of the eastern frontiers of al-Sham, the west and al-Jazira, these regions being the borders between the Romans and the Persians. Among those appointed as chiefs by the Romans was Udhaina ibn al-Samaida` who is mentioned by al-A`sha in the following line of verse:

*He removed Udhaina from his realm,
And separated Dhu Yazan from his people.*

1148. The ruler after the Amalekites was Hassan ibn Udhaina ibn Zarib ibn Hassan, better known by his mother, Thirba. Ruling after him was `Amr ibn Zarib, and it is said that it was in fact `Amr who was known by his mother, Thirba. There were many wars between `Amr and Jadhima al-Abrash ibn Malik ibn Fahm al-Azdi. We have already mentioned that Jadhima killed `Amr and the killing of Jadhima by al-Zabba`.

1149. Following `Imlaq ibn Lawad, Tasm ibn Lawad ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Noah marched out with his progeny and followers and recited:

*I am Tasm and my ancestor is Sam,
That is, Sam son of Noah, the Imam.
When I saw brothers and uncles departing,
I said to myself: Follow those wandering camels.
Your brother is `Imlaq, so display your courage.
Behind me is Yafith and the family of Ham.*

This group settled in Bahrain.

1150. All groups mentioned above were nomads who then spread throughout the whole earth according to their places of settlement mentioned earlier. Jadis grew in numbers and appointed al-Aswad ibn

Ghifar as their king, and Tasm grew in numbers and appointed `Amluq ibn Jadis. `Ubaid ibn Shariya al-Jurhumi, when he visited Mu`awiya, stated that Tasm ibn Lawad ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Noah and Jadis ibn `Abir ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Noah are the extinct Arabs, and that both groups settled in al-Yamama, then called Jaww. Among Tasm was a king called `Amluq who was an unjust and violent king and whom nothing could divert from pursuing his own base desires. This was coupled with his persistent and aggressive actions against Jadis and his attacks and violence against them. Tasm remained like this for a very long time, an idle people who belittled their blessings and violated sanctities even though their land was the best and most prosperous, having all sorts of trees and vines, sumptuous orchards and mansions laid out in rows.

1151. The king, `Amluq, continued to behave in this manner until there came to him a woman from Jadis called Huzaila bint Mazin whose husband, called Mash, had abandoned and divorced her. The husband wanted to take away her child. She refused, so the two of them sought the judgment of `Amluq. The woman said: "O king, here is a son I carried for nine months, bore him in hardship, breast fed him till he was sated, and obtained no benefit from him. Now that his limbs have grown to fullness and his time of breast-feeding is over, he wants to take him from me by force, and rob him from me by violence, and leave me bereft of him." The woman's husband said: "You have taken your bridal money in full and the only thing I got out of him is an ignorant child, so do with him, O king, what you please." Amluq ordered the child to be taken away from her and to be included among his servants, then said to Huzaila: "Consider him dead [reading *in`ihi*] as a child and do not marry any other man after this one." Huzaila replied: "Marriage requires bridal money and fornication happens by force, and I have no

desire for either.” `Amluq then ordered that Huzaila’s husband be enslaved and that one tenth of his price should go to Huzaila and ordered her enslaved and one fifth of her price to go to her husband. Concerning this incident Huzaila recited the following verses:

*We came to the man of Tasm to judge between us,
And he pronounced an unjust sentence on Huzaila.
I swear: you were made a judge, but you were neither pious,
Nor did your verdict issue from understanding or legal knowledge.
I regretted what I did but could do nothing to one who went astray,
And my husband became confused and regretful.*

1152. When `Amluq heard what Huzaila had said, he was angry and ordered that no woman of Jadis was to be wed to a husband before being carried to him first in order to violate her before her husband did. The Jadis was to suffer this humiliation for a long time. This continued until the time when `Ufaira, also called al-Shamus, bint Ghifar al-Jadisi and sister of al-Aswad ibn Ghifar, was to be delivered to her husband on her wedding night. She was then taken to `Amluq al-Tasmi to sleep with her as was the custom. With her were singing girls who sang as follows:

*Begin with `Amluq. Get up and ride out,
And greet the morning with a wondrous fact.
You shall meet with what you did not request,
For no virgin can escape him.*

When `Ufaira entered the presence of `Amluq he violated her, then allowed her to depart. She came to her people, bloodied and with her dress torn from front and back, and recited:

*No one is more humiliated than Jadis:
Is this what is to be done to a bride?
Can a free man, O my people, accept this,*

One who has given his gift and paid the bridal money?

It were better for him to die

Than that this be done to his bride.

1153. She further recited the following verses, inciting her people, Jadis, against Tasm, and refused to proceed to her husband:

Is it right that this be done to your young girls,

When you are men as numerous as ants?

Will your young girl wake up all bloodied

The morning she was meant to have been delivered to her husband by women?

If you feel no anger at this event,

Become women who cannot be separated from kohl.

And here, ready for you, are perfumes for brides, for you were born

To be clothed in bridal garments and a full body bath.

How ugly and unseemly is one who does not defend his honor,

Yet swaggers amongst us like a stallion!

Had we been the men and you the women,

We would never have resigned ourselves to humiliation.

Die as honorable men! Fan the flames of war against your enemy,

A war whose flames are fed on dry firewood.

Otherwise, abandon this valley and take to some desolate land,

Where you will die emaciated.

O people, do not fear war, for it is conducted

By honorable men, who take it to heart.

In war, every cowardly and helpless person dies,

But the intelligent and righteous survive.

1154. When Jadis heard these and other words that she uttered, they grew angry. Al-Aswad ibn Ghifar, a chieftain whom they listened to, said to them: "O Jadis, obey me in what I shall command and call upon

you to do, for in it lies the path to everlasting glory and an end to humiliation.” “What might that be?” they asked. He said: “You know that these people--- meaning Tasm--- are not more mighty than you are but the power of their ruler over us and them is what forces us to obey them. Were it not for that, they are not superior to us, and if we defy them we can easily be their equal.” They replied: “We accept what you say but these people are our kinsmen, and are more numerous and better armed than us. If they win we fear they may not spare our lives.” He said: “O Jadis, you will either obey me in what I command and call you to do or I shall lean on my sword and kill myself.” They said: “We shall obey you in what you are determined to do.” He said: “I shall prepare a banquet for `Amluq and his people and invite them to it. If they come wearing their ordinary clothes, that is, in garments and sandals, we will attack them with our swords. I will take on the king myself and every man among you will take on one of their men.” They said: “Do what you please.” So they all agreed to that plan.

1155. `Ufaira then said to her brother al-Aswad: “Do not do this. Treachery is a base and shameful act. But attack these people in their homes and you will either win victory or die as honorable men.” They said: “No, we would rather trick them, because this will more likely give us victory over them and be more fitting as revenge against them.” `Ufaira then recited some verses quoted in our earlier books. So al-Aswad prepared a large banquet and commanded his people to bury their drawn swords in the sand near the place of the banquet. He then said to them: “If they come wearing their fine clothes, pull up your swords and attack them before they have taken their seats at the table. Begin with their chiefs for once you kill the chiefs you need not worry about the riff-raff and they will no longer be able to do anything hateful to you.” They said: “We shall do what you have commanded us.”

1156. Al-Aswad then invited `Amluq al-Tasmi and his followers, the chieftains of Tasm in al-Yamama, and they were quick to accept his invitation. When they arrived at the banquet, Jadis held firm to their plan. They pulled their swords out of the sand and assailed `Amluq and his followers, killing every single one of them, then went on to plunder their homes. Al-Aswad recited some verses on that occasion where he elegizes Tasm and mentions their viciousness and what `Amluq had done to his sister, verses too long to mention in this book but cited in our previous books.

1157. It is said that a man from Tasm, called Riyah ibn Murra al-Tasmi, escaped and went to see Hassan ibn Tubba` to seek his aid. The man had picked up a wet palm-branch which he covered with wet mud and took with him his female dog. When he came to Hassan he broke the dog's leg and removed the mud from the palm-branch which now appeared green. He then entered into Hassan's presence, sought his aid and informed him what Jadis had done to his people. The king asked him: "Swear to me by your father: where did you begin your journey?" Riyah answered: "May you be free from all curses! I have come to you from a nearby land and a people who suffered a violence that none have ever suffered before. My name is Riyah ibn Murra al-Tasmi. Jadis had invited us to a banquet and we accepted, and came in our ordinary clothes. They had prepared their weapons next to the bowls of food. We had hardly begun to taste their food when we turned into lifeless carcasses. No blood revenge had taken place before that time and no retaliation existed between us. Here then, may you be free from all curses, are a people who severed our ties of kinship and shed our blood." King Hassan asked: "Did this palm-branch and this female dog come out with you from the start of your journey?" "Yes," he answered. The king said: "If what you say is true, you must have come from a

nearby land,” and promised to aid him. He then called to Himyar to prepare to march out and told them what had been done to Tasm. They asked: “May you be free from all curses! Who committed that act?” The king answered: “Their slaves did this.” They said: “There is no need for us to act in this affair. They are both our kinsmen so why aid some against others? They are all your slaves, O king, so let them be.” Hassan said: “This is not a moral view that you have expressed. If this had happened to you, would it have been a virtuous act for your king to acquiesce in the shedding of your blood? Our foremost duty as judges is to exact justice for and against each other.” Their knights then stepped forward and said: “May you be free from all curses! Your orders shall be obeyed. Command us what you will.”

1158. He ordered them to march out with Riyah ibn Murra in the lead. When they approached Yamama and were at a distance of a three-night journey, Yamama being known then as Jaww, Riyah said to king Hassan: “May you be free from all curses! I have a sister who is married to a man of Jadis. Her eyesight has no equal throughout the earth. She can see a rider at a distance of a three-night journey and I fear she may give warning to Jadis about your expedition. I suggest you order every man under your command to pull up a tree from the ground and carry it before him then march on.” Hassan ordered them to do so and they obeyed and marched on. The sister of Riyah was called Yamama bint Murra. Surveying the country from a look-out, she said: “O Jadis, the trees are marching upon you.” They said: “What are you talking about?” She responded: “I see trees behind which are certain things. I see a man behind a tree munching a piece of shoulder meat or sewing his sandals.” They refused to believe her and it turned out as she had told them. They failed to prepare for war, and concerning this incident Yamama recited the following verses to Jadis:

I see trees behind which are humans

But how can trees and humans be joined together?

Rise up, all of you, and face their vanguard!

If you do so, I tell you, you will win victory.

1159. King Hassan then marched on, leading Himyar until, when at a night's journey from Jaww, he arrayed his troops then fell upon them at dawn, slaughtered the Jadis and exterminated them, enslaving their boys and women. The king of Jadis, al-Aswad ibn Ghifar, fled until he reached the land of Tay' where they gave him safe-conduct from king Hassan before they knew who he was. It is said that his progeny still survives and is known among the Tay'.

1160. When Hassan was done with Jadis, he summoned al-Yamama bint Murra, who was blue-eyed. He ordered her eyes to be plucked out and inside them were found black veins. When he asked her about these, she said: "This comes from a black stone I used for kohl and is called al-Athmad." She was the first to use it for kohl and people would later on use it for the same purpose. He then ordered her to be crucified at the gate of Jaww and said: "From now on you are to call Jaww al-Yamama" [one phrase omitted]. So it became known as such until today.

1161. Al-Mas`udi said: Following Tasm ibn Lawad, Wabar ibn Umaim ibn Lawad ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Noah marched out with his children and others who followed him and they settled in the land known as Raml `Alij where God's anger fell upon them and they were exterminated because of their sins on earth. In an earlier section of this book, we mentioned a part of their history as narrated by Arab historians. These latter, however, have transgressed the bounds of the rational and the customary among narratives that can be properly ascertained in alleging that the Almighty, when He destroyed that great

nation known as Wabar, as He destroyed Tasm, Jadis and Dasim--- Dasim's land being al-Samawa who were destroyed in a hot and black wind---and Jasim---their land being al-Jawlan and Jazir in the land of Nua in Hawran and Bathaniyya, between Damascus and Tiberias in al-Sham---and destroyed `Imlaq, `Ad and Thamud---these historians alleged that the *jinn* inhabited the land of Wabar and protected it from all who wished to come near or to visit it. They further claim that it was the most fertile of God's lands, had the most trees, and the most tasty fruits, grapes, dates and bananas, and maintain that if any human came near that land, accidentally or on purpose, the *jinn* threw dust in his face, stuffed sand in his mouth and agitated the winds against him. If any wanted to turn back, the *jinn* would drive them mad, make them lose their way or even kill them. According to many people in the Hijaz this locality is a fantasy. If they are asked to point out that place and to show its boundaries, they claim that anyone seeking that place would experience a supernatural turning-away (*sarfa*), as had once occurred to the Israelites when they were in the desert with Moses. God prevented them from leaving that place and provided no way to escape it until He had fulfilled His purpose for them and pronounced His verdict upon them. A poet from Hijaz recited the following verses, in which he mentions what we stated above about their views regarding that unknown land:

He called upon a beetle, one who cannot find his home--

So vicious is he--

Any more than he can find Wabar.

1162. These historians have much to say on similar topics. The Arabs both in ancient and modern times, in both the pre-Islamic and the Islamic periods, relate stories about the land of Wabar as they do about the valley of al-Daww, al-Samman, al-Dahna', Raml Yabrin and other

lands they camp in or gather around, seeking water and pastures. They allege that nothing exists in that land of Wabar except the *jinn* and wild camels. According to them, these camels are ones that mated with male *jinn* camels, so wild camels are descended from the camels of the *jinn*. Thus, camels known as `Idiyya, `Asjadiyya and `Umaniyya have been crossed with wild camels. Concerning this, Ru'ba ibn al-`Ajjaj recited:
Our camels have given birth from the land of wild camels.

Abu Huraim recited:

*As if I were mounted upon a wild camel or an ostrich,
Akin to the birds, as they gallop away.*

1163. There are many poems about this topic. If we spell out in detail all the Arab lore as transmitted from their ancestors, a lore that could possibly have happened and is neither necessarily true nor acceptable, we would transgress the bounds of abbreviation and succinctness, especially since we mentioned all this history in our previous books, making it unnecessary to repeat it here.

1164. Following Wabar ibn Umair, `Abd Dukhm ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Noah departed with his progeny and followers and settled in Ta'if. Through the vagaries of time, they died and left no trace behind. Some poets mentioned them and claimed they were the first to write Arabic script and invented the letters of the alphabet which are *Alif, Ba', Ta', Tha'*, and up to the 28th letter. But other accounts are also given, in line with the disputes of people as to the beginnings of writing.

1165. Following `Abd Dukhm ibn Iram, Jurhum ibn Qahtan departed with his progeny and followers. They journeyed in the earth until they came to Mecca and settled in it. Regarding this event, `Amr ibn Mudal al-Jurhumi recited:

*This is my path, like the path of Ya`rub,
The first who spoke clear Arabic.*

O people, walk forth, not like one who is a foreigner:

Jurhum is my ancestor and Qahtan is my father.

1166. Following Jurhum, Umair ibn Lawad ibn Iram departed and settled in Persia. Hence the Persians, as mentioned above in this work when discussing the disputes concerning Persian genealogy, are the descendants of Kayumarth ibn Umair ibn Lawad ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Noah. An ancient Persian poet, among their men of wisdom, and after the coming of Islam, recited the following verses:

Our ancestor is the virtuous Umair, before Faris,

And Faris are the lords of kings, my source of pride.

Some biographers and historians state that all the tribes mentioned above were tent dwellers and nomads who lived in tents wherever they settled on earth. They further state that Umair was the first to build buildings and walls, cut trees, construct beams in ceilings and build roofs.

1167. They further assert that the progeny of Ham settled in the lands of the south; that the progeny of Kush ibn Kan`an in particular are the Nubians, as mentioned above when discussing the black nations in this work; and that a clan of the progeny of Kan`an ibn Ham set out towards the region of Ifriqiyya and Tangier in the west, where they settled. The person who advanced that view claimed that the Berbers are descended from Kan`an ibn Ham. People have disagreed regarding the origins of the Berbers. Some say they are from Ghassan and other Yemeni tribes, and that they dispersed from Yemen towards these lands when people scattered from the land of Ma`rib, as a result of the `Arim flood. Others say that they are from Qais `Ailan and still others hold different views, all of which we have recorded in our previous works.

1168. The progeny of Kan`an ibn Ham, who were the majority among the descendants of Kan`an, settled in al-Sham. They are the Canaanites,

and the land was named after them, being called the Land of Canaan. In previous sections of this work, we discussed the histories of Misr ibn Ham, Baisar and the Copts.

1169. Nufir ibn Fut ibn Ham marched out with his progeny and followers to the land of Sind and India. In Sind there are many people with tall bodies who are settled in the district of al-Mansura, in Sind. Hence, according to this view, India and Sind are the descendants of Nufir ibn Fut ibn Ham ibn Noah. The children of Ham in the south are the majority among them. The children of Yafith, on the other hand, are found in the north, between east and west, as already mentioned when we described the dispersal of mankind in the east and elsewhere, and live beyond the Caucasus mountain and al-Bab wa'l Abwab.

1170. `Ad with its king al-Khuljan ibn al-Wahm, grew tyrannical upon the earth. They worshipped three idols called Samuda, Sada and al-Haba. God sent them the prophet Hud, as mentioned above, but they called him a liar. He is Hud ibn `Abdullah ibn Rabah ibn Khalid ibn al-Khulud ibn `Ad ibn `Us ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Noah. We stated above that `Ad were ten tribes whose names we already cited. Hud invoked God's curses upon them and they had no rain for three years. The land experienced drought and no udder gave them milk.

1171. The above-mentioned nations did not deny the existence of the Creator Almighty and knew that Noah was a prophet and had fulfilled his promise to his people that the torment would fall upon them. However, confusions had entered their minds because they had abandoned the path of research and rationalism, and their souls had inclined them to laziness and to the normal traits of human nature such as base pleasures and blind imitation. Their souls were in awe of the Creator but they sought nearness to Him through idol worship, imagining that these idols would bring them closer to Him and act as

intercessors. Nevertheless, they held the Ka`ba in great respect, its site having been, as mentioned already, a mound of red earth.

1172. `Ad sent a delegation to Mecca to pray for rain. At that time the Amalekites held Mecca. When the delegation arrived in Mecca they indulged in drinking and entertainments until the two so-called “Locusts”, the singing girls of Mu`awiya ibn Bakr, sang them a poem in which they urged them to complete the task they had come to accomplish, as follows:

O Qil, shame on you! Get up and whisper a prayer to God,
Perhaps God will send us clouds of rain,
That will water the land of `Ad. `Ad are now
Unable to speak plainly, so thirsty are they
That we hope not for survival of either the old man or the young.
Their women were once living well,
But now they are dying of thirst.
A wild animal now wanders into the land of `Ad,
But fears no arrow from their archer.
And meanwhile you are here, dissipating yourselves,
All your days and nights.
What a disgraceful delegation you are!
May you never be greeted or saluted.*

1173. The delegation were aroused from their heedlessness and turned to praying for rain for their people. The story of how the clouds came upon them and how they chose from them what they chose is set out in their history. Regarding them, Mathad ibn Sa`d recited the following verses, addressed to them:

*`Ad disobeyed their prophet and so
Suffered thirst, unwatered by the sky.
May God disgrace the minds of `Ad!*

Their minds are vacant and insubstantial.

1174. So God sent `Ad an arid wind which came upon them from the direction of one of their valleys. When they saw it they said: {This cloud shall bring us rain} and saw it as a good omen. When the prophet Hud heard them he said: {Rather, it is what you brought quickly upon yourselves—a wind in which lies painful punishment}. The wind came upon them on a Wednesday, and by the following Wednesday none of them remained alive. This is the reason why people dislike Wednesdays. In later sections of this work we shall explain how this is so and how Wednesday is related to other days of the month when we come to discuss the subject of the months.

1175. When the prophet Hud saw what had befallen his people, he took himself apart with his faithful followers. Regarding this event, al-Nahlil ibn al-Khalil recited:

If only `Ad had listened to Hud,

And followed his rightly-guided path!

He called upon `Ad, promising reward and threatening punishment,

And using both gentleness and harshness.

`Ad would not have suffered calamity:

Dead bodies, prostrate on noses and cheeks,

Carcasses scattered in their yards.

What did that delegation gain from its journey?

A story to be told for all eternity.

1176. The last of the `Ad kings was al-Khuljan. Earlier in this work we made mention of the kingdoms of `Ad, Thamud and others. It is said that the first `Ad king was `Ad ibn `Us who reigned for three hundred years, and was followed by `Ad ibn `Ad ibn `Us. When these Arab nations and tribes vanished, other people inhabited their lands. A group

of the Hanifa tribe thus settled in al-Yamama and made it their home.

Their poet wrote an elegy for those who once inhabited their land:

Tasm, Jurhum, Jadis and the Amalekites, in ancient days,

Built up the House for an era, then vanished,

The vagaries of the nights having caused them to pass away.

*Time overpowered them, and others came to inhabit their empty
quarters.*

The evil accidents of time struck them down, and their homes

Were deserted, exposed to the buffeting of the north wind.

1177. The land of al-Juhfa between Mecca and Medina had been inhabited by `Abil ibn `Us ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Noah with his progeny and followers and they drowned in the flood. The place was named Juhfa because the flood had carried them away (*ajhafa `alaihim*).

1178. Yathrib ibn Qatiya ibn Mahlil ibn Iram ibn `Abil had resided in Medina with his progeny and followers and the town was named after him. These too were struck down by the vagaries of time and its arrows, and one of their descendants elegized them as follows:

O eye, cry copious tears for `Abil! But can tears bring back

One whom death has carried away?

They built up Yathrib when there was no one there,

No one to cry for help, and no camel.

They planted its olibanum trees in the channel of a river,

*And surrounded its palm trees with thickets [reading *al-nakhil*].*

1179. God Almighty has informed us about those mentioned above as follows: {Thamud and `Ad cried lies to the Blast. As for Thamud, they were destroyed by the Scream; as for `Ad, they were destroyed by a raging, howling gale}. As regards their destruction, the Almighty informs us as follows: {To each we struck parables, and each we utterly destroyed}.

1180. The communities possessing a revealed law have disputed regarding the people of Shu`aib ibn Nuwail ibn of Ra`wa'il ibn Murr ibn `Aifa' ibn Madyan ibn Abraham, God's Friend. His tongue was Arabic. Some regarded them as part of the vanished Arabs and extinct nations and a remnant of some of the ancient nations mentioned earlier. Others say that they are the progeny of al-Mahd ibn Jandal ibn Ya`sub ibn Madyan ibn Abraham and that Shu`aib is their brother in kinship. There were several kings among them who dispersed, forming continuous and discontinuous realms. Among these are the ones called Abjad, Hawwaz, Hutti, Kalaman, Sa`fas and Qarashat.* These are, as mentioned already, the children of al-Mahd ibn Jandal. The letters used for calculation (*ahruf al-jummal*) are twenty-four in number and based upon the names of these kings. Other views regarding these letters have also been expressed, as set forth earlier in this book. But the present work is not the place to mention what people have said about these letters and the different interpretations of them or of their meaning.

1181. Abjad was king of Mecca and surrounding areas of the Hijaz. Hawwaz and Hutti were two kings in the land of Wajj, which is the territory of Ta'if, and neighboring regions in Najd. Kalaman, Sa`fas and Qarashat were kings of Madyan, and some say of Egypt. Kalaman was ruler of the realm of Madyan. Some claim that the realms of those we mentioned was held in common and was continuous, as already stated.

1182. Some claim that the torment mentioned in the Qur'an as {the torment of the Day of the Shadow} took place in the realm of Kalaman, and that Shu`aib called upon them but they called him a liar, so the torment of the Day of the Shadow fell upon them where a gate of fire from heaven was opened upon them. Shu`aib and his faithful followers removed themselves to a place called al-Aika, near Madyan. When the people began to feel the calamity and the heat increased and they knew

for certain that the end was near, they sought out Shu`aib and his faithful followers but these latter were enveloped in a white cloud with soft breezes and air where they were spared the pain of torment. They made them come out of where they were and imagined that this would save them from the calamity afflicting them, but God turned that calamity into a fire which consumed them.

1183. Al-Muntasir ibn al-Mundhir al-Madani mentioned them in verses where he recited:

The generous kings of the progeny of Hutti and Sa`fas,

And Hawwaz, builders of stone structures:

They were rulers of the land of Hijaz, their faces

Bright like the rays of the sun or the full moon.

They lived in the Holy House, their presence was like an ornament,

And they ruled by reason of generous and glorious deeds.

1184. Wondrous tales are told of these kings, their wars, their conduct, the manner in which they overcame these realms and came to rule them, and how they exterminated the nations living there before them. These subjects we dealt with in our previous works, to which this present work is a pointer and an inducement to readers to study them.

1185. As for the tribe of Hadur, a mighty and violent nation, it overcame many lands and kingdoms. This tribe too is a subject of dispute among people. Some consider them part of the above-mentioned vanished Arabs, others that they are part of Himyar, still others that they are of the progeny of Yafith son of Noah. Other versions of their genealogy also exist. God had sent them Shu`aib ibn Dhi Mihdam ibn Hadur ibn `Adiyy as a prophet to rebuke them for their way of life. This Shu`aib is different from Shu`aib ibn Nuwail ibn Ra`wa'il ibn Murr ibn `Aifa' ibn Madyan ibn Abraham, God's Friend, who was the chieftain of Madyan and the one whose daughter married

Moses son of `Imran, mentioned above. Hundreds of years separate the two Shu`aibs. According to the People of the Book, between Moses and Christ there were a thousand prophets.

1186. When the violence and blasphemy of the tribe of Hadur increased even further, their prophet Shu`aib ibn Dhi Mihdam became ever more persistent in his preaching to them with his rebukes and his threats. So they killed him even after certain miracles and signs that God made to appear by his agency which had demonstrated his truthfulness and confirmed his prophetic mission to them.

1187. God did not permit his blood to be shed in vain nor failed to carry out His threat. So God inspired a prophet of that time called Barakhia son of Ahnina son of Zurubabil son of Salatial who was from the tribe of Yahuda son of Ya`qub son of Isaac son of Abraham, God's Friend, to go to Nebuchadnessar, then in al-Sham---some say another king---and command him to invade the Arabs who have no locks on their doors. When Barakhia came to that king, the latter said: "You have spoken the truth. For the last seven nights I have been commanded in my sleep to do what you mention and been told about your coming to me and given glad tidings of your speech. I have been instructed to do what you have commanded and to take revenge for that unjustly killed and solitary prophet." So he marched against them with his army and invaded their lands with his troops. A voice from heaven called out to them and they prepared to fight him since that voice had reached them all. The voice said:

A people shall be overcome, one who openly defied God.

Though they defied him, he was mightier than they, and more defiant.

Thus does God lead astray one whose heart is diseased,

And who practiced deceit and blasphemy.

1188. When they heard this they knew that the divine sentence had been passed upon them. Their massed troops broke up and their regiments ran off in all directions. They were put to the sword and totally exterminated. It is mentioned regarding the story of their realm that this is referred to in the words of the Almighty: {But no sooner did they sense our might than they ran away from it}. There is disagreement concerning their homelands and the place where they resided. Some assert that they lived in the land of al-Samawa, and that it had once been a series of continuous habitations with gardens and flowing waters, located between Iraq and al-Sham, near the border with Hijaz. Today it is a ruined wasteland and deserts. Others claim that their homelands were Jund Qinnasrin up to Tall Masih and on to Khunasira in the land of Syria. These towns are presently, i.e. in the year 332, a part of the province of Aleppo in the land of Qinnasrin, in al-Sham.

1189. Al-Mas`udi said: We have now covered in outline the history of the Arabs, both those who remain and those who vanished. Before the coming of Islam, those who remain held certain views and doctrines regarding the spirit, the origin of the ghouls, the ghostly voices and the *jinn*. In what follows we shall mention, God willing, in brief and in separate sections, as required by the need to be brief in this work, what has reached us of their history or lore, and also the views of both those among them who remain and those who have passed away, as transmitted to us.

Chapter 48

An account of Arab beliefs regarding the spirit, the *Ham*, the *Safar* and other topics

1190. The Arabs of pre-Islamic times held certain doctrines and views regarding the spirit (*nafs*) but disagreed about its nature. Some claimed that the spirit is the blood and the soul (*ruh*) is the air found inside the

body of a human being from which he breathes. This is why they called a woman in confinement (*nufasa* ') because of the blood that issues from her. This is also why the jurists of the various Islamic cities disagreed regarding one whose spirit is flowing out of him: if he falls into water, does he, or does he not, cause the water to be polluted? Ta'abbata Sharran* once responded to his uncle al-Shanfara al-Akbar* who had asked him about a man he had killed and how he did it: "I stabbed him with a sharp sword until his spirit gushed out of him."

1191. They believed that the blood does not come out of a dead person nor is anything seen in him which had been seen before. The condition and nature of life is to exist and grow, which comes from heat and humidity. Since every living creature possesses heat and humidity, if he dies, there remains dryness and coldness and heat is expelled. Ibn Barraqa recited:

*How many a man of might, possessed of many camels, have I
encountered in battle,
Whose spirit flowed upon his chest.*

1192. Another group believed that the spirit was a bird spread out in a human body. If the person dies or is killed, that bird continues to circle the body and assumes the person's shape in the form of a bird, screeching above his grave and mourning his loss. Concerning this matter, a poet recited the following verse, where he mentions the People of the Elephant:

*The birds and instruments of death were set upon them,
And now, in the echo of the grave, they have a ham.*

1193. They called these birds *al-ham*—singular *hama*. When Islam appeared, the Arabs still believed in this until the Prophet declared: "There is no *ham* and no *safar**". They allege that this bird, i.e. the *ham*, begins by being small then grows larger until it resembles a type

of owl. It is always found in the wilderness, screeching, and in ruined habitations, sepulchers, and spots where men were killed or dead men were buried. They claim that the *hama* continues to screech near the children and descendants of the dead person, and attends their assemblies to learn what took place after death so as to inform the dead person of this. This is found in the following line of verse by al-Salt ibn Umayya, addressed to his children:

*My ham will tell me what you will say to one another,
So avoid what is gross and detestable.*

1194. Regarding this subject, the poet Tawba recited the following verses in Islamic times regarding Laila al-Akhyaliyya*:

*If only Laila al-Akhyaliyya were to greet me,
Though I be buried in the ground and covered with blocks of stone,
I would warmly return her greeting, or else a screech will reach her,
An echo from the side of my grave, loud and clear.*

These verses indicate that the echo can descend into and ascend from their graves. We shall cite these verses again when we come later on in this book to the story of al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf* and Laila al-Akhyaliyya. Some say these verses were composed by someone other than Tawba and for someone other than Laila. There is another line of verse attributed to Hatim Tai'* on the same subject, the story of which we shall relate later on in this book. The verse is the following:

*You came with your companions, seeking hospitality,
To a hole in the ground, whose ham was screeching.*

1195. This topic is frequently encountered in pre-Islamic poems, prose, rhymed prose, orations and other speech. Arabs and other religious communities, ancient and modern, have much to say about transmigration of souls, a subject we have covered in detail in our two

books, *Sirr al-Hayat* and *al-Da`awa al-Shani`a*. In God is right guidance.

Chapter 49

An account of Arab views regarding the *ghoul* and its phenomenon, together with matters relevant to this topic

1196. Al-Mas`udi said: The Arabs tell a number of entertaining tales about the ghouls and the phenomenon itself, since they allege that the ghouls appear to them in the wilderness and that it appears to particular people among them in all sorts of forms whereby they can converse, and perhaps even copulate, with them. There is much about the ghouls in Arabic poetry, as for example in the following verses by Ta`abbata Sharran:

*A black night it was. I wrapped myself in it,
As a young girl wraps herself in her vest.
I searched for a fire to give light,
And spent the night, coming near it and going far.
When morning came, the ghouls were my female neighbors;
"O neighbors," I said, "How gorgeous you look!"
I asked to make love to her, and she turned around,
With the face of a ghouls, ready to kill.
Whoever asks about my neighbor,
Her home is in al-Liwa.*

1197. They also claim that she has the legs of a wild ass, so whenever the Arabs came face to face with a ghouls in the desert, they would recite:

*O leg of a wild ass, bray as loud as you want,
We shall not abandon our path through this desert.*

1198. This is because she would appear to them at night or in moments of solitude and they would imagine she was one of them so they would

follow her, and she would get them to stray from their path and become lost. This was a well-known fact among them so they would determine not to change their course. They believed that if they shouted at her the verse above, the ghoul will run away from them into the deep valleys and mountaintops.

1199. This is attested also by some Companions of the Prophet, among them `Umar ibn al-Khattab, who related that he saw the ghoul on one of his journeys to al-Sham. He stated that the ghoul would alter its shape before him and that he struck her with his sword. This was before the coming of Islam and is a well-known report in the history of the Prophet's Companions. Some who claim knowledge of philosophy state that the ghoul is a freakish type of animal, distorted and not perfected by nature. Since it was peculiar in form and spirit, it became disaffected with its habitat and sought to live in the deserts. The ghoul is thus comparable to an animal or a human with a brutish form.

1200. A group in India argue that such phenomena appear as a result of the action of invisible stars when they first appear such as the star known as Canis Major, that is, Sirius, and that this causes a disease among dogs, while Canopus causes disease among camels and the star called Dziban (*al-Dhi'b*) causes the disease called Lupus (*dhi'ba*). Perseus (*Hamil Ra's al-Ghul*), when it first appears, causes certain figures and forms to appear in deserts and other localities, inhabited and uninhabited, which the common people call "ghoul". There are forty-eight of these stars mentioned by Ptolemy and others, both ancient and modern. Abu Ma`shar al-Balkhi* in his book called *Al-Madkhal al-Kabir ila `Ilm al-Nujum* describes all these stars and illustrates the diverse shapes of each star when it first appears. When discussing this subject in our earlier works we stated that each one of these stars

assumes forms different from what they assumed before, and this causes certain effects in this world, each star causing its own peculiar effect.

1201. Some people allege that the ghoul is the name of any *jinn* that waylays travellers and assumes diverse shapes and garments, be it male or female, but most speak of the ghoul as a female.

1202. Abu al-Mitrab `Ubaid ibn Ayyub al-`Anbari recited:

*Two ghouls in a desert, a male and a female,
As if upon them were pieces of striped garments.*

Another recited:

*She never remains in one mood or state,
Just as the ghoul changes the colors of its garments.*

They further differentiated between the female ghoul (*al-si`lat*) and the male ghoul. Thus, `Ubaid ibn Ayyub recited:

*She mocks me. But if only her eyes had seen
The horrors I encountered, she would become mad.
I stumbled in the desert with a si`lat and a ghoul;
When night hid the jinn, these would cry out.*

Some have described the *si`lat*, reciting:

*Hoof of a wild ass, with ample legs,
And eyelashes, different in length from a human being.*

1203. People have much to say about ghouls, demons, evil *jinn* (*marada*), *jinn*, a fiend called *qutrub*, and *al-`udar*, a type of demon called by that name. This *al-`udar* appears in the regions of Yemen, the Tihamas and the Sa`id of Upper Egypt, and is said to occasionally pursue a human being and to have sex with him so that his buttocks become worm-infested and he dies. It may also appear suddenly to a person and terrifies him. If this happens to a person, the people of these regions will ask: "Is he penetrated or terrified?" If penetrated, all hope for his survival is abandoned. If terrified, his mind will be put at ease

and he will be consoled for what happened to him. This is because if a person sees this demon he will fall down in a swoon. Yet, there are some people who, when this demon appears to them, will not be affected in the least because of their brave heart and courageous spirit. All these things are well known in the regions indicated above. It may also be the case that all that we have related from inhabitants of these regions can be the result of types of disordered imaginings and sick fancies or of other similar diseases and maladies that afflict animal species, both those that possess speech and others. God knows best how this happens.

1204. In this book, we have not mentioned the views of people with revealed laws and what historians and other authors who wrote about the genesis of creation have transmitted from authorities like Wahb ibn Munabbih*, Ibn Ishaq and others, namely, that God Almighty created the *jinn* from intensely hot wind; that he created from the male *jinn* a female spouse, just as Eve was created from Adam; that the male *jinn* copulated with the female who became pregnant and delivered thirty-one eggs; that one of these eggs hatched and from it emerged a *qutruba*, the mother of all later *qutrubs*; that a *qutrub* resembles a cat in form; that the demons (*abalisa*) issued from another egg, among whom was al-Harith Abu Murra, who make their home in the seas; that the *marada* come from another egg and make their home in the islands of the sea; that the ghouls are from another egg and make their home in ruined habitations and deserts; that the *sa`lats* are from another egg and reside in the mountains; that ghostly whisperings (*wasawis*) came from another egg and make their home in the air where they assume the form of serpents with wings and fly there; that the phantoms (*dawasiq*) come from another egg and the *hamamis* *come from yet another. We have

not dealt at length with this subject because we have covered it in our previous books and works.

1205. In our previous works we also mentioned their genealogies and how they branched off, and their most common names and places of residence, on land and sea. Though what is mentioned about these creatures by religious communities is possible, and neither impossible nor necessary, nevertheless most rationalists and researchers and those who use reason and investigation consider what we have related to be impossible and do not accept our description as valid. However, the author of a literary work (*musannif*) is like a “woodcutter by night”, so we simply transmitted what people belonging to religious communities and others have said about this topic. Such an author is bound to relate what people from all groups have said about a particular topic. In our work entitled *al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat*, we narrated everything we were told about invisible persons, both *jinn* and demons, and what people informed us concerning the dealings of the *jinn* with humans. In God is succor.

Chapter 50

An account of the views of Arabs regarding the *hawatif* and the *jinn*

1206. Al-Mas`udi said: As regards ghostly voices (*hawatif*) these had begun to increase among the Arabs and to spread in their homelands. Most were reported round about the time of the Prophet’s birth and during the early days of his mission. The definition of such a voice (*hatif*) is that it calls out in a clear voice but the caller’s body is invisible.

1207. Al-Mas`udi said: People have disputed regarding these voices and the *jinn*. Some argue that what the Arabs report and narrate concerning this topic is the result of a condition of solitude and loneliness in deserts and valleys, and traversing eerie landscapes and lonely desert tracks.

Thus, when a man finds himself in such an environment, he feels lonely and begins to reflect, and when he reflects he grows fearful and cowardly. In a state of cowardice, he is subject to false imaginings and harmful, corrupting and melancholic fancies. These will cause him to imagine that he is hearing voices or seeing persons, deluding him into conceiving what is impossible, in a manner resembling a person suffering from delusions. The primary and basic source of such delusions is misapprehension where thoughts are not ordered properly or in a sane fashion. A lonely man in the wilderness and a solitary traveller through barren landscapes is subject to terrors, fears death, and expects that he will perish, this being a result of false imaginings and their deep influence over his thinking and spirit. What he relates about the *hawatif* and the *jinn* will therefore be the product of fancy.

1208. Before the coming of Islam, the Arabs believed that some *jinn* had half the form of a human being and that it used to appear to them on their journeys or in places of solitude, and these they called the “half” (*shiqq*). The Arabs report that `Alqama ibn Safwan ibn Umayya ibn Muharrith al-Kinani, maternal grandfather of Marwan ibn al-Hakam*, went out one night seeking to recover money owed to him in Mecca. Reaching a place well known to this day called Ha’it Hazman, he encountered a *shiqq*, described in that tale. The *shiqq* recited:

O `Alqama, I am one who is to be killed,

My flesh is to be eaten.

I shall strike them with a drawn sword,

Like a noble [reading mashmul] youth,

Long of arm, truly heroic.

1209. `Alqama answered:

O Shaqq, what have I to do with you?

Sheathe your sword from me!

Will you kill one who did not kill you?

Shaqq said:

You readied yourself against me, and I against you,

So that I can have the chance to kill you.

Be steadfast in the face of the death awaiting you.

The two then exchanged blows and both fell dead. This is a well-known incident among the Arabs, namely, that the *jinn* killed `Alqama.

1210. They also relate two lines of verse spoken by the *jinn* when they killed Harb ibn Umayya:

The grave of Harb is in a desolate place,

And there is no grave near the grave of Harb.

They concluded that this verse must have been spoken by the *jinn* because no one can recite this line of verse three times in quick succession without spluttering or stumbling, since a person can recite a poem of twenty or thirty verses or more, much harder than this verse, without a single stumble or a stutter.

1211. Others killed by the *jinn* include Mirdas ibn Abi `Amir al-Sulami, father of `Abbas ibn Mirdas, and Gharid the singer, whose songs had spread wide and were transmitted from him. The *jinn* had warned him not to sing certain lines of verse, but he did so and they killed him.

1212. Yahya ibn `Attab<`Ali ibn Harb<Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna*<Mansur ibn Yazid al-Ta'i, then al-Samiti, who said: "I saw the tomb of Hatim Tai' in Tughna, a mountain with a valley called Ha'il. Near the tomb were the remains of huge overturned stone urns from which Hatim used to feed people. To the right of his tomb stood four statues of slave women and to its left four others. All had disheveled hair, leaning over [reading *muhtajiwat*] his grave as if in mourning for him. Their bodies were of unequalled whiteness as was the beauty of their faces. These were sculpted by the *jinn* and had not

been there before. In daytime, they are as we described them but when sleep came over our eyes, the voices of the *jinn* were raised in mourning for him, and we in our camp could hear this until dawn. At dawn, their voices became calm and silent. It may happen that a passer-by sees them and is struck by their beauty, so turns towards them full of admiration only to find, when he draws near, that they are stone statues.”

1213. Yahya ibn `Attab and al-Jawhari<`Ali<`Abd al-Rahman ibn Yahya al-Mundhiri< Abi al-Mundhir Hisham al-Kalbi<Abu Miskin ibn Ja`far ibn Muhriz ibn al-Walid <his father, a client of Abu Huraira*<Muhammad ibn Abi Huraira, who said: “A man called Abu al-Khaibari was passing with some of his clansmen by the grave of Hatim Tai’ and camped close by it. Abu al-Khaibari kept calling on Hatim and saying: ‘O Abu’l Ja`d, feed us, feed us!’ His clansmen said to him: ‘What! Are you addressing a decayed corpse?’ He answered: ‘The tribe of Tai’ claims that no one ever visited his abode without being fed.’ They then went to sleep.

1214. “Towards the end of the night Abu al-Khaibari sprang up from his sleep in great agitation and fear, calling: ‘O my camel!’ His companions asked what had troubled him and he said: ‘Hatim has risen from his grave with his sword in his hand and as I looked on he struck my she-camel.’ They called him a liar, but when they went and saw his camel lying slaughtered and lifeless among their own, they said: ‘By God, he has indeed fed you.’ So they continued to grill and cook its meat and eat it until dawn broke. They then seated him behind one of them and continued on their journey. Soon, they were overtaken by a rider on a camel leading another camel behind him, who asked: ‘Which one of you is Abu al-Khaibari?’ Abu al-Khaibari said: ‘I am he’. The rider said: ‘I am `Adiyy ibn Hatim. Hatim came to me in my sleep as

we camped behind that mountain, mentioned your insulting words to him and how he fed your camel to your friends, and recited the following verses to me:

*O Abu al-Khaibari, you are a fellow
Unjust and insulting to my tribe.
You brought your companions, seeking to be fed,
To a hole in the ground whose ham is hooting.
Do you intend to insult me as you go to sleep,
While Tai' and its hordes of camels are all around you?
We shall always feed our guests,
And milk for them our mounts by night.*

Hatim has ordered me to mount you on a camel instead of the one you had, so come and take it.”

This incident is also mentioned in the following verses recited in praise of `Adiyy ibn Hatim, and composed by Salim ibn Dara al-Ghatafani:

*Your father is the goodly Abu Saffana who,
From early youth till he died, sought to do good deeds.
His grave fed guests who camped by its side,
And no grave had ever fed a rider before.*

1215. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Duraid<Abu Hatim al-Sijistani<Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna al-Taymi, who said: “I heard an old Arab, who had passed the age of a hundred, mention that he set out once on a journey to some Umayyad king. He said: ‘I set out on a windy and dark night whose stars were covered by odd-looking clouds, so I lost my way and plunged into a valley that I did not know. I grew anxious and was not sure I was safe from the humming of the *jinn*, so I said: ‘I take refuge with the lord of this valley from the evil thereof, and I throw myself on his mercy and ask for his guidance.’ I then heard a voice calling from the depth of the valley:

*Turn right from where you are and you will meet the light
Shining, and be safely on your way.*

I headed in the direction pointed, feeling a little more secure, and came to firebrands flickering before me with gaps in between, like palm fronds on very tall palm trees. I went on and in the morning I arrived at Awshal, which is a spring belonging to the Kalb tribe in the Damascus countryside.”

1216. The Almighty, Worthy of All Praise, mentions this act of the *jinn* in the Qur'an as follows: {That some men among humans used to pray for safety to some men from the jinn, but they only increased them in insolence}.

Chapter 51

An account of Arab beliefs regarding tracking, augury, divination from birds, auspicious and inauspicious gazelles and other matters

1217. Al-Mas`udi said: There are disputes among people regarding divination from birds, tracking and the other things we have mentioned. Some accept tracking as true and argue that like begets like, and that it cannot be the case that a child would not resemble his father or one of his family in some respect or another. Others have maintained that, in a child, only some body members can be tracked but not others, where no similarity or common attributes are detectable. Still others reject what we have described and claim that people resemble each other in being human and in other attributes but are dissimilar in other respects. The existence of a majority of similar attributes does not necessitate attaching like to like, thereby negating difference and discrepancy, as dictated by reason.

1218. These fields of speculation are peculiarly an Arab attribute to the exclusion of most other nations. Though soothsaying (*kahana*) is found among other nations, bird divination (*`iyafa*), bird augury (*zajr*), and

good and bad omens do not belong to other nations in most cases. Furthermore, these powers are not found among all Arabs but only among the elite among them who possess understanding, experience and intuition. If they are found among some nations like the Franks, for example and nations similar to them in their part of the earth, it may perhaps be that these powers were inherited from the Arabs and adopted by them in ancient days. This is because the Arabs wandered all over the earth and their languages dispersed, so these powers were attributed to the race among whom Arabs had once lived. So it may be the case that the Franks or other nations possessing such powers took over these after the coming of Islam from their Arab neighbors who inhabited the land of al-Andalus, a part of the Great Land*.

1219. If the Arabs possessed all these powers before the coming of Islam, it was for the reasons stated above. It may also be the case that the Almighty singled out nations other than the Arabs as he did the Arabs, for this does not fall under the category of the impossible or the necessary. Hence, bird augury and omens may have been prevalent among some Arabs just as other nations were singled out, e.g. like the *nuqat* [?] among the Berbers and like palmistry and other things that each race of men have been specially endowed with.

1220. Some people of research and thorough investigation in ancient times held that tracking (*qiyafa*) is derived from *qafu*, which is a deductive derivation. The origin of this is as follows. Forms split bearing the images of their like through things that are peculiar to kinds in their formation and in their characteristics. These come to exist because those that give birth infuse their parts into the individuals of a species. Thus, the act of procreation takes place by producing both likeness and dissimilarity from others, because nature makes it necessary for each shape or form to be congruent with every shape or

form that nature holds in stock, and to turn that shape or form into its proper end. And just as nature singles out each type of species by making it distinct from others that are unlike it, and makes each type distinct in form, so also nature has singled out each individual specimen which is dissimilar in shape in order to be different from others. This is why diverse forms are almost never found to be exactly similar in any individual even if these belong to the same species or are the result of common procreation. The tracker compares shapes and judges according to the closest image. The relationship between species is closer than that between genera, just as the relationship of the individual to the genus is closer than that to the species, because genus (*naw`*) and individual are included under two definitions whereas the species (*jins*) has one definition. This is the basic principle behind tracking, according to this group of people. It is a type of research and of comparing like to like in most aspects, because of their similarity and as dictated by the above-mentioned rules of reasoning. This is the precise equivalent of analogy.*

1221. The above discussion does not come from any religious jurist who judges by analogy or any other Muslim scholar, but is in fact a discussion we have quoted which is found in the works of some ancient philosophers. In the opinion of this group, the tracker would need in the first place to examine the foot because it is the extremity of the form and the final limit of the shape. A child, though very unlike his father in his moral actions and is different in all his physical aspects will in all probability be like him in the foot because procreation must necessarily single out certain effects which distinguish and separate him from others.

1222. This is why a tall stature is found among the tribe of Azd Shanu'a and why roughness and coarseness is found among the Byzantines and

among the people of the mountains and the majority of uncultured people in al-Sham or the riff-raff in Egypt. This is also why duplicity is found among the Khazar and the people of Haran in the region of Diyar Mudar; why miserliness is found in Faris and stinginess in food is found in Isbahan; why flat feet and wide and snub noses are found among blacks; and why intense mirth is found among the Zanj in particular. What we describe here is, according to that group of philosophers, to be sought among the secrets of nature and the special effects of heavenly and celestial substances and bodies.

1223. We covered this subject in great detail in two of our books which dealt with secrets of nature and the special effects of celestial bodies and other philosophical oddities. The first is entitled *al-Ru'us al-Sab'iyya fi Anwa` al-Siyasat al-Madaniyya wa Milaliha al-Tabi'iyya* and the second is entitled *al-Istirja` fi al-Kalam*. The second work aims to refute those who allege that the substance of the world is changing into darkness and that the light in it is an oddity and is in a disordered condition; that there were six spirits who were lights without a body: Shit son of Adam, Zaradusht, Christ, Jonah and two others who cannot be mentioned*; that light and darkness are pre-eternal and have ever been unmixed; that things function only in these two substances; that these two then mixed of their own accord without any agent interfering or anything that forced them to do so. These views are all false and iniquitous.

1224. Al-Minqari<al-`Utbi, who said: “`Ubaid the shepherd stood one day along with a caravan in a desert wasteland. They were on their way to meet a chieftain of the Tamim tribe when a gazelle appeared before them, assuming an unusual appearance, then blocked the caravan’s path, stopped running and stood up to its full height. `Ubaid found this alarming though his companions paid no attention, so he recited:

*Do you not understand what is meant by the appearance of gazelles,
They that block the path of a caravan while the caravan is moving?
Those of my companions who did not recognize omens kept going,
But my heart was certain that these gazelles were women in mourning.”*

1225. Arriving at their destination, they found that the chieftain had been bitten by a serpent and died. Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna said: “This is an unusual omen. This is because the Arabs consider a gazelle’s approach to be a good omen and the fleeing gazelle to be the alarming omen. I think `Ubaid must have interpreted the gazelles when they turned away and just described their first appearance in his verses. Whoever describes an incident should begin by explaining the initial causes. This is how `Ubaid the shepherd’s interpretation of the omen is to be understood from his verses.”

1226. It is claimed that soothsaying is prevalent among the Qays tribe, bird augury among the Asad, and tracking among Mudlij and the clans of Mudar ibn Nizar ibn Ma`add, because of the story, recounted earlier, of the four sons of Nizar on their journey to al-Af`a al-Jurhumi and their descriptions of the lost camel. They thus displayed their skill at tracking. From that point, tracking spread among the clans of Mudar, in accordance with that which is deeply embedded in hereditary qualities or inclines to ancestors. Those who live near watercourses are more inclined to soothsaying while people living in wide deserts are better at tracking.

1227. In the land of Jifar, which is the desert between Egypt and al-Sham, are found Arabs who, if one helps himself to their dates and is absent for many years and not seen by them, will know after the passage of time that it was he who took their dates and will rarely be mistaken about this. This is a well-known trait among them. They will hardly ever be mistaken in identifying any persons by their footprints.

In this land, I myself saw some people appointed by those in charge of the stations on the road and who roam around that desert landscape. They are known as “trackers” (*qussas*) who track the traces of humans and others, and tell the station masters what sort of people have travelled in that land, even though they have not seen them and saw only their footprints. This is a curious phenomenon and requires subtle intuition.

1228. When the Prophet and Abu Bakr escaped to the cave*, the trackers of Quraish followed them until they arrived at the entrance of the cave where there were smooth rocks and boulders and high mountains with no sand or mud upon them where footprints could be detected. God hid his Prophet from them by having the spider weave his web over the entrance and the sand blown onto it by the wind. The tracker was puzzled and said: “The footprints end here.” With him were a group from Quraish who saw nothing on the rocks and boulders, though they could see well and there was nothing wrong with their eyes and no obstacles to their vision. Were it not for the existence of a subtle knowledge that people are not equal in perceiving or in recognizing what is perceived, it would not have been the case that only a group of people possessed that ability and not others. Those who live in mountains, deserts and sandy wastes are better at augury and divination than others.

1229. Some members of religious communities and some jurists in Muslim cities in the past used to judge in favor of tracking by affirming its honorable nature, its great importance and the respect in which it was held, and held it to be true because it had amazed the Prophet who believed Mujazziz al-Mudliji.*

1230. Other jurists, ancient and modern, denied that one can pass judgment based on tracking, because of the existence of proofs that

indicate such judgments to be false, and because the Prophet attached a child to his father when the latter doubted his paternity for lack of resemblance. This occurred in the story of a man who said to the Prophet: “Prophet of God, my wife has delivered a black child.” The Prophet, seeking to bring the problem closer to the man’s understanding, and to refute the proof the man had adduced in order to doubt his paternity, asked him: “Do you possess any camels?” The man said: “Yes.” “What colors are they?” the Prophet asked. “Red,” the man answered. “Are any of them dusky?” “Yes,” replied the man. “How did this come about?” asked the Prophet. “Perhaps a hereditary quality has mutated (*la`alla`irqan naza`*).” The Prophet said: “In your case, too, this could have happened.”

1231. There is also the Prophet’s verdict in the case of Sharik ibn Sahma’. The Prophet had said to him: “If your wife delivers a child having the distasteful features that resemble the person she has been accused of sleeping with, the child belongs to the accused.” When she delivered the child who possessed these distasteful features, and a resemblance was established with her paramour, the Prophet said: “Were it not for the judgment of God, this would have had a different outcome for you and me.” Here, the Prophet attached the child to its father despite the absence of resemblance, thus ignoring resemblance and failing to take it into account when judging. He judged by asserting the primacy of the marriage bed and used a Qur’anic text in rejecting a verdict based on resemblance.

1232. This is a topic which we have deliberately addressed here, our intention being to point out the existence of judgments that contravene tracking. It is a complex and polemical issue and one which requires a great deal of exposition because of its ambiguity and subtlety. In our book entitled *al-Ru’us al-Sab`iyya*, which dealt comprehensively with

the order and secrets of creation, we gave a full account of this topic and the views of various groups, ancient and modern, regarding it. God is our helper.

Chapter 52

An account of soothsaying (*kahana*) and what has been said about it, together with matters related thereto such as what one sees during sleep and the definition of the rational soul

1233. Al-Mas`udi said: People have disagreed about soothsaying. One group of wise Greeks and Romans believed in soothsaying and claimed knowledge of the future. Some among them in particular held that their souls had become pure and thus able to behold the secrets of nature and to manipulate them to accord with their wishes, because the image of things in their view resided in the universal soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*). Another group claimed that individual souls, which are the *jinn*, informed them of events before they occurred and that their own souls had become so pure that they had become like the souls of the *jinn*. Some Christians held that Christ knew future events and foretold what would happen because he possessed a soul that knew the unseen. Had this soul been found among other human beings they too would have been able to foretell the future. No nation that has passed away has ever been without soothsaying.

1234. The early Greek philosophers did not deny soothsaying. It is well known among them that Pythagoras [*Fitaghurus*] possessed knowledge of the unseen and types of inspiration because of the purity of his soul and its being devoid of the impurities of this world. The Sabians believe that Euridyce [*Uribasis*] and Orpheus [*Urfayus*] the First and Second, who are Hermes and Agathon Daimon [*Aghathadimun*] could all foretell the future, so were considered prophets by the Sabians. They held it to be impossible that the *jinn* could have endowed the persons

mentioned above with any knowledge of the unseen. Rather, their souls became pure so they were able to know what remained hidden to the rest of their fellow men.

1235. Another group held that soothsaying had a subtle psychic origin generated from purity in the combination of the temperaments, strength of soul and subtlety of feelings. Many people believe that soothsaying comes from a demon who accompanies the soothsayer and tells him what is obscure to him, and that demons used to eavesdrop, then reveal what they heard on the tongues of the soothsayers who would then inform people of the reports revealed to them. Almighty God informs us of this in the Qur'an where it says: {We probed the sky and found it filled with mighty guards} to the end of that verse. God also says: {It is the devils who inspire their friends to argue against you} to the end of that verse and also {Each inspires to each vanities of speech, all of it delusion} to the end of the verse. The *jinn* and demons do not know the future, but this happens because they eavesdrop on what they hear from the angels as is plainly obvious in the following verse of the Almighty: {When he fell, the jinn realized that, had they known the unseen, they would not have lasted in their abasing torment}.

1236. Another group argued that soothsaying was to be understood from the astronomical point of view, and that this occurs at the inception [?] (*mawlid*) when Mercury settles at its highest elevation. If the other planets that exercise an effect such as the sun, moon and the five others are on parallel nodes, equivalent quarters, and analogous perspectives [?] (*manazir*), the person who calculates the inception [?] can practice soothsaying and foretelling events before their occurrence because these planets have reached their highest elevations. Some claim that this occurs during major conjunctions.

1237. Many ancients and moderns hold that the causes of soothsaying are psychic, and that when the soul grows strong and is enhanced, it overcomes nature and reveals to a human being every subtle secret and informs him of every noble idea. The soul, through its subtlety, penetrates into the most profound and obscure essences, brings them out and reveals them in perfect form.

1238. This last group explains its above-mentioned reasoning as follows: a human being has two parts, soul and body. The body is lifeless, motionless and senseless without the soul. Since that which is lifeless knows nothing and transmits no knowledge, knowledge must necessarily belong to the soul. Souls have categories. Some are pure, like the rational soul, while some are murky like the sensible soul, the angry soul and the imaginative soul. Some of these are more powerful in a human being than the body, while the body is more powerful in others. Since the illumined proportion of the soul in a man is the one that guides him to discover the unseen and knowledge of what is to come, and his intuition and perception is sharper and more extensive; and once the soul is at its most apparent and transcendent, and is fully illumined and perfectly radiated, it can penetrate into the unseen just like the souls of soothsayers. This is why soothsayers are found in this manner to have defective bodies and a distorted physical appearance, as has been related to us regarding soothsayers like Shiqq, Satih, Samlaqa, Zawba`a, Sadif ibn Hirmas, the female soothsayer Zarifa, `Imran, brother of `Amr ibn `Amir Muzaiqiya, Haziya of the Juhaina tribe, the female soothsayer of the tribe of Bahila, and other soothsayers like them.

1239. As for the diviner (*arrafa*), who is in a class below the soothsayer (*kahin*), examples include al-Ablaq al-Asdi, al-Ajlah al-Zuhri, `Urwa

ibn Zaid al-Asadi, and Rabah ibn `Ajala, the diviner of Yamama, about whom the poet recited:

I said to the diviner of Yamama, treat me!

If you cure me, you are truly a physician.

He further recited:

I shall accept the authority of the diviner of Yamama,

As also the diviner of Najd, if only they would cure me.

1240. Soothsaying therefore has a psychic origin because it is a subtly percipient quality and one that causes amazement, akin to a miracle. It is mostly found among Arabs and in rare cases among other nations. This is because it is a thing generated from the natural purity of a temperament and the power of the substance of an illumined soul. If you consider its principal characteristics, you will see that these are combined with a chaste soul that represses greed, along with much solitude, addiction to loneliness, great aversion to human company, and little pleasure in the society of humans. This is because when a soul is apart from others it contemplates. When it contemplates, it transcends. When it transcends, the clouds of psychic knowledge descend upon it and it is able to see with an illuminated eye and perceive with sharp perspicacity and so moves along a straight path. It can then report about matters as they truly are. It may also happen that the power of the human soul grows to the point where it brings a human being to a knowledge of future events before they occur.

1241. The major Greek thinkers used to call this group the “Spiritualists” and would assert that if the soul was enhanced and became the greater part of a human being, it becomes guided towards deducing marvelous facts and secret knowledge. As proof, they say that the insight of a human being may be enhanced and the basic matter of his soul and intellect may increase to the point where a person can

deduce what is to come before it occurs. When an image is perceived, the appearance of that image is as that person had imagined it to be. Likewise, if the soul becomes refined, a dream during sleep can turn out to be true and to take place in reality.

1242. Dreams, their cause, their essence and the way they take place have all been subjects of dispute. Some say that sleep is defined as the soul diverting its attention from visible matters and coming in contact with other matters hidden inside it. This occurs in two ways. The first is known in itself and present in form, namely, passing thoughts which create in the soul concepts that change these thoughts and separate them, thus diverting the soul from its preoccupation with apparent reality, while the hidden element is revealed by the five senses. The senses thus cease to perceive what is sensed because the soul is diverted from making use of them. If such cessation becomes necessary, this is called accidental sleep because it is not the same as total sleep which is common to children, old women and old men. These categories of humans would have abandoned the occasions of pleasure or fear of harm. Their nightly sleep is as we have described it. The second way is total sleep which is common to all categories of animals that think as well as others. These are natural [dreams?] imposed of necessity by the mode of creation at a certain time, just as hunger imposes itself at a certain time by necessity, since hunger according to the physicians is a cause which alerts the heart to the absence of sustenance.*

1243. Some hold the view that the soul grasps the images of things in one of two ways: the first through the senses and the second through thinking. Sensible images are grasped by the soul only through their form. If the knowledge of the soul ends at that point, its perception of these forms is separate from their essence, so that man's thinking, when awake, is subject to the senses. Once asleep, and the soul lacks all the

senses, these images and forms of material objects, which were taken up by the soul, remain as if sensed. This is because sensing them in their essence, and before they were absorbed by thought, was in fact weak. With sense now absent, thinking becomes more potent, and begins to picture objects in the soul as if they were sensed. Thoughts will now occur to a sleeping person, just as happens when he is awake, which have to do with whatever things he was made to forget. This process lacks order and is haphazard. Thus, a person will see himself in sleep as if he is flying though he is in fact not flying but merely sees an abstract image of flying, just as he knows about flying when it is an idea absent from his mind. However, his thoughts about flying grow stronger to the point where flying appears to him to be a real experience. As for what a sleeper sees of things which indicate his wishes, this is because the soul knows through images. When the soul in sleep is pure and free from the distractions of the body it accosts what it wishes to attain, knowing that in a state of wakefulness it cannot know this. So it imagines certain notions through which it indicates the things it wants to attain. When the soul awakes, it remembers these imaginings and objects. He whose soul is pure will hardly have a false vision whereas a murky soul will fabricate many falsehoods. Between purity and murkiness of soul there are many stages in proportion to their nearness to these two conditions, and the truth of a vision or its falsity is relative to these stages.

1244. Another group claimed that though in appearance a soul might dispense with the senses, in reality it does not cease to use these senses in themselves or to suspend its use of them. Thus the soul will move from place to place and will see certain persons through a bodiless spiritual power and not through a dense corporeal power. This is because corporeal power cannot be perceived except by associating with or consorting with things either through contact like the contact

between color and what is colored or through separation like the separation of a body from its locus. The soul, however, perceives both what is in contact and what is separate, and does so not through the agency of the body, which necessitates that the perceiver be near what is perceived. Some people argue that sleep produces a confluence of the blood which then descends to the liver, while others maintain that sleep is a repose of the spirit and a calmness of the soul and still others hold that what a person experiences in sleep by way of stray thoughts is produced by the action of food, nutrition and the temperaments.

1245. Some people argue that certain dreams come from the angels while others come from Satan, and adduce as proof the following verse from the Qur'an: {Such secret conversation comes from Satan in order to cause sorrow to the believers} while others say* that a dream is one part out of sixty-one parts of prophecy, and they argue about the how and the what of that part.

1246. Some say that a human possessed of sense is something other than the visible body, and that he issues out of the body in a state of sleep, and regards the world and the kingdom of the heavens in proportion to his soul's purity. These people and others of the same view use as proof the following verses in the Qur'an: {God takes the souls to him at death} right up to {until a stated term}. Most physicians hold that dreams come from the four humors and are seen in proportion to the temperament and potency of each humor. Thus, people whose bodies are inflamed by yellow bile see in their sleep conflagrations, sarcophagi, smoke, lanterns, houses burning, cities on fire and similar sights. He whose dominant humor is phlegm sees many seas, rivers, springs, brooks, pools, gulfs and waves, and similar sights, and sees himself swimming or fishing or similar things. Those whose humors are dominated by black bile see in their dreams dead bodies, graves and

dead people wrapped in black shrouds, mourning, wailing, screams and terrifying sights, horrors, elephants and lions. Those whose humor is sanguine see wine, date wine, aromatic plants, entertainments, revelry, music, happiness, joys, and all sorts of amusements or some of them, dancing, drunkenness, garments dyed in red and all that relates to the types of merriment. There is consensus among physicians that laughter and revelry and all that we mentioned above of merry diversions come from the blood, and that all sorrow or fear, though different in kind, comes from black bile, and they adduce as proof what was summarized above.

1247. We gave a full and detailed account of this topic in our two books, *al-Nuha wa al-Kamal*, and *Tibb al-Nufus*, so there is no point in our going into detail at this point in our present book, since this is a book of history (*khabar*) and not a book of scientific research and rationality (*bahth wa nazar*). It is just that our treatment of these topics led us far into a detailed discussion of their views as these were related to us. In this work, we have not dealt with people's views of the soul, or with the views of Plato and his definition of the soul as a substance that moves the body. Nor did we deal with the view of the author of the *Logic* [Aristotle] that the soul is defined as the perfection of the physical body and from another viewpoint as something that is potentially alive. Nor have we addressed the question of the difference between the spirit (*nafs*) and the soul (*ruh*) because the difference is that whereas the soul is a body (*jism*) the spirit is not; that the soul is encompassed by the body whereas the spirit is not; that the spirit when it leaves the body ceases to exist whereas the soul ceases its actions in the body but in itself does not cease; that the spirit moves the body and provides it with sensation.*

1248. Plato in his *Political Regime* mentions the effects on a human being of the characteristics of the incoming soul (*al-nafs al-dakhila*) upon the rational soul (*al-nafs al-natiqa*). In his epistle to Timaeus and in his *Phaedo*, Plato gives an account of the execution of the wise Socrates and what he talked about, namely, the soul and the form. People have discussed the categories of souls and their characteristics, and these people include the Dualists* and others among the philosophers. The Muslims too disputed among themselves as to the essence of a human being who is possessed of sense and perception, and is commanded and forbidden. The Sufis, for instance, and the gnostics (*ashab al-ma`arif*) and others who propagate esoteric teachings have discussed the categories of souls such as the calm (*mutma`inna*) soul, the censuring (*lawwama*) soul, the soul that tempts to evil, together with other types of soul to be found in the teachings of the Jews, Christians, Magians, Sabeans and other communities. We have described and explained all these views in our book entitled *Sirr al-Hayat*, and in our other works.

1249. Satih the soothsayer, whose full name was Rabi` ibn Rabi`a ibn Mas`ud ibn Mazin ibn Dhi`b ibn `Adiyy ibn Mazin ibn Ghassan, used to be able to fold up his body as one folds a garment so that the only bone remaining was his skull which, if touched by a hand, would leave a mark because its bone was so soft. Shiqq ibn Sa`b ibn Yashkur ibn Afrak ibn Qais ibn `Abqar ibn Anmar ibn Nizar lived in the same days as Satih, as too the female soothsayer Jumra. Samlaqa and Zawba`a also lived in the same period.

Chapter 53.

A brief account of reports concerning soothsayers, the flood of `Arim, and the dispersal of the Azd in the lands

1250. Al-Mas`udi said: We have given a brief account of soothsaying, tracking, augury and auspicious and inauspicious gazelles. We shall now mention in outline some accounts to do with soothsaying and the dispersal of the descendants of Saba' in various lands.

1251. The progeny of Qahtan continued to live a life of great ease until the death of Saba'. Following his death, the passage of the years carried them from one condition to another until God sent upon them the flood of `Arim. This was because leadership among them had passed to `Amr ibn `Amir Muzaiqiya whose full name was `Amr ibn `Amir ibn Ma' al-Sama' ibn Haritha the Lord ibn Tha`laba ibn Imru'ul Qais ibn Mazin ibn al-Azd ibn al-Ghawth ibn Kahlan ibn Saba'. This was in the land of Ma'rib, in the Yemen, and known as the land of Saba'. This is the one mentioned by the Almighty in the Qur'an which states that God sent upon them {the flood of `Arim}. This was a dam, *farsakh* by *farsakh* in dimension, built by Luqman the Elder, al-`Adiyy, whose name was Luqman ibn `Ad ibn `Adiya. We gave an account above of this person and others like him who lived lives as long as those of vultures. That dam used to protect them from the flood that used to destroy their properties in ancient times. So God {scattered them utterly} and made far the journeys between them and others. But people are not in agreement as to how they were destroyed and as to their history in general.

1252. Those who concern themselves with ancient history state that the land of Saba' was one of the most fertile, richest, best irrigated, most endowed with gardens and orchards and with broad meadows in the whole land of the Yemen. This was joined to handsome and solid buildings, trees in rows, numerous irrigation channels and scattered canals. A person riding hard would take one month to cover the distance lengthwise and an equal time in width. A mounted person or one

walking would pass through these gardens from beginning to end without encountering the sun or leaving the shade because the entire land was covered with a canopy of trees which overspread and surrounded it. Its people lived the best, most luxurious and most joyful and plentiful of lives, with a most fertile soil, the purest of air, the least polluted of climates, and water most plentiful. With this they combined a mighty strength and unity of purpose and the very best of kingdoms. Their land was proverbial throughout the earth. They pursued the path of righteousness, possessed noble manners and sought to do right by both those who resided among them and those who visited their country as much as was in their power and circumstances. They lived like this for as many eras as God had decreed. They overcame any king who opposed them, and destroyed any tyrant with his army who came near them, so that all countries became their subjects and paid them allegiance, and they became the crown of the earth.

1253. Water, which flowed most copiously into the land of Saba', used to issue from a sluice (*mikhraq*) in that dam and mountain, made of solid rock and iron. The sluice as already stated was a *farsakh* in length and behind the dam and mountain were great rivers. In that sluice which blocked these rivers were thirty circular openings about an arm in length and width, perfectly formed and calculated, and the water would flow out of these openings into its courses until it came to the orchards which it would irrigate and supply drinking water to the inhabitants. The land of Saba', before attaining the prosperity and fertility we described above, would be flooded by these waters.

1254. The king of the people of those days was one who befriended wise men, brought them near to him, granted them precedence and was kind and generous to them. He gathered them from all lands in order to consult them and benefit from their wisdom, and sought their advice

regarding the best way to protect against that flood and to confine it. The waters used to descend from the mountain-tops in a vertical manner, destroying the crops and carrying away houses in their rush. The wise men agreed that outlets should be constructed to lead the waters into open lands and force out the waters into the seas. They informed the king that if outlets are dug that descend downwards, water would flow down and would not build up to cover the mountains since it is in the nature of water to seek low-lying land. The king then dug these outlets until the waters descended and flowed away, rushing onwards in their appointed direction. They then built the dam at the place where the waters began their flow from mountain to mountain and built in it the sluice mentioned earlier. They also drew away from these waters a canal flowing gently and at a specific volume which ended up at the sluice, from which the waters, passing through these thirty small openings described above, issued. Thus the land came to prosper, as described earlier. These nations then vanished, the years passed and time afflicted them with its reversals and crushed them with its burdens. The waters undermined the foundations of that sluice and with the passing of the years weakened it as the waters crashed into it repeatedly and from all sides. A proverb has it that a drop of water falling repeatedly on a hard boulder will eventually dent it; how much more will a rushing flood affect a man-made structure of iron and stone.

1255. When the progeny of Qahtan came to inhabit these lands and to overcome their native inhabitants, they were unaware of the calamity resulting from the deterioration of the dam and sluice and their weakness. As the structure of the dam reached its furthest limit of weakness, the waters overwhelmed the dam, sluice and edifice, tossing them aside in their flow when these waters had attained their greatest increase. So the waters inundated buildings, orchards, and built up areas

and the inhabitants of these lands ceased to exist and were driven away from their habitations.

1256. This, in brief, is an account of the flood of `Arim and the land of Saba'. There is agreement among scholars that the `Arim was the dam which they had built with great care to act as a barrier between their villages and the flood. This was then made to burst by a she-mouse in order to demonstrate a greater miracle, just as God had made Noah's flood to gush from the surface of the earth in order to be a clearer illustration, and a more telling proof, of divine power. To this day, the progeny of Qahtan living in these lands do not deny the story of the `Arim because it is widespread and very well known among them.

1257. Some Qahtanis boasted in the presence of the caliph al-Saffah* of the virtues of Qahtan, of the tribes of Himyar and Kahlan, and their superiority to the children of Nizar. Meanwhile, Khalid ibn Safwan and other Nizaris sat and listened in silence, being in awe of the caliph, whose maternal uncles were Qahtanis. Al-Saffah then turned to Khalid and said: "Will you not speak now that Qahtan has outstripped you in nobility and overwhelmed you with its age-old virtues?" Khalid replied: "What can I say to a people among whom there is no one but a dyer of leather, a weaver of garments, a monkey handler or a donkey rider? A people whom a she-mouse caused to drown, a woman was their monarch and a hoopoe revealed their abode?" He went on to disparage them, telling the story of how the Abyssinians had come to rule them and how the Persians had been their masters, as outlined earlier.

1258. In their poetry, the Qahtan make mention of the `Arim, the land of Saba' and of Ma'rib, and state that Ma'rib was originally the title of the king who ruled that town, but that the name Ma'rib became attached to the town itself, and this became its common designation. A poet recited:

*Do you not remember Saba', those who lived in Ma'rib,
When they built the `Arim to protect them from the flood?*

It is further stated that Ma'rib was the name of the palace of that ancient king. Thus Abu'l Tamahan recited:

*Have you not seen how well fortified was Ma'rib,
And all that surrounded it of walls and buildings?*

1259. Al-A`sha mentioned in his verse what we described as follows:

In this is an lesson to one who seeks it:

Ma'rib, destroyed by the `Arim.

Built of marble for them by Himyar,

When their waters approach, they do not overwhelm them.

These waters irrigated crops and cattle,

The water divided among them at equal intervals.

Thus they lived for a lengthy period of time;

Then a flood overtook them, sweeping them away.

They quickly scattered, unable to give from these waters

Even a drop to drink to a weaned child.

1260. When we discussed long lifespans in our work entitled *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we made mention of the king who lived a long and virtuous life and built the dam, and whose lifespan equaled that of vultures. The Arabs had much to say on the subject of the long lifespans of vultures, using their long age in proverbs, and also the healthy body of the crow. This, for example, is what al-Khazraji recited in a poem where he described the long lifespan of Mu`adh ibn Muslim ibn Raja', client of al-Qa`qa` ibn Hakam:

Mu`adh ibn Muslim is a man so old

That eternity itself loudly complains about him.

*Time's head has grown hoary with age, and eternity dyed its white
hairs,*

But the garments of his age remain new.

O vulture of Luqman, how long do you intend to live?

How long will you wear the robe of life, you who are motionless?

Adam's house has collapsed,

But you endure, like the tent peg.

You inquire from the crows, hopping on one leg,

What it feels like to have a headache or an inflamed eye.

1261. In our previous works and in certain places in this present work we cited what ancient authorities have stated regarding the cause of long and short lifespans, the large size of bodies at the beginning of time and their gradual diminution with the passing of long eras and epochs of time. We also stated that when the Almighty began his creation, nature, which God made to be the innate quality of bodies, was at its most abundant and at its most potent and perfect.

1262. When nature is at its most potent, lifespans are longer and bodies are stronger, because the advent of sudden death occurs through the dissolution of the powers of nature. When these powers are at their utmost, lifespans are longer and bodies are stronger. When the world began it was perfect in age. But it gradually began to shrink because of loss of matter, and as a result of this loss of matter lifespans and bodies began to decrease so that the end of nature will result in the complete diminution of bodies and lifespans.

1263. This view regarding the large bodies of human beings at the beginning of time has been rejected by modern scholars and researchers. These latter claim that what one observes as regards their dwellings and the works they undertook on earth indicate that their bodies were small and similar to our own bodies. This, they claim, can be seen in their dwellings, doors, and corridors and in what they built of various structures, temples, houses and living quarters all over the earth.

Examples include the habitations of Thamud who carved their houses in the mountains out of solid rock, with their small rooms and dainty doors. The same is true of other places in the land of `Ad, Egypt and al-Sham and indeed in all places on earth, east or west. But this is a subject which, if we were to discuss fully, would grow too long and unwieldy.

1264. Let us now return to our main subject from which we digressed namely, Saba', Ma'rib and the history of the king of that time, `Amr ibn `Amir. This king, mentioned earlier in this chapter, had a brother, a childless soothsayer called `Imran, and a wife, a soothsayer from the people of Radman, from Himyar, called Tarifa the Good. The first indication of what was to happen in Ma'rib with the flood of `Arim was a vision that `Imran saw while prophesying, namely, that his people will be {utterly scattered} and their journeys will become far. He mentioned this to his brother `Amr, known as king Muzaiqiya, whose reign was calamitous upon his people. God knows best how this happened.

Furthermore, as Tarifa was asleep one day she saw in her dream that a cloud had overspread their land then came thunder and lightning. This was followed by bolts of lightning that stunned and burnt everything they touched, then fell to the ground and ignited everything in their path. Tarifa was terrified and filled with great dread. She went to see the king and said: "What I saw today has driven sleep away. I saw a cloud with protracted thunder and lightning, followed by a bolt which burnt everything it touched. Nothing can be more horrid than this except drowning."

1265. When they saw how terrified she was, they watched over her and calmed her down until she recovered from her fright. Then the king `Amr ibn `Amir entered one of his orchards with two servant girls. When Tarifa heard this, she went to see him and ordered a page of hers called Sinan to follow her. As she left the door of her house, she was

accosted by three blind mice (*manadhij*) standing up on their hind legs and covering their eyes with their hands. The *manadhij* are animals found in Yemen that resemble gerbils. When Tarifa saw them, she placed her hands over her eyes, sat on the ground and said to her page: "Let me know when these animals have gone." When they went away, he informed her and she quickly resumed her walk. When she came to the pool of water of the orchard at which `Amr was to be found, a tortoise leapt out of the water and fell on its back along the path, attempting to turn over but not succeeding. It made use of its tail to move, tossing dust on its belly and sides, and urinating. When Tarifa saw the tortoise she sat on the ground. As the tortoise returned to the water, Tarifa continued on her way until she finally reached `Amr at midday, when the heat was intense and the trees were swaying without any breeze. She passed through and came upon `Amr lying on a bed with the two servant girls. When he saw her he was embarrassed and ordered the two servant girls to leave the bed.

1266. Then he said: "Come to your bed, Tarifa." At this point she prophesied [in rhymed prose]: "By light and darkness, by earth and sky! The trees shall vanish and the water shall return as it was in ancient days!" `Amr asked her: "Who told you all this?" She replied: "The blind mice informed me of arduous years to come, when both parent and child shall cease to be." He said: "What are you saying?" She said: "I am speaking like one regretful and grieving! I saw a tortoise throwing up dust in heaps and showering urine! I entered the garden to find the trees swaying!" "So what does it all mean?" he asked. She answered: "A heap of calamities! A great disaster! Momentous events!" "What is this calamity, woe to you?" She answered: "Woe, indeed, to me and no escape for you! Woe to both me and you from what the flood will bring!" `Amr leapt up from his bed and said: "What is this you're

telling me, Tarifa?” She answered: “A fateful matter! Long lasting sorrow! A few survivors! The few who survive are the best!” `Amr asked: “What proof do you have for what you’re telling me?” She said: “Go to the dam. If you see a mouse digging vigorously in the dam with his hands and turning boulders from the mountain with his legs, know that the deadly end is coming through digging, and that fate has overtaken us.” He asked: “What is this calamity that will befall us?” She said: “A promise from God that has descended upon us! Falsehood has manifested itself! A punishment has fallen upon us! Let the catastrophe come about but not through your doing!”

1267. `Amr then proceeded to the dam to examine it and found a mouse turning a boulder with its legs that fifty men could barely move. So he returned to Tarifa and told her what he had seen, reciting:

*I saw a sight that brought me pain,
Its awful aspect stirred up in me excessive distress.
And all from a mouse who resembled a male boar of the woods,
Or a hardy ram unique among the flocks of sheep.
He was dragging a rock from the boulders of the `Arim,
With claws and fangs that crush.
What rock he could not drag he crushed,
As easily as if he was tending an enclosure of old camels.*

1268. Tarifa said to him: “Among other proofs for what I told you is for you to sit on your throne between the two gardens, then order a bottle to be placed before you. The wind will then fill the bottle with the dust of the flatland in the plain of the valley and its sand, though you know that the gardens are overspread with a canopy which neither sun nor wind can penetrate.” `Amr ordered a bottle to be placed before him and it soon became filled with earth from the flatlands.

1269. He then went to Tarifa and told her what had happened and asked: “When will the dam collapse in your view?” She answered: “Between the present moment and the next seven years.” “But in which year?” he asked. She responded: “Only God knows. If anyone knew this, it would be me. Not a night will pass between now and the next seven years without your thinking that the dam will collapse the next day or that very night.” In his sleep, `Amr saw the `Arim flood and was told that the sign of its coming was to see small pebbles appearing on palm fronds. He then went to the stumps and fronds of the palms and found that pebbles had appeared, so knew that the calamity was upon them and the land will be destroyed. He kept this information to himself and told no one about it but resolved to sell everything he owned in the land of Saba’ and to leave the country with his family. But he worried that people might find his departure strange so he ordered a feast, slaughtered camels and sheep and spread out a spacious banquet. He sent word to the people of Ma’rib to say that `Amr had arranged for a great and memorable day of feasting and inviting them all to come and partake of the food.

1270. He then summoned a son of his called Malik, though some say he was an orphan being raised by him, and said: “When I sit down to feed the people, sit next to me and keep objecting to whatever I say, and answer me rudely, and do to me whatever I do to you.” The people of Ma’rib arrived and when they sat down he invited them to eat. Next to him sat the person he had instructed, who then began to dispute and object to his words and to answer him rudely. `Amr slapped his face and cursed him so the boy slapped him back. `Amr then got up and said in a loud voice: “What humiliation! This is `Amr’s day of celebration and a mere boy curses him and slaps his face.” He swore he would kill him but they kept imploring him to let him be. He did so and said: “I

swear to God I cannot remain in a country where this was done to me and I will now sell my property and wealth.”

1271. The people said to one another: “Let us seize this chance of `Amr’s anger and buy his properties before he calms down.” The people then bought up all his property in the land of Ma’rib. Some of what he had heard about the flood of `Arim became known to people so some members of the Azd tribe departed after having sold their properties. As sales of property increased people grew suspicious and stopped buying it. `Amr, having gathered his wealth together, now told people about the flood. His brother `Imran, the childless soothsayer, addressed the people as follows: “I saw in a vision that you will be utterly scattered and your journeys will become long. I shall describe the various countries to you and you can choose whichever country you like to head towards.

Whoever among you likes the description of a particular land, let him proceed to it. Now, then, if any of you are adventurous, have hardy camels and new water pouches, let them head towards the mighty fort of Oman.” Those who settled there were the Azd of Oman. The soothsayer then said: “If any of you are not so adventurous, do not possess hardy camels or have new water pouches, let them head towards the mountain passes of Kurud” which is the land of Hamadhan. Those who settled there were the progeny of Wadi`a ibn `Amr, and they attached themselves to the genealogy of its inhabitants. The soothsayer continued: “If any of you are needy and in want, and possess sound policy, foresight and patience in the face of time’s turmoil, let them head towards the valley of Marr [near Mecca].”

1272. Those who settled there were the tribe of Khuza`a. They were so called because they turned aside into that locality and separated themselves (*inkhaza`a*) from the other groups. They were the progeny of `Amr ibn Luhayy. They separated themselves from the others and so

are called Khuza`a until the present day. Regarding this matter Hassan ibn Thabit al-Ansari recited:

*When we arrived in the valley of Marr,
Khuza`a separated itself from us in many valleys.*

Malik, Aslam and Malkan are the sons of Afsa ibn Haritha ibn `Amr Muzaiqiya.

1273. The soothsayer said: “Whoso among you desires trees firmly rooted and which provide nourishment in times of famine, let them head to Yathrib of the palm trees”, Yathrib being Medinah. Those who settled it were the Aws and the Khazraj, the two sons of Haritha ibn Tha`laba ibn `Amr Muzaiqiya. The soothsayer then said: “Whoso among you desires prosperity and leavened bread, brocade and silk, power and authority, let them head to Busra and the spring of Hafir”. These are two localities in al-Sham. Those who settled there were the tribe of Ghassan. The soothsayer said: “Whoso among you desires delicate garments, fine horses, treasures, and livelihoods, let them head to Iraq”. Those who settled there were Malik ibn Fahm al-Azdi and his progeny, as also the Ghassanids of al-Hira, as mentioned earlier in this book. Hisham ibn al-Kalbi said: “As for my father, he used to say that the Ghassanids of al-Hira settled there long after that date, with Tubba`”.

1274. Then `Amr ibn `Amir Muzaiqiya and his children left Ma`rib along with all the Azd of Ma`rib, seeking a land to settle in that could keep them united. Wadi`a ibn `Amr ibn `Amir Muzaiqiya left them to settle in Hamadhan. Remaining behind was Malik ibn al-Yaman ibn Fahm ibn `Adiyy ibn `Amr ibn Mazin ibn al-Azd who after them became king in Ma`rib until overtaken by destruction. The main group went on until they arrived in Najran where Abu Haritha ibn `Amr ibn `Amir Muzaiqiya and Di`bil ibn Ka`b ibn Abi Haritha separated from

them and associated themselves with the tribe of Madhhij. Hisham al-Kalbi said: "It is said that Abu Haritha was the grandfather of al-Harith ibn Ka`b ibn Abi Hudhaifa who was in Najran, but God knows best."

Then `Amr ibn `Amir marched on until he reached a locality between al-Sarat and Mecca where some members of the Banu Nasr clan of the Azad settled there along with `Imran the soothsayer, brother of `Amr ibn `Amir Muzaiqiya, and `Adiyy ibn Haritha ibn `Amr Muzaiqiya.

1275. `Amr ibn `Amir, along with the tribe of Mazin, went on until they reached the land of the `Asharis and `Akk, arriving at a spring called Ghassan, between two valleys called Zabid and Rima`. These valleys stretch between an elevated ground called Sa`id Hasak and the high mountains of Zabid and Rima`. They settled at the Ghassan spring and drank from it so came to be known as Ghassan, and this became their common name by which alone they are known. Their poet recited:

If you ask us, we answer that we are a noble people,

The Azd is our pedigree, and Ghassan is our spring.

1276. Those called Ghassan from the tribe of Mazin are the Aws and Khazraj, the two sons of Haritha ibn Tha`laba ibn `Amr Muzaiqiya, Jafna ibn `Amr Muzaiqiya, al-Harith, Ka`b and Malik, sons of `Amr Muzaiqiya, and al-Taw`am and `Adiyy, the sons of Haritha ibn Tha`laba ibn Imru`ul Qays ibn Mazin ibn al-Azd. These people relate many accounts about their dispersal and who among them came to associate themselves in genealogy with Ma`add ibn `Adnan. They further speak of the wars between them until the Ma`add were victorious and drove them out so they reached al-Sarat, which is the Azd mountain, where they came to be known as al-Sarat, which is also called al-Hijaz. The name Sarat refers to the back of that mountain just as the back of a beast of burden is called *sarat*. So they settled on its mountain and plain and its surrounding territories. This is a mountain

on the borders of al-Sham which separates al-Sham from Hijaz and is next to the provinces of Damascus, al-Urdunn and the land of Palestine, and is joined to the Musa Mountain.

1277. The people of Ma'rib were sun worshippers so God sent them prophets calling them to the worship of Almighty God, reprimanding them for their beliefs and reminding them of God's gifts and grace upon them. But they rejected the prophets and their teachings and denied that God had shown them any gift of grace, saying to them: "If you are prophets sent by God, ask God to rob us of what he has given us, and to take away what he bestowed upon us." A blaspheming woman among them recited:

If what we experience of comfort comes from your God,

Let him depart with his wealth.

Let him go away and tend to his dependants.

A believing woman from those who embraced the true faith answered her:

Were it not for God, we would not be able to support our dependants,

And our dependants would be unable to endure the hardships we suffer.

It is he who answers our prayers,

And relieves us from distress when it afflicts us.

1278. The prophets then called down God's anger upon them so God sent them the `Arim flood which destroyed their dam, inundating their land, destroying their trees, erasing their cities and obliterating their properties and flocks. So they went to their prophets and said: "Pray to God that he might restore our prosperity, make our land fertile, and return to us the flocks that ran away, and we solemnly pledge not to associate anything with God in our worship." The prophets prayed to God and he answered their prayer and granted them what they had asked. Their lands prospered and their built up areas extended all the

way to Palestine and al-Sham with villages, road stations and markets. The prophets then came to them to say that the time had come for them to believe in God, but they refused choosing to be {violent and blasphemous}, so God utterly scattered them and increased the length of their journeys.

1279. Al-Mas`udi said: Now that we have given a brief account of the dam, the land of Ma`rib, `Amr ibn `Amir and other matters discussed earlier in this chapter, let us turn back to a history of soothsayers. The first prophesy uttered by Satih the Ghassanid is the following. As he was sleeping with his brothers on a windy and dark night, under covers, and while the rest of the clan were absent, he suddenly screamed, made plaintive sounds and moaned, then said [in rhymed prose]: “By daylight and dawn, by darkness and twilight, a calamity shall overtake you!” “What calamity, O Satih?” they asked. He said: “When darkest night advances, then turns into dawn, leaving them behind and disregarding them!” “What is the sign for all this?” they asked. He replied: “It has to do with a dam exploding, with fear from reprimand, one heat wave after another, in a cold night!” They ignored his utterances and treated them lightly. So on a very cold night, the waters from the valleys there grew turbulent and all of a sudden overwhelmed them as mentioned above, carrying away their camels and flocks and almost destroying them completely.

1280. Many and wondrous tales are told of Satih and Shiqq ibn Sa`b, the soothsayers. One such tale concerns Tubba` al-Himyari who saw in a vision that a firebrand descended from the darkness and fell in the land of Tihama, consuming all living things [reading *nasama*], and how the two soothsayers interpreted that vision to him. Another relates to Satih and `Abd al-Masih in the vision reported by the chief priest of the Persians and the trembling of the palace (*iwan*). Yet another concerns

Samlaqa and Zawba`a and their doings. Other tales concern the male ostrich and the tree; the war between `Akk and Ghassan over milk and its thinness, sweetness and density; the arrival of Ghassan at the top of the valley and the `Akk below them; the augury they practiced as to the manner in which the sun rose and set on their camels; the story of al-Samaw'al ibn Hanna ibn `Adiya and what transpired with him and Mazin the soothsayer, and what he said to him when the latter knocked on his door at night and how he came to be under his protection; the tale that concerns the white goat, the red ostrich, the blond mare, the cross-eyed camel and the mean old man together with other stories of soothsayers and trackers, mentioned in our earlier books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. From God comes success.

Chapter 54

An account of the chronology of Arabs and non-Arabs, their months, and where they agree and disagree

1281. Al-Mas`udi said: The number of months among the Arabs and all other non-Arabs, is twelve. Let us now mention the years, months and days most common among the major nations who are the Arabs, Persians, Romans, Syrians [*Suryaniyyun*] and Copts, since the Greek terms used are those also used by the Romans. We have not attempted to describe the views of the Indians as regards years, months and days and the calculations appended thereto, nor the nations that followed them in this regard such as the Chinese and many other kingdoms and nations. This is because their chronologies contravene what is in common usage among most of mankind. We shall begin our description by citing the years and months of the Copts which agree with those of the Syrians, then follow this with the Syrian months which agree with those of the Romans. This will be followed by the years, months and days of the Persians, then by the years, months and days of the Arabs

and why each month and day was called such, and what the Arabs have mentioned concerning the naming of the nights. We then describe in brief the actions of the sun and moon and their effect on mineral, plant and animal life in this world, as well as other matters that a contemplative reader will discover when he reads them, God willing.

Chapter 55

An account of the months of the Copts and Syrians, and the differences in naming them, together with a brief history

1282. The first Coptic month is Tut, which is Aylul (September), then Babah which is Tishrin al-Awwal (October), then Hatur or Tishrin al-Thani (November), then Kaihak, which is Kanun al-Awwal (December), then Tubah, which is Kanun al-Thani (January), then Imshir, which is Shibat (February), then Barmahat, which is Adhar (March), then Barmuda, which is Nisan (April), then Bashnash, which is Ayyar (May), then Bu'una, which is Huzairan (June), then Abib, which is Tammuz (July), then Misra, which is Ab (August). The Copts then add five more days they call "blind" which they add to the months we named. These are 360 days and so become 365 days. The first day of the Coptic year is the 29th of August, and each month has thirty days. So the days of the year came to 365 just like the days of the Persian year. In ancient times, the Coptic months began like the Persian, so the first day of Tut was the first day of the Persian Adharmah, then each subsequent month until the end of the Coptic year coincided with the end of Adharmah. This precise chronology is found in the books of astronomical almanacs.

1283. At this time, which is the year 332, the people of Egypt and all the Copts use a different calculation of the months from the one described above, since, like the Syrians and Romans, they have added one quarter of a day to their year. Hence their months have come to

differ from the Persian and to agree with the months of the Syrians and Romans in the number of days in a year. The Coptic chronology as found in *Almagest* starts from the first year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and the first day was a Wednesday. However, Coptic chronology in the almanac of Ptolemy commences with the first year of the reign of Philip, the first day of which was a Sunday. The disparity between the chronology of Nebuchadnezzar and that of Yazdjird is one thousand, three hundred and seventy-nine Persian years and three months. That between the chronology of Philip and of Yazdjird is nine hundred and fifty-five years and three months while that between the chronology of Alexander and Yazdjird is nine hundred and forty-two Roman years and two hundred and fifty-nine days, and between Yazdjird and the Hijra three thousand, six hundred and twenty-four days.

1248. The first of these chronologies is that of Nebuchadnezzar, then Philip, then Alexander his son, then the Hijra, then Yazdjird. Arab chronology begins with the first year that the Prophet emigrated from Mecca to Medinah, which began on a Thursday. Persian chronology begins with the first year of the reign of Yazdjird son of Shahriyar son of Kisra Abrawiz, which was a Tuesday. The chronology of the Romans and Syrians began with the first year of the reign of Alexander, which was a Monday. God knows best.

Chapter 56

An account of the months of the Syrians and where these agree with the months of the Arabs [Romans in Vol. 1], together with the number of days in a year and knowledge of meteorology

1285. To begin with, the days of the year are 365 and one quarter. Each month has a different number of days. April has 30 days, May 31, and June 30. On the 18th day of that month, the sun returns, descending from

the north, [as required by Indian calculations] which is the longest day of the year and the shortest night. July has 31 days, and August 31.

Once August ends, the heat disappears. Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Malik al-Zayyat* recited:

*The water has turned cold, the night has become sweet,
And drinking is now enjoyable.*

June, July and August have passed you by.

1286. September is thirty days. On the fifth of that month is the Feast of Zacharias and on the tenth the star called Beta of Leo appears and the heat vanishes. On the thirteenth of this month is the Feast of the Cross, which is the fourteenth day. On that day, the canals in Egypt are opened, as already mentioned in this book. On the eighteenth day, day and night are equal in length. Abu Nuwas recited:

*September has passed away, and the heat has vanished,
And Sirius has extinguished its fire.*

1287. October has 31 days. In it occurs al-Mihrajan [ancient autumnal festival]. Between it and the Nawruz [New Year festival] is one hundred and sixty-nine days. The story of the Mihrajan as recounted by the Persians is that one of their ancient kings, called Mihr, was very unjust to both elite and commoners. Their months used to be named after their kings, thus Mihrmah, mah meaning month. That king lived long and his tyranny increased. When he died in the middle of that month, that is Mihrmah, the day of his death was called Mihrajan, which means the “soul of Mihr has departed”. This is because the Persians bring forward in their sentence structure what the Arabs hold back. That language is Pahlavi, which is First Persian. The people who live in towns called Marw in Iraq and other Persian towns regard this day as the first day of winter. They then change their bedding, furniture and many of their garments.

1288. On the fifth of October is the Feast of the Church of Resurrection in Jerusalem. On that day, Christians from all over the world gather therein and fire descends from heaven by which candles are lit. A vast concourse of Muslims also gather to observe that feast, on which olive leaves are plucked and Christians have many rituals. That fire is based on a subtle trick and a great secret which we have explained in our book called *al-Qadaya wa'l Tajarib*.

1289. November has 30 days and December 31. On December 19, the day lasts nine hours and one half and one quarter, which is its shortest duration, while the night lasts fourteen hours and a quarter, its longest duration. On the 25 of that month is the birth of Christ.

1290. January has 31 days. The first day of the month is the Calends (*Qalandas*), a feast day for the people of al-Sham where on that night they light fires and turn out in crowds especially in the city of Antioch where mass is celebrated in the Church of the Qusyan [St Peter's], but also in the rest of al-Sham, Egypt and the whole of Christendom. The Christians of Antioch celebrate the day with great joy, lighting fires, eating and drinking and are joined in these festivities by the commoners and many of the elites. This is so because Antioch is the seat of the great patriarch who is held by them in great reverence. The Christians call Antioch "City of God" and also "City of the King" and "Mother of Cities" because Christianity had its earliest beginnings in that city.

1291. There are four Christian patriarchs: the first is the patriarch of Rome, the second of Constantinople, also called "He Polis" and whose ancient name was Byzantium. The third is the patriarch of Alexandria in Egypt and the fourth is that of Antioch. Rome and Antioch are dedicated to Peter so they begin with Rome because it is the church of Peter. They end with Antioch because it is his church and out of reverence to Paul. They created a new patriarchate in Jerusalem: this is

new and was not found in ancient times. Iliya, which is Bait al-Maqdis, used to have a bishop and another in Lydda in the land of Palestine. 1292. Antioch also has a church dedicated to Paul and is known in Antioch as the “Monastery of the Fleas” which is next to the Persia Gate. There is another church in Antioch, called Ashmunit, in which is celebrated a feast day held in high regard by the Christians. In that city also are the Church of Barbara and the Church of Mary, the latter being a round church whose construction is one of the world’s wonders in its structure and height. The caliph al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan* had ripped out from that church some amazing marble columns to be installed in the Mosque of Damascus. These were carried by sea to the coastal region of Damascus while the majority of columns remain to this day standing in their place in that church. A strange tale is told about a king of the Romans in Antioch and the Jews in Ashmunit Church, which was outside the city walls. It used to belong to the Jews so the Jews were compensated with the Royal Residence in Antioch instead of the Ashmunit Church. Today, what used to be the Royal Residence is now known as the Residence of the Jews. The Jews used trickery when the church passed from their possession, killing a large number of Christians in that church by sawing off its wooden beams and employing other tricks.

1293. Earlier in this work we recounted the history of Peter and Paul and what happened to them in the city of Rome and also what happened to the other disciples of Christ and their dispersal on earth. We further recounted the story of the king who built the city of Antioch, called Antikhus which means “he who built the surrounding wall”. The city of Antioch was named after him in Greek. When the Muslims came and conquered the city, they changed the letters around except for the “a”, “n” and “t”. According to the history of the Melkite and other Christian

communities, the year from the birth of Christ till today, which is the year 332, is 940. According to the Alexander calendar it would be the year 1255, and the years elapsed from Alexander to Christ are 309. This is what I myself found in the history of the Melkites in the Church of the Qusyan in Antioch. We shall later on mention the question of dating in brief and in a separate chapter, God willing.

1294. Let us now return to a description of the months. February is twenty-eight days and one quarter for three successive years. The fourth year is a leap year, where it becomes twenty-nine days and that year would be 366 days. On the seventh of that month, the first live coal (*jamra*)*, called *Jabha*, falls. On the fourteenth of the month the second live coal, called *Zubra*, falls. On the twenty-first, the third live coal, called *Sarfa*, falls and the cold vanishes, and the three days before its end are called “days of the old woman”.

1295. March has thirty-one days. On the fourth day from its start, the “days of the old woman” come to an end. The Arabs call these seven days Sinn, Sinbar, Wabr, Amir, Mu’tamir, Mu`allil and Mutfi’ al-Jamr. A poet recited:

Winter has been slapped on its rear

By seven dust-colored objects:

Sinn, Sinbar and Wabr, and Amir and his brother Mu’tamir,

And Mu`allil and Mutfi’ al-Jamr.

1296. On the fifteenth day of March night and day are equal in length and the sun enters Aries. This day marks the change in the climate of the year. Abu Nuwas recited:

Do you not see how the sun has entered Aries,

And how the balance of time has moderated?

How the birds have begun to sing after being silent,

And wine has aged one whole year?

How earth has come to wear its decorative apparel?

How its plants have come out in many colors,

Which you'd imagine were an ornamented dress?

So drink a toast to the new season,

For the face of the season is ready to be kissed.

It is not the case that wine has aged one year when the sun is in Aries.

What the poet meant by "year" (*hawl*) was *hawl* meaning the potency of the wine.

1297. Al-Mas`udi said: As regards the Roman months, these agree with the months of the Syrians in number. This is so because the first Roman month is Yanuarius, which is Kanun al-Thani, the first day of which is the Calends as already mentioned. Shibat is Fabrarius, Adhar is Martiush, Nisan is Abrilius, Ayyar is Maius, Huzairan is Yunius, Tammuz is Yulius, Ab is Aghustus, Ailul is Sutumbrius, Tishrin al-Awwal is Aqtubrius, Tishrin al-Akhar is Nunumbrius and Kanun al-Awwal is Dijambrius.

Chapter 57

An account of the months of the Persians

1298. All the Persian months have thirty days. The first is Farwardin Mah and the first day of this month is the Nawruz. Between it and the Mahrajan is 194 days. The second month is Ardibihast Mah, the third Khurdadh Mah, the fourth is Tir Mah—Nimruz is the feast of Mahrajan—then Murdadh Mah, Shahrir Mah, Mihr Mah, the sixteenth day of which is the Mahrajan, then Aban Mah in which occurs Aban Ruz which is the feast of Aban Kah, the last five days of which are the Farawardijan.

1299. The first day of Adhur Mah is when a beardless person (*kawsaj*) mounted on a mule comes out in Iraq and the land of Persia. What we recount here is unknown except in Iraq and Persia; the people of al-

Sham, al-Jazira, Egypt and Yemen know nothing of this. For a number of days he feeds people with walnuts, garlic, fatty meat and other hot foods and drinks that repel the cold. He appears to be one who drives away the cold and when cold water is poured on him he feels nothing because of the pain. He screams in Persian: Karma! Karma! which means "Heat! Heat!" This is a feast day for the Persians where they enjoy music and display much merriment, as also at many times during the seasons of the year and the rotating Adhur Jashn, Dayy Mah, Bahman Mah and Isfandar Mah, thus completing 365 days.

Chapter 58

An account of the Persian days

1300. These are: Hurmuz, Bahman, Ardibahisht, Shahrir, Isfandarmudh, Khurdadh, Murdadh, Dai Badhur, Adhur, Aban, Khur, Mah, Tir, Jush, Dai Bamhar, Mihr, Usrush, Farwardin, Bahram and Ram. A poet recited:

Give us early to drink sweet wine,

On a Saturday and on the day of Ram.

My normal practice is for you to see me on dawn that day,

Languid in speech.

Then also Badh, Dai Badin, Ard, Ashtad, Asman, Zamiad, Marasfand and Aniran.

1301. As regards the days known as Farawardijan, they are: Ahandkah, Ashtadkah, Isfandkah, Isfandmudhkah and Bahishtshakah. The Arabs used to call these five days: al-Harir, al-Habir, Qalib al-Qahr, Jafil al-Ta`n and Mudhahdhih al-Ba`ir. The Persians used to intercalate a month every one hundred and twenty years. They postponed this until the one hundred and twentieth year because their days were divided into lucky and unlucky. So they hated to intercalate a day every four years, thus

turning lucky days into unlucky, and where the Nawruz does not fall on the first of the month. In God is success.

Chapter 59

An account of the years and months of the Arabs and what they called their days and nights

1302. The first lunar month is Muharram. A lunar year has 354 days which is eleven days and one quarter shorter than the Syrian. Every thirty-three years the lunar is shorter by one year. That Arabic year then passes away without containing a Nawruz. The Arabs in the Jahiliyya period used to intercalate a month every three years and called it *al-nasi'*, which means delay. Almighty God condemned this practice in the Qur'an: {To intercalate is to sink deeper in unbelief}. The Arabs delineated the months starting with Muharram, the beginning of the year, and called it so because they prohibited (*tahrim*) war and military raids during that month.

1303. The next month, Safar, was so called after certain markets in the Yemen that were called Safariyya which they frequented to buy their food from. Whoever failed to attend these markets would die of hunger. The poet al-Nabigha al-Dhubyani recited:

*I warned the Dhubyan tribe against a day of great cold,
And against their sitting tight in every month of Safar.*

It is also stated that the month was called so because towns would become empty of their inhabitants who had gone out to war. This is taken from the phrase *asfarat al-dar*, meaning the house has become vacant.

1304. The month called Rabi` is so called because in it people and beasts of burden grow lively and brisk (*irtiba`*). If someone says that beasts of burden can become lively in other months, one might answer by saying that the name may have been appropriate at one particular

point in time and that the name stuck even though the season of the year may have changed.

1305. The next month, Jumada, was so called because water used to freeze (*jumud*) at the time when these months were first given their names, but those who named them did not know that the times of heat and cold would rotate, making the name inappropriate. The next month, Rajab, was so called because it inspired fear. The verb *rajaba* means to fear something. A poet recited:

If an old woman wishes to be entered from behind,

Enter her thus, and do not be embarrassed by her, or fear her.

1306. The month Sha`ban is so called because the tribes scatter (*tasha`ub*) to their water springs and to engage in raiding. Ramadan is called thus because of the excessive heat (*ramda`*) that used to occur in it at that time. Another view holds that it is one of the names of the Almighty and thus should not be called Ramadan but the “month of Ramadan”. Shawwal, the next month, is so called because camels at that time used to raise their tails (*tashulu*) desiring to mate. This is why the Arabs disliked marrying during that month. Dhu`l Qa`da was called thus because during that month the Arabs refrained (*qu`ud*) from wars and raiding. The month Dhu`l Hajja is called thus because it is the month of pilgrimage (*hajj*). The sacred months are Muharram, Rajab, Dhu`l Qa`da and Dhu`l Hajja. The months of pilgrimage are Shawwal, Dhu`l Qa`da and the first twenty days of Dhu`l Hajja.

1307. The Known Days (*al-ayyam al-ma`lumat*) are the first ten days of the month Dhu`l Hajja. The Numbered Days (*al-ayyam al-ma`dudat*) are the Days of *Tashriq*, the three days that follow the feast of sacrifice. Haste in departure for pilgrims can, by general agreement, only occur on the third day after the Day of Sacrifice. Had the Day of Sacrifice been one of the Numbered Days, haste in departure would have been

permissible during any of the three days. But this would contravene the Qur'an since the Almighty informs us that haste in departure may occur in any of the two days of the Numbered Days. If the Numbered Days are as we described, it would follow that the Known Days are included in them and that sacrifice on the Day of Sacrifice would occur during the Numbered Days, because these latter are part of it. In normal Arabic speech one can, by general agreement, say "I came to you in that month" when the coming itself occurred on a certain day of that month, or else "I came to you on that day" when the coming occurred at a certain time of that day.

1308. No fasting is allowed on the Day of Sacrifice, the Day of Breaking the Fast, or the Days of Mina, nor is voluntary fasting allowed on these days because the Prophet forbade this. He did not specify a particular religious duty when forbidding this voluntary act, so one must desist from fasting, as we have described. It is related from `Uqba ibn `Amir that the Prophet forbade fasting during the three Days of *Tashriq*. Nonetheless, and concerning all that we have mentioned here about the Known and Numbered Days and fasting during the Days of *Tashriq*, there is dispute among people. The first of the Days of *Tashriq* is the second day following the Day of Sacrifice, while the last day is the thirteenth day of Dhu'l Hajja, and the afternoon thereof.

1309. People differ as to why these days were called Days of *Tashriq*, these being the days and nights at Mina. Some assert that they acquired that name because they used to slaughter the sacrificial animals in Mina and to dry the strips of meat in the sun (*sharraqa*). Others say that they were so called because the people of Mecca and others would head home in an eastern direction (*yatasharraqun*). Yet others claim that the name originates from the fact that the pilgrims would depart from Mina and other places like al-Muzdalifa to certain prayer spots in the open air

that they called *mashariq*, singular *mishraq*, where they used to glorify God and pray to him, so these days acquired that name. Still others claim that the name comes from the slaughtering of animals, called *sharq*, alleging that the Prophet forbade sacrificing an animal that was *musharraq*, meaning one whose ears were cut lengthwise, and thus the days acquired that name. People of diverse sects and views have expressed many opinions about the Days of *Tashriq*, opinions that this present work cannot really accommodate. We mentioned this topic because our discussion led us into it as being relevant to our main purpose, though this discussion should properly belong to jurisprudence.

1310. Ill-omened days are each Wednesday which coincides with the number 4 in a month, such as day 4, day 14, day 14 before the end of a month, day 24 or day 4 before its end. The names of the days of the week begin with *al-Ahad* (Sunday), so called because it was the first day of time created by God, as is found in the Torah. At the beginning of this work we already treated the subject of the days since the beginning of creation. Monday (*al-Ithnain*) was so called because it is second to it (*thanin*). Tuesday (*al-Thulatha`*) is the third (*thalith*) day. Wednesday (*al-Arbi`a*) is the fourth (*rabi`*) day. Thursday (*al-Khamis*) is the fifth (*khamis*) day. Friday (*al-Jum`a*) is so called because all creation gathered (*ijtima`a*) in it. Saturday (*al-Sabt*) is so called because all creation in it ceased, and at the end of it Adam was created. The name comes from the phrase *Sibti* sandals, that is, hairless. One also says: so-and-so *sabata*, or else *samada* his hair, meaning he cut it.

1311. In pre-Islamic days the Arabs used to call the days of the week as follows: Sunday was Awwal; Monday was Ahwan; Tuesday was Jubar; Wednesday was Dubar; Thursday was Mu`nis; Friday was `Aruba and

Saturday was Shiyar. A poet of the Thamud, the tribe of the prophet Salih, recited:

*I hope that I will live, and that my day of death
Will occur on Awwal, or Ahwan or Jubar,
Or else on Dubar that comes next, but if I miss it,
Then on Mu'nis, `Aruba or Shiyar.*

The months they used to call as follows: Muharram was called Natiq, Safar was called Taqbal, then followed by Taliq, Najir, Aslakh, Amyah, Ahlak, Kas`, Zahir, Burak, Harf and Na`s which is Dhu'l Hajja.

1312. The Arabs differ in naming the four seasons. Some claim that the first season is Wasmi, i.e. Autumn, then Winter, then Summer then Qaydh [excessive heat]. Others count Spring as the first season, this being the most widespread and best known view. The Arabs say: we “autumned” (*kharafna*) in such a land and “wintered” (*shatawna*) in such a land and “springed” (*tarabba`na*) in such a land and “summered” (*sifna*) in such a land. The months of the Arabs are not arranged in accordance with the seasons of the year nor in accordance with the solar year. Thus, Muharram and other Arab months might at times fall in the spring and at other times in other seasons of the year. The months of the Greeks are designated to coincide with the seasons of a solar year where the sun traverses all the constellations. Similarly designated are the number of days and nights in each month as regards their length or brevity, and the appearance of visible stars and the disappearance of those that disappear across the ages and the years, these latter being twelve months in number. We have already explained that the first of these months is October (*Tishrin al-Awwal*) and the last is September (*Ailul*).

1313. Each of the four seasons of the year has its well-known months from among the twelve, which neither change nor move as do the

Arabic months. Each constellation too has a month. September, October and November are under the influence of melancholy; December, January and February are under the influence of phlegm; March, April and May are under sanguinary; June, July and August are under yellow bile. September has Virgo as its sign of the zodiac; October has the Balance; November has Scorpio; December has Sagittarius; January has Capricorn; February has Aquarius; March has Pisces; April has Aries; May has Taurus; June has Gemini; July has Cancer and August has Leo. 1314. Al-Mas`udi said: In what follows of this book we shall discuss, in brief, topics that have to do with natural characteristics and the seasons of the year and what is appropriate to each season by way of food and drink and other matters related to these topics in that chapter.

Chapter 60

An account of Arab views regarding the nights of lunar months and matters related thereto

1315. The Arabs used to describe the moon on each night of a month in accordance with its degree of brightness and other things, and did so in the form of question and answer. Thus: Q. "What are you when one night old?" A. "A suckling infant of a small lamb, whose parents have settled on a small hill." Q. "What are you when two nights old?" A. "Two servant girls gossiping, lying and deceiving." Q. "What are you when three nights old?" A. "Young girls talking, coming together from different places---or else "Who do not stay long". Q. "What are you when four nights old?" A. "An hour of night when a young camel is held down, neither hungry nor suckling." Q. "What are you when five nights old?" A. "Conversation and pleasantries." Q. "What are you when six nights old?" A. "Go travel by night and sleep." Q. "What are you when seven nights old?" A. "It becomes empty on the Day of Sacrifice----or else "the night journey of a hyena". Q. "What are you

when eight nights old?" A. "The moon on a cloudless night"--- or else "a loaf divided between two brothers". Q. "What are you when nine nights old?" A. "In me can be found a yellow color". Q. "What are you when ten nights old?" A. "I dispute with the dawn." Q. "What are you when eleven nights old?" A. "I am visible at night and visible in early morning." Q. "What are you when twelve nights old?" A. "Ready to march, for nomads and city people." Q. "What are you when thirteen nights old?" A. "A splendid moon that dazzles the eye of the beholder." Q. "What are you when fourteen nights old?" A. "Advancing towards youth, shining in between clouds." Q. "What are you when fifteen nights old?" A. "Perfection is reached and the days have passed." Q. "What are you when sixteen nights old?" A. "My shape has shrunk, in west and east." Q. "What are you when seventeen nights old?" A. "The poor man has embarked on his poverty." Q. "What are you when eighteen nights old?" A. "Not lasting long, soon to disappear." Q. "What are you when nineteen nights old?" A. "Slow to appear, because of awe." Q. "What are you when twenty nights old?" A. "I appear before dawn and am seen in daylight." Q. "What are you when twenty-one nights old?" A. "I do not travel long by night except when I become visible." Q. "What are you when twenty-two nights old?" A. "Reddish dark in color and a lion in battle". Q. "What are you when twenty-three nights old?" A. "Like a firebrand, and I appear at night's end." Q. "What are you when twenty-four nights old?" A. " I appear in part and do not disperse any darkness." Q. "What are you when twenty-five nights old?" A. "On such a night I am neither moon nor crescent." Q. "What are you when twenty-six nights old?" A. "Death is approaching and hope is gone." Q. "What are you when twenty-seven nights old?" A. "What is near has drawn near, and there is no more light in me." Q. "What are you when twenty-eight nights old?" A. "I appear in the

morning but vanish at noon.” Q. “What are you when twenty-nine nights old?” A. “I precede the sun’s rays and do not stay long.” Q. “What are you when thirty nights old?” A. “A future crescent but quick to vanish.”

1316. The Arabs used to call the first three nights of a month “the three openers”; the next three, “the three clear nights”; the next three, “the three glittering nights”; the next three, “the three that go round”; the next three, “the three white nights”. As for the second half of the month, they used to call the first three nights, “the three black ones”; the next three, “the three dark ones”; the next three, “the three intensely dark ones”; the next three, “the three speedy ones”; the next three, “the three where nothing is visible”. In other versions, it is said that the nights of a month are described as three crescents, three moons, six additional nights, three white, three black and white nights, three dark ones, six intensely dark ones, two that pass quickly and one where nothing is visible.

1317. Al-Mas`udi said: As regards the names that the Arabs gave to the moon, it is called the night when it first appears a crescent (*hilal*) and is called a crescent so long as it does not become round. When round, it is called a moon (*qamar*). When surrounded by a halo and shines, it is called a moonlet (*qumayr*). The poet `Umar ibn Abi Rabi`a* recited:

And when a moonlet appeared, twenty-five nights old,

The two maidens said [to the two men]: Up and away!

1318. On the thirteenth night, the moon assumes its regular shape, and the night is called the midmost night. This is followed by the night of the full moon (*badr*). A young man is called a *badr* if his youthfulness is flawless but before he attains puberty. An eye is described as *hadra badra*, i.e. wide and sharp-sighted if it has a keen eyesight like that of a mare. The three white nights are the nights of the thirteenth, fourteenth

and fifteenth of the month. The three black and white nights are ones where they begin as dark then the rest of the night turns white. The night where nothing is visible is when the sun shines upon it. The black moon is when it hides behind the sun. The moon is said to be haloed when a thin, not thick, white line surrounds it. It is also said that the moon has parted asunder (*aftaqa*) if a wisp of cloud covers it then comes out. The expression goes: the moon has parted asunder and shown us the way. Every darkness of night is called *hindis*. The nights called *zuhar* are the white nights because *zuhra* means whiteness. In God is right guidance.

Chapter 61

An account of views regarding the effects of sun and moon on this world, and a summary of what has been said about this topic together with matters related thereto in this chapter

1319. Al-Mas`udi said: All scientists, Greek and others, hold that the moon has major effects on essences in our world but that such effects are less than those of the sun, the moon being subordinate to it. This is so because the months are lunar and depend on its movement for their rotation. Its effects are more plainly and more actively observed on marine life in particular. It nurtures plants, ripens fruit, fattens animals and constrains women to menstruate at certain times.

1320. Al-Mas`udi said: People have disagreed as to how an embryo is formed in the womb. Some ancient authorities hold that the seminal fluid contains a power that can form an embryo either from itself or from menstrual blood. Others argue that inside the womb is a mould where the embryo is formed. Galen in his book on seminal fluid, quoting Hippocrates, states that the role of the seminal fluid in forming the embryo is both active and passive. Aristotle states that the semen acts as an active agent and that the embryo is formed in menstrual blood

from the semen. He states that the semen imparts to the blood something like an impetus which then becomes a soul and exits from the womb.

1321. Galen claims that the embryo is formed from semen and that it attracts the menstrual blood, while the soul comes from the veins and arteries. The embryo is thus formed from the semen, the blood it attracts and the airstream that comes to it from the arteries. He states that the formation of an embryo is similar to the formation of plants, and that nature forms it from semen and blood, doing to the embryo what it does to plants. This is so because plant seeds need soil from which they derive nurture, and an embryo likewise needs a womb. Plants send forth roots from their stems to attract water while the embryo inside the placenta has veins and arteries similar to plant roots which act like stems for the embryo. Plant seeds produce a stem, then large branches, then the branches gradually divide from other branches until they reach their maximum height. The same is found in an embryo. In its body one will find a stem with three from each of the major branches: the major artery, the vena cava (*al-`irq al-ajwaf*) and the brain. One will then find that, from each of these, other branches divide like tree branches that divide until they reach their ends. Galen then added that semen is self-propelling and that an embryo is formed from a man, a woman and menstrual blood.

1322. Galen, quoting Empedocles, states that the body parts of a child are divided between a man and a woman's semen, and that the craving to copulate drives these parts to coalesce. This, says Galen, is to be found in the major work of Empedocles where he states his views about the manner in which the world is structured and how the soul is connected to its world, among other topics. Some ancient authorities claim that certain fine parts of a human body, akin to other human body

parts, pour into the womb, which feeds upon them and they grow, thus producing an embryo. Some believe that these fine parts that issue from all body parts of a male are congruent with similar matter from the womb and from the water of a female when they copulate, thus producing an embryo. This is why a child resembles its father in most of its body parts, and takes after the father's family. This is why sons resemble their fathers in most body parts, and how trackers decide on paternity when there is resemblance or else when they doubt paternity. This is the opinion of jurists who accept paternity through tracking. In earlier sections of this work we discussed this topic in a chapter devoted to tracking.

1323. A great deal is said by people about how an embryo is formed in the womb, how it begins, what is its essence and how it changes from a drop of semen to a blood clot, then to a lump of flesh, until it assumes its final shape. Among them are the Dualists, both ancient and modern. However, we have opted not to mention all this because it takes us far from our main purpose in this book.

1324. Al-Mas`udi said: However, the preceding discussion must be completely set aside and all rational knowledge must be abandoned when set against the words of the Almighty on this subject. Thus, the Qur'an states: {It is He who gives you shape in wombs, in any manner He pleases. There is no god but He, Almighty, All-Wise}. Thus God does not tell us how this occurs nor what material is involved but kept this knowledge to Himself, and offered as proof a revelation of His wisdom which points to His unity and the perfect wisdom He showed to His creatures. God then informs us of the origin from which He created mankind as follows: {O mankind, We created you from male and female} and also {O mankind, if you are in doubt about the resurrection, We created you from dust, then from a sperm, then from a

blood clot, then from a lump of flesh, formed and unformed, to make it plain to you. And We plant in wombs whatever We desire, for a stated term, then We bring you forth, a child, and then to reach full maturity. Some of you die; some are held over to the most degrading old age } to the end of that verse.

1325. Al-Mas`udi said: Adherents of religious communities, both ancient and modern, have had much to say regarding the ways in which sun and moon act to influence this world, the views they expressed and what effects they single out for each, together with the effects of the second of these two, namely, the moon. They have pointed out the moon's effect on the tides in the seas of China, India, Abyssinia and Yemen, as already described in this book. They have discussed such topics as its effect on minerals, the brains of animals, plants, and the increases to be observed therein when the moon is full, as also the decreases when it wanes, together with the sudden changes for the worse in a sick person which occur on the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first and twenty-eighth day of their sickness. This is so because the moon has four distinct and clear shapes: a half shape, a full shape, a half shape from full and an invisible shape. Each of these shapes lasts seven days since it assumes a half shape in seven days, is full on the fourteenth day, is a half shape from full on the twenty-first day and vanishes on the twenty-eighth day. So too are the relapses of a sick person which become evident on the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first and twenty-eighth day, and are also evident on days that occur midway through these periods, for these are the most clearly determined sectors of a thing to be divided. However, many others have disputed this view, holding that such relapses occur because of the humors of the body and other mutations of the four natures. We have explained all this in detail

in our two books entitled *Kitab al-Zulaf* and *Kitab al-Mabadi' wa'l Tarakib*, and how the sun and moon exercise their effects.

1326. As regards the evidence for the curvature of the heavens with all its stars, and that all are as rounded as a ball; that the earth, both lands and seas, is likewise round in shape; that the orb of the earth is fixed in the midst of the heavens like the center; that its size with regards to the heavens is like that of a center to a circle; the description of the fourth part of the earth which is inhabited and what occurs therein as the heavens rotate; the rotation of nights and days; the description of the characteristics of that fourth part of the earth which is inhabited and, finally, the description of places on earth where the sun shines for months without setting and other places where it sets for months without rising----all these topics we described in full, together with clear and well established proofs and the views of people regarding these subjects, in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*. In that book, we explained the shape of the heavens and stars, and that the earth with its round shape is placed in the middle of the heavens like the yolk inside an egg, with the breezes pulling at it from all sides towards the heavens; that the breezes also pull the bodies of all creatures because of their light weight whereas the earth pulls them because of their heavy weight; that this is so because the earth acts like the magnetic stone which by its nature attracts iron; that the earth is divided in two halves bisected by the equator which runs from east to west; that this line according to these authorities marks the length of the earth because it is the longest line on earth just as the constellations are the longest line in the heavens; that the width of the earth extends from the southern pole to the northern pole around which revolve *Ursa Major*; that the curvature of the earth at the equator is 36 degrees [should be 360] where a degree is 25 *farsakhs*, the *farsakh* is 12,000 *dhira`s*, the *dhira`* is 42 *isba`s*, the

isba` is six grains of barley lined one next to the other, the whole being 9,000 *farsakhs*.

1327. In earlier sections of this work and in the chapter where we treated the subject of the earth, seas, and origins of rivers, we referred to the length of a mile and the black *dhira`*. In each section of this book we merely mention what occurs to our mind and what we find in people's books. So we transmit the information from them as we find it in their books, but we do not thereby accept it as accurate, since the common view as to the length of a mile in *dhira`s*, and *dhira`s* in *isba`s*, is the one we set forth in our chapter on the earth and the seas. Between the equator and each of the two poles is 90 degrees and its curvature in width is the same. These authorities claim that the inhabited portion of the earth above the equator is 24 degrees while the rest is covered by the great sea; that creatures live on the northern quarter of the earth while the southern quarter is bare because of the extreme heat, and that the remaining half of the earth has no inhabitants. Each quarter in the north and south has seven *iqlims*. In an earlier section of this work, when discussing the earth and the seven *iqlims*, we stated that the number of cities in the era of the author of the *Geography* was four thousand and two hundred cities. As for the the direction of prayer (*qibla*) for the people of the east, west, north and south, we gave a brief account of this in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, and Abu Hanifa al-Dinawari* also discussed this subject in full in his book. Ibn Qutaiba* then plagiarized this information, transferring it to his books *verbatim* and claimed it as his own. He did this with many books of Abu Hanifa, who was a man of great learning.

1328. Ptolemy, author of *Almagest* and other ancient authorities, followed by scholars who appeared in Islamic times like al-Kindi, the Munajjim clan, Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib, Masha'allah*, Abu Ma`shar,

Khwarizmi*, Muhammad ibn Kathir al-Farghani in his book the *Thirty Chapters*, Thabit ibn Qurra*, al-Nayrizi*, Muhammad ibn Jabir al-Battani and other scholars who concerned themselves with astronomy, have provided much scientific information on this subject. In this work, we merely cite summary accounts, seeking brevity. In God is success.

Chapter 62

An account of the earth, its natural characteristics, its climates and what is distinct in each sector such as east, west, north and south, its winds, and other matters to do with the influence of the stars, together with topics related thereto

1329. Al-Mas`udi said: The natural constituents (*taba'i`*) are four in number: fire is hot and dry, and is the first of these. The second, water, is cold and humid. The third is air, which is hot and humid, and the fourth is earth which is cold and dry. Two of them ascend upwards, namely, fire and air, while two descend downwards, earth and water. The world is divided in four parts. The east is the first quarter.

Everything in it is hot and humid like air, blood and the season of spring. Its wind is the southern. Of hours, it has the first, second and third. Of the powers of the body it has the digestive power and of taste it has sweetness. Of heavenly bodies, it has the moon and Venus; of constellations, Aries, Taurus and Gemini. Scholars have much to say in describing these quarters, summarized in the preceding and the following sections of this work.

1330. The west is the second quarter. Everything in it is cold and humid, like water, phlegm and the winter season. Its wind is the west wind. Of hours, it has the tenth, eleventh and twelfth; of tastes it has saltiness and such like; of powers, it has the power of propulsion; of heavenly bodies, it has Jupiter and Mercury; of constellations, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces. The south is the third quarter.

Everything in it is hot and dry, like fire, yellow bile and the season of summer. Its wind is the east wind. Of hours it has the fourth, fifth and sixth of daylight; of powers of the body, it has the psychic and animal; of tastes, bitterness; of heavenly bodies, Mars, and the sun; of constellations, Cancer, Leo and Virgo. The north is the fourth quarter. Everything in it is cold and dry like earth, black bile and autumn. Its wind is northern. Of hours, it has the seventh, eighth and ninth; of powers of the body it has the restraining power; of tastes, astringency; of heavenly bodies, Saturn; of constellations, the Balance, Scorpio and Sagittarius.

1331. Following our description of the earth, we affirm that it is similar in shape but different with regard to that which exercises an influence upon it, depending upon the lines of latitude. If a line is far, the effect is different from when that line is near, because far and near has, by necessity, contrary consequences. The best part of the inhabited portion of the earth is one where the sun shines down with its rays directly upon it. According to this group of scholars, it is in the fourth *iqlim* where the sun's rays reach their purest and least harmful glow, because these rays fall on that locality in parallel streams. That place is Iraq.

1332. Still according to that group of scholars, uninhabitable regions are so because of two reasons: the first is excessive heat where the sun burns and its rays keep falling on earth, turning it into lime, and dehydrating it through excessive desiccation. The second is where the sun is far away from a region and high above its territory to the point where the cold overpowers these lands which become gripped by extreme chill and iciness. The excessive cold in the air eliminates moderation and the advantage of generating life. Heat does not remain in bodies and the humidity necessary for animal life is lacking, thus turning these regions into level and desolate places, where no animals

or plants exist. Lands that one observes to be excessively hot or cold are similar to the above description of these desolate regions.

1333. This group of scholars has much to say regarding the extinction of the world and its end, then its reoccurrence once again. They state that dominion in this present age belongs to Virgo. This age will last seven thousand years, which is the age of this world. Virgo is aided by Jupiter in managing the world, and the end of the world is due to the many effective stars crossing the complete circuit through their powers. Once the distance these people specify has been traversed, extinction occurs and the world perishes. Once the stars have completed every single one of their circuits and revolutions, control returns to the first among these stars. The figures and shapes of each world are reconfigured when their matter is reassembled, that is, the matter they possessed when the stars through their movement exercised their influence and control. According to these people, this is how the world runs for all eternity.

1334. They also allege that the dominion of Aries lasts twelve thousand years, that of Taurus eleven thousand, of Gemini ten thousand, of Cancer nine thousand, of Leo eight thousand, of Virgo seven thousand, of the Balance six thousand, of Scorpio five thousand, of Sagittarius four thousand, of Capricorn three thousand, of Aquarius two thousand and of Pisces one thousand years, a grand total of seventy-eight thousand years. They say that this period marks the end of the world and the completion of all that is in it, and its return to simple being.

1335. A different group of people discussed the *jinn* that existed in this world before God's creation of Adam and his appointment as deputy of God on earth, and claimed that it was one of the fiery stars which controlled the *jinn*. Both groups of people have discussed the apogee of the sun as it moves to the southern constellations, and what occurs in

the world when north becomes south and south north, and how built up regions become inundated, and vice versa, as explained in our book entitled *Kitab al-Zulaf*.

1336. Ancient authorities other than the ones mentioned above hold that the first principles through which all existents came to be, like the first, the second and the third principles, are ranked as follows: spirit, form and primordial matter. These are the first principles as arranged and presented in *Kitab al-Zulaf*. All else are bodies and are of six kinds: the heavenly body, the earthly body, the speaking animal, the dumb animal, plants, and stone-like bodies, i.e. minerals, and the four elements: fire, air, water and earth. These authorities also discussed the characteristics of each, but this work cannot accommodate such a discussion because this would lead us far from our declared purpose. We have given a detailed account of this subject in our work entitled *Al-Ru'us al-Sab'iyya*, in its chapter on the political regime, the number of its parts and their natural causes, and whether dominion over a city is one of its parts or of others, and whether these parts culminate in dominion, in accordance with what Porphyry mentioned in his book, where he describes the conflicting views of Plato and Aristotle on this subject.

1337. As for the reason why it is wintertime in India when it is summertime in our own land and vice versa, we have mentioned the cause of this and provided proof for it. This is because of the nearness or distance of the sun. We have likewise discussed the reason why black people are found in certain regions of the earth and not others and why their hair is woolly and their other well-known characteristics; why white people are found in some regions and not others; why Slavs have soft skin color, are blond and have red and white hair; how Turks possess supple joints, bent legs and soft bones so that a Turk can shoot an arrow from behind him as he shoots it from in front, to the point

where his back becomes his face and vice versa, and how their vertebral column enables them to do so; how redness appears in their faces when heat pervades their face, and when in most cases it appears and rises up because of the dominance of cold over their bodies. In our previous works that dealt with the above-mentioned topics, we have, God be thanked, explained fully all these matters and furnished proofs for the accuracy of what we cited.

1338. We have not cared to mention accounts of things in this world that we have not ascertained to be true either through the senses or a report that cannot be gainsaid or one that banishes all suspicion and doubt. One example would be what commoners relate about the existence of the *nisnas*, namely, that they have faces that are half-human, have fangs and are edible, or the tales they spin about *`anqa` mughrib**.

1339. Many allege that animals endowed with speech are of three kinds: humans (*nas*), *nisnas* and *nasanis*. This is absurd because *nisnas* is a word applied to the riffraff and the dregs of society. Al-Hasan said: “People (*nas*) have passed away and I remain behind with the riffraff (*nisnas*).” A poet recited:

People have passed away, becoming rare,

And we remain behind among the meanest of riffraff (nisnas).

The poet intends what we have described, i.e. that decent people have passed away and there remain only those from whom no good can be expected.

1340. Many people also allege that the *jinn* are of two kinds: the superior and most powerful kinds are the *jinn* and the inferior and weakest are the *hinn*. A poet recited:

I go to sleep, falling among demons that emit loud sounds,

Diverse in their conversation between jinn and hinn.

This distinction between the two kinds is one transmitted in no trustworthy report or Hadith from the Prophet. It is simply a product of the nomads' fancy, as explained earlier. Many common people have spread stories about the *nisnas* and that he truly exists in the world, asserting, for instance, that he exists in China or some other far flung kingdom or region. Some say he exists in the east, others in the west. The easterners say he exists in the west, while the westerners say he is to be found in the east. Similarly, the inhabitants of each region of this earth allege that the *nisnas* exists in some far away or distant land.

1341. They cite a report, transmitted by single authorities, that the *nisnas* is found in the land of Hadramawt and the region of Shihr. This is mentioned by `Abdallah ibn Sa`id ibn Kathir ibn `Ufair al-Misri>his father>Ya`qub ibn al-Harith ibn Nujaim>Shabib ibn Shaiba ibn al-Harith al-Tamimi who said: "I came to Shihr and was a guest of its ruler. We discussed the *nisnas* and he said: 'Go out and hunt some *nisnas* for us'. As I set out seeking them with some of the ruler's Mahri followers, I came upon a *nisnas* who said to me: 'I am in God's hands and in yours'. I said to my companions, 'Let him go' and they did so. When mealtime approached, the ruler said: 'Have you hunted any *nisnas* for us?' His followers replied: 'Yes, but your guest released him.' He said: 'Get ready, for we shall go out and hunt them'. When departing for the hunt at dawn we heard someone saying: 'O Abu Muhammad, morning has been revealed, night has passed, the hunt is readied, so head for the mountain'. He answered, 'Until we are exhausted, we shall not abandon the hunt.' Then a *nisnas* ran out from the mountain, having a human face, some hair on his chin and something like a breast in his chest, and with two human legs. Two dogs were in close pursuit while he recited:

Woe is me from what has befallen me,

*And what sorrows my life has brought me!
Stay a while, you two dogs, and listen to me, and believe
What I tell you.
When you run after me, you find me
Weak in running.
Had you found me in my youth you would never have caught me
Until you die or abandon the chase.
I am neither feeble nor a coward,
Nor am I impotent, nor one who has a heart that trembles.
But this is the verdict of the Almighty and All-Merciful,
Who humbles the powerful and mighty.”*

He added: “The dogs caught up with him and captured him”.

1342. They allege that they once slaughtered a *nisnas* so another *nisnas* said: “Glory be to God! How red is his blood!” So they caught and slaughtered him too. Another *nisnas*, hiding in a tree and invisible to them, said: “He used to eat sumac.” They shouted: “Here’s another one! Get him!” So they caught and slaughtered him and said: “If only he had remained silent we would not have discovered his hiding place.” From another tree, another *nisnas* said: “I, however, am prone to silence.” They said: “A *nisnas*! Get him!” so they caught and slaughtered him. Another *nisnas* from another tree said: “O tongue, hold your tip!” They said: “A *nisnas*! Get him!” and he was captured. The person who transmitted this report alleged that the people of Mahra hunt and eat the *nisnas* in their country.

1343. Al-Mas`udi said: I found that the people of Shihr, in Hadramawt, and its coastline, specifically in the city of Lahsa, which is on the sea coast in the territory of al-Ahqaf, known also as the Land of Sands, as also in neighboring territories of Yemen, Oman and Mahra---I found them all to take pleasure in stories of the *nisnas* when recounted to

them. They are amazed at its description and imagine that this creature lives in regions of the earth far distant from them, exactly as people in other lands hear these stories recounted about them. All this proves that this creature does not exist in this world but is the product of the fancies and confusion of the commoners, just as in the case of the stories about *`anqa mughrīb*, about which they narrate a report they ascribe to Ibn `Abbas.

1344. We do not assert that the existence of the *nisnas*, the *`anqa* and similarly odd and rare animals in the world to be impossible from the rational point of view. For this is not impossible from the viewpoint of divine power. But we do so because there is no totally reliable report to confirm their existence. This is a matter that falls under the category of the possible and plausible, and not under the category of the necessarily impossible. It could be that these species of rare animals like the *nisnas*, the *`anqa*, the *`arabid** and such like were species of animals that nature transformed from potentiality to actuality but failed to do so thoroughly and did not succeed in perfecting them as is the case with other animals, so they remained odd, singular, wild and rare. They sought to escape to faraway regions, unlike other animal species, speaking or otherwise. This is because of their antithetical nature towards other animals perfected by nature, and because they are dissimilar and incompatible with other animal species. We have explained this matter when discussing the ghouls in an earlier chapter. To prolong discussion of this subject would divert us from the main purpose of this book.

1345. In our earlier works, we cited reports of some who allege that the caliph al-Mutawakkil ordered Hunain ibn Ishaq*, or someone else from among the wise men of that age who concerned themselves with such matters, to try and use trickery in order to bring him a *nisnas* and a

`irbid from the land of Yamamah. They further allege that Hunain did in fact purvey these animals to the caliph. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we gave a detailed account of the person sent to al-Yamama to capture a *`irbid* and to al-Shihr to capture a *nisnas*, but God knows best whether this report is accurate. Here, we simply transmit the report ascribing it to its transmitter, who knows best what he related and transmitted. We then insert it as best we can in its appropriate and fitting place in this work. In God is success.

1346. As for the report they relate from Ibn `Abbas, this is connected with the report of Khalid ibn Sinan al-`Absi. Earlier on in this work we cited the report about Khalid ibn Sinan al-`Absi and that he lived in the interval between Jesus and Muhammad. We further related his story with the fire and how he quenched it. So let us now turn to the report about the *`anqa* as this was transmitted. But in making mention of the *`anqa* we must first repeat the story of Khalid because the two stories are linked. All these reports are transmitted from Ibn `Ufair.

1347. Al-Hasan ibn Ibrahim>Muhammad ibn `Abdallah al-Marawzi>Asad ibn Sa`id ibn Kathir ibn `Ufair>his father>his grandfather Kathir>his greatgrandfather `Ufair>`Ikrima>Ibn `Abbas, who said: “The Prophet said that God created in earliest times a bird of the most beautiful kind, and endowed it with an aspect of beauty in all its parts. Its face was like that of humans. Its wings and feathers possessed every beautiful color. He created four wings for it from each side and hands with claws. Its beak was like that of a vulture, with a thick base. He also created for it a female that resembled it and called it *al-`anqa*’. To Moses son of Aaron God revealed the following: ‘I have created a marvelous bird, both male and female, and made it feed on the wild animals of Bait al-Maqdis and in order to keep you company, so that they would be indications of some of what you have been

privileged with from among the Israelites.’ The birds went on to mate until their progeny grew in number. God then made Moses and the Israelites enter the wilderness where they remained for forty years, until Moses and Aaron died in the wilderness, along with the six hundred thousand Israelites who were with Moses. Their descendants then succeeded them in the wilderness.

1348. Then God made them leave the wilderness with Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ disciple and heir. So this bird moved and flew into the Hijaz and Najd in the territory of the tribe of Qais `Ilan. The bird remained there, feeding on wild animals and children and other dumb beasts until a prophet appeared from the tribe of `Abs in the interval between Jesus and Muhammad called Khalid ibn Sinan. People complained to him about what the `anqa’ was doing to their children, so he prayed to God to make the birds extinct. They were made extinct but their images remained and were narrated on occasions of merriment and others. Some men of understanding hold that when people use the phrase `anqa’ *mughrib* as a metaphor they mean an occurrence that is strange and rare. Thus, when they say “so and so came up with a `anqa’ *mughrib*” they mean he came up with some strange and unusual story.

A poet recited:

In the morning, he met them with an army, a `anqa mughrib

Here the word `anqa’ with its root `anaq means speed.

1349. Ibn `Abbas said: “Khalid ibn Sinan the prophet of the tribe of `Abs preached about the coming of the Prophet. On his death-bed, he said to his people: ‘When I die, bury me in one of these *ahqaf*--- these being great mounds of sand--- and stand guard over my tomb for some days. If you see an ass black and white in color and tailless going round the mound in which is my tomb, come together, dig my corpse out and place it on the edge of the grave. Then get a writer with something to

write on and I shall dictate to you what will happen from now until the Day of Resurrection.

1350. “So they stood guard over his tomb for three days, then another three, then another three, and an ass was seen grazing around the mound near his grave. They then came together to dig him up as he had ordered but his sons appeared with drawn swords and announced: “By God, we will not allow anyone to dig him up! Do you want us to be shamed hereafter, and the Arabs to call us ‘Children of the dug-up corpse’?” So they dispersed and left him.”

1351. Ibn `Abbas added: “An old woman, a daughter of Khalid who lived to old age came to see the Prophet who met her graciously and paid her honor. She then embraced Islam and he said to her: ‘Welcome to the daughter of a prophet whose people let him down!’” A poet from `Abs recited:

*O children of Khalid, had you, when you came,
Dug up the dead man buried in his grave,
He would have bequeathed to you among the `Abs,
A legacy of learning unending for all eternity.*

1352. From `Ufair are transmitted many reports on this and similar subjects that belong to the genre of “Tales of the Israelites”^{*}and others. Among such reports is the one about the creation of horses. This is transmitted by al-Hasan ibn Ibrahim al-Sha`bi, the judge, who said: “I was told by Abu `Abdallah Muhammad ibn `Abdallah al-Marwazi>Abu al-Harith Asad ibn Sa`id ibn Kathir ibn `Ufair>his father>his grandfather Kathir >his greatgrandfather `Ufair who said: “`Ikrima said that my master Ibn `Abbas said that the Prophet said: ‘When God wished to create horses, He inspired the south wind thus: ‘I shall create a creation from you so come together.’ The south wind collected together. God then ordered Gabriel to take a handful from it and said:

‘This is my handful.’ Then God created from it a dark mare and said: ‘I have created you as a mare and made you to be Arab, and preferred you above all other dumb beasts and provided you with an ample livelihood and booty carried on you back. Goodness is tied to you forelock.’ He then sent it forth and it neighed. God said: ‘I have blessed you. Your neighing shall scare the polytheists, fill their ears and make their feet tremble.’ God then gave it a white mark on its forehead and legs. When God created Adam, he said: ‘O Adam, which of the two dumb beasts do you prefer?’---meaning the horse or the *buraq*, this last being in the form of a mule and neither male nor female. Adam replied: ‘O Lord, I have chosen the more handsome of face’, and thus chose the horse. God said to Adam: ‘You have thereby chosen the source of your glory and the glory of your descendants, a glory that shall last as long as they, and be as immortal.’” Ibn `Abbas added: “This mark is upon the horse and its descendants until the Day of Resurrection”, i.e. the white marks on its forehead and legs.

1353. Al-Mas`udi said: `Isa ibn Lahi`a al-Misri mentions in his book called *Al-Jala`ib wa`l Hala`ib*, where he lists every race track in which horses competed in pre-Islamic and Islamic times, that Solomon son of David presented a horse to some people of the Azd tribe for them to hunt upon. The horse was named *Provision for the Rider*. People narrate many stories about horses which we cited in our previous works.

1354. Were it not that a composer of books is like a woodcutter by night, since he includes in his composition every kind of report, we would not have cited these stories. This is because scholars and experts differ in their attitude to the acceptance of reports. Some hold that reports which are indisputable and necessitate both knowledge and action are reports transmitted by a very large number of people, i.e. what all have transmitted from all. Other reports do not necessitate

acceptance. Most scholars of the law in Muslim capitals accept reports transmitted by a very large number, which is called a report transmitted by *tawatur*. This kind of report necessitates both knowledge and action. They also claim that a singular report necessitates action but not knowledge if it satisfies certain conditions which they mention. Other people have adopted other methods in accepting reports, both by necessity or otherwise. The stories we cited above about the *nisnas*, the *`anqa*, and the creation of horses do not fall under reports transmitted by *tawatur* that necessitate action, nor those that necessitate action but not knowledge, nor reports that compel those who hear them to accept them and to believe them to be accurate as narrated by a certain transmitter. Such stories, as explained earlier, fall under the category of the plausible and possible, and are neither impossible nor necessary. They belong to the same category as stories of the Israelites and of wonders of the seas.

1355. Were it not that we have, as explained earlier, taken upon ourselves to be brief and concise, we would have mentioned what Hadith scholars have transmitted from the Prophet. These people are the conveyors of the Prophet's exemplary actions and transmit his deeds which they find admissible, and which they accept as true and do not reject. One example is the story of the monkey found on a ship in the days of the Israelites. He accompanied a man who sold wine to the passengers and diluted the wine with water, amassing many *dirhams*. The monkey grabbed the bag which contained the coins and mounted the *daqal*, which is the ship's mast, called *daqal* in Iraq. He untied the bag and threw one coin in the water and another in the ship until he divided the amount in two halves.

1356. Another example is transmitted by al-Sha`bi>Fatima bint Qais> the Prophet, but also transmitted by several Companions of the Prophet

other than Fatima, namely, the story of Tamim al-Dari. The Prophet related that Tamim had told him that he once boarded a ship with some kinsmen and the sea tossed them about so they lost their way and ended up on an island. They disembarked and saw a beast with a huge body and its hair all untied. They said to her: "Who are you, O beast?" She answered: "I am the one who ferrets news (*Jassasa*) and who will appear at the end of time." Tamim reported more words uttered by her and that she said: "Go seek the lord of the palace." They looked and saw a palace of a certain description and a man chained in irons with the chains stretching to an iron column. He had a certain kind of face and he addressed them and asked them questions. That man was the Anti-Christ (*Dajjal*). He told them of certain momentous events that would take place and that he would not enter the City of the Prophet, Medinah. The story includes other features of a similar character. But this is a subject that can grow long if treated or explained in detail.

1357. Let us now turn back to the subject we were discussing earlier, namely, the quarters of the earth, the natural constituents, and matters related thereto. We offered above and in summary form certain information about the natural constituents and other topics, enough to indicate the vastness and extent of this subject.

1358. A group of ancient and modern physicians and authors of books on nature claim that food undergoes three digestive processes. The first occurs in the stomach which digests the food, extracts its potency, turns it into something like *kishk* *water and delivers it to the liver. The liver then drives it through the veins to all parts of the body, just as water from a river flows into canals and irrigation channels. The body's parts turn it next into that which resembles them: meat into meat and fat into fat. The same goes for veins, sinews and the like. If the amounts of food are moderate, their potencies are moderate, and when these are

moderate the body itself becomes moderate and healthy, God willing. The seasons, they further state, are four in number: summer, autumn, winter and spring. Summer strengthens yellow bile and increases its agitation. Autumn strengthens black bile, winter phlegm and spring blood. A man's age is divided into four parts: childhood, when blood is strengthened, youth when yellow bile is strengthened, middle age when black bile is strengthened and old age when phlegm is strengthened. 1359. They further state that countries are also divided into four parts: the east which by nature is hot and humid and where blood is strengthened; the north which by nature is cold and dry and black bile is strengthened; the west whose nature is cold and humid and where phlegm is strengthened, and the south which by nature is hot and dry and where yellow bile is strengthened. They assert that the structure of human bodies follows from the principles above. They might be moderate where the humors are also moderate, or one humor might predominate in the body structure. Its dominance is then observed through its signs, thus strengthening that particular humor when agitated.

1360. Hippocrates [*Abuqrat*] said: It ought to be the case that everything in this world is ordered and arranged according to the number seven: there are seven planets, seven *iqlims*, seven days, and seven ages of man. These latter are as follows: infant, then boy till age fourteen, then young man till age twenty-one, then youth as long as he remains sprightly and capable of growth till the age of thirty-five, then a middle-aged man until the age of forty-nine, then an old and then a decrepit man to the end of his life. The changes that come over animals, speaking or otherwise, all proceed from the air. The physician Hippocrates stated that changes in the conditions of the air are responsible for changing the moods of people, at times to anger, at

others to calmness, at times to anxiety, at others to joy and so forth.

When the conditions of the air are moderate, the moods and behavior of people are likewise moderate. He added that the powers of the soul are subject to the temperaments of the body and these in turn are subject to the behavior of the air. If it turns cold at one time then warm at another, plants would ripen at times and be unripe at others, would be plentiful at times and scant at others, warm at times and cold at others. This would cause their shapes and temperaments to change. If the air is moderate and temperate, the plants grow to be moderate too, thus acquiring moderate shapes and temperaments.

1361. The reason why Turks resemble one another in shape is because the air in their land is evenly cold so their shapes have become uniform and similar. Since the cold predominates over the Turks, and the heat is unable to dry the humidity of their bodies, their body fat is increased, their bodies grow soft and they resemble women in many of their character traits. Thus, the sexual appetite among them is weak and their progeny are few because of their cold temperaments and the humidity that predominates over them. The weakness of the sexual appetite may also be due to frequent riding on horses. The same is true of their women. As their bodies grow fat, their wombs are too feeble to attract seed. Their red skin color is due, as explained before, to the cold because whiteness, if constantly permeated by cold, turns into redness. The proof for this is that when extreme cold besets fingertips, lips or noses, these turn red.

1362. The physician Hippocrates stated that there is a city in the south where there is much rainfall and many plants and grass, with its trees rising high into the air, its waters sweet, and its beasts of burden large in size. It is fertile because it is a land not burned by the heat of the sun nor dried by the cold. Thus the bodies of its people are large, their

shapes are handsome, and their morals are noble. In their shapes, physical statures and moderate natures they may be compared to the moderate season of spring. However, they are gentle in nature and cannot bear hardships and fatigue. Regarding the subject we are discussing here, namely, to explain how the air affects animals and plants, Hippocrates argues that it is the soul implanted in these animals and plants that attracts the air to them. He further states that the winds transform the animal from one state to another, shifting it from hot to cold, from dry to humid and from joy to sorrow. He adds that the winds also change what is found in a house by way of seeds, honey, silver, beverages, or grease, warming them at times, cooling them at others, moistening them at times and drying them at others. The cause of this is that the sun and stars change the air through their movements and when the air changes everything else changes accordingly. Whoever advances in knowledge and learns about the changes of the seasons and the signs of these changes learns the greatest source of knowledge and becomes preeminent in knowing how to preserve the health of bodies.

1363. Hippocrates further states that when the southern wind blows, it liquefies and cools the air, warms the seas and rivers and everything humid, changes the color of everything and its conditions, slackens the bodies and sinews, causing laziness, and producing heaviness of hearing and murkiness of vision. This is because that wind dissolves the bile and drives humidity down to the roots of sinews where sensing is located. The north wind makes the body firm, turns the brain healthy, improves colors, purifies the senses and strengthens the appetite and movement. However, it also agitates the cough and chest pains. A modern Muslim scientist claims that when the south wind blows in Iraq, the color of the rose changes, its petals scatter, the cauliflowers start to crack, the water becomes warm, the body slackens and the air grows

murky. He adds that this is similar to what Hippocrates said about the summer being more prone to diseases than the winter because it warms the body, slackens it and weakens its powers. He states that a person sleeping in his bed in Iraq would feel that wind as it blows, whereas when the north wind blows, the ring on his finger grows cold and expands because the wind shrinks the whole body. When the south wind blows, the ring on a person's finger grows warm and tight, the body slackens and the person experiences laziness. All who live in Iraq and who possess sense experience these conditions if they examine the matter with care. Likewise, all who live in the diverse regions and cities of the earth will attest to this fact when they study it, though the matter is more obvious in Iraq because of the general temperateness of the land.

1364. Hippocrates further states, regarding our current topic, that the general winds are four in number. One blows from the east and is called *al-Qabul* (advent), the second from the west and is called *al-Dabur* (departing), the third from the side of the Yemen, i.e. the south wind, and the fourth from the north. As for winds that blow in some countries but not in others, these are called local winds.

1365. In earlier sections of this work we dealt in summary form with certain reports about the earth, the seas and many kingdoms and countries, and mentioned in this regard and also in summary form, reports concerning natural characteristics, climates, countries, the earth's quarters, inhabited or under water, together with other topics discussed earlier whose description we were able to include in an orderly fashion, God be thanked. We have decided to conclude the present chapter with a summary account of the distances between kingdoms, near or far, as reported by al-Fazari* author of the *Almanac*

and the Ode on the shapes of the stars and heavenly bodies. From God comes strength.

1366. Al-Fazari claims that the domain of the Caliph, from Farghana and furthest Khurasan to Tangier in the west extends for 3,700 *farsakhs*; from Bab al-Abwab to Judda 600 *farsakhs*; from Bab to Baghdad 300 *farsakhs*; from Mecca to Judda 32 miles; the domain of China in the east is 31,000 *farsakhs* by 11,000 *farsakhs*; the domain of India in the east is 11,000 by 7,000 *farsakhs*; the domain of Tibet is 500 by 230 *farsakhs*; the domain of Kabul Shah is 400 by 60 *farsakhs*; the domain of the Tughuzghuz in the land of the Turks is 1000 by 500 *farsakhs*; the domain of the Khaqan of the Turks is 700 by 500 *farsakhs*; the domain of the Khazar and al-Lan is 700 by 500 *farsakhs*; the domain of Burjan is 1500 by 300 *farsakhs*; the domain of the Slavs is 3500 by 700 *farsakhs*.

1367. The domain of the Romans of Constantinople is 5000 by 420 *farsakhs*; the domain of the Romans of Rome is 3000 by 700 *farsakhs*; the domain of al-Andalus under `Abd al-Rahman ibn Mu`awiya is 300 by 80 *farsakhs*; the domain of Idris the Fatimid is 1200 by 120 *farsakhs*; the domain of the coastline of Sijilmasa under the Banu al-Muntasir is 400 by 80 *farsakhs*; the domain of Anbiya is 2500 by 600 *farsakhs*; the domain of Ghana, the land of gold, is 1000 by 80 *farsakhs*; the domain of Waram is 200 by 80 *farsakhs*; the domain of Nakhla is 120 by 60 *farsakhs*; the domain of Wah is 60 by 40 *farsakhs*; the domain of Bujja is 200 by 80 *farsakhs*; the domain of Nubia under al-Najashi in the Maghrib is 1500 by 400 *farsakhs*; the domain of the Zanj in the east is 7600 by 500 *farsakhs*. [He constructed a fleet for the Banu al-Muntasir 400 by 250 *farsakhs* ---sic] This comes to a total length of 72,480 *farsakhs* in length and 25, 250 *farsakhs* in width.

1368. As regards the discussion of the basic principles of medicine and whether they are derived from practice or from analogy or from something else, and an account of the disputes concerning this issue among people, we have not mentioned this topic in this chapter, even though it is connected to it and is related to the discussion of natural characteristics and the other relevant topics dealt with in this chapter. This is because we mention this topic in a later section of this book under the history of the Caliph al-Wathiq Billah. In that section, we shall give a full account of what transpired in his presence. That assembly was attended by Hunain Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Masawayh*, Bakhtishu`, Mikha'il* and other philosophers and physicians, making it unnecessary to include this topic here.

1369. Were it not that this book caters to the different tastes of people, given the diversity of their natures and purposes, we would not have included some of what we did include by way of various sciences and stories. A person will feel bored if he reads what does not interest him so will move to another topic. Hence we included in this work all that a seeker of knowledge would need to know, together with what our discussion has diverted us towards, i.e. other interconnected subjects not treated before, as the discussion progressed and grew more complex. All the subjects treated here have already been treated clearly and at length in our two works *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, God be thanked for His aid.

Chapter 63

An account of the great temples and hallowed sanctuaries and temples of fire and idols, together with a mention of the planets and other wonders of the world

1370. Al-Mas`udi said: Many Indians, Chinese and other religious sects used to believe that God was a body, that angels had perfect bodies and

that the Almighty and his angels had secluded themselves in heaven. This led them to adopt effigies and idols in the form of the Creator and of angels, diverse in their sizes and shapes. Some are human in shape and some otherwise. They worshipped them, and offered them sacrifices and votive offerings because they believed them to be similar to the Creator and near to him. They remained thus for a period of time, and eras passed, until some of their wise men alerted them to the fact that the heavenly bodies and planets were the nearest to God of all visible bodies, that they are living and rational, that the angels move back and forth between these heavenly bodies and God, and that everything that takes place in the world is ordained by the movement of the stars as commanded by God. So they glorified the heavenly bodies and sacrificed to them in order that these might benefit them, and remained thus for a long period of time. When they saw that the stars disappeared in daytime and during certain stretches of the night because of certain obstructions in the atmosphere, some of their wise men commanded them to make idols and effigies that resembled the images and shapes of heavenly bodies. So they erected idols equal in number to the major, famous and fixed planets, so that each sect came to glorify a particular planet and to offer to it sacrifices that differed from the sacrifices of the other sect. However, when they worshipped the statues they had carved, the seven heavenly bodies, they believed, would move to grant them their wishes. They built for each idol a separate temple and called these temples by the names of one of the planets.

1371. Some have claimed that the Holy Sanctuary of Mecca was once the temple of Saturn, and that the aforesaid Sanctuary lasted across the ages and was held in great honor at all times because it was the temple of Saturn; that Saturn assumed lordship over that Sanctuary because it is in the nature of Saturn to endure and persist; and that a temple dedicated

to Saturn will neither vanish nor fall into ruin and will always be held in great honor. They mention many other things that we have decided to omit because of their objectionable nature. With the long passage of time they came to worship the idols in the belief that these brought them near to God, and abandoned the worship of planets. They continued to do so until Budasaf, an Indian, appeared in the land of India. He had left India for Sind, then travelled to Sijistan and Zabulistan, the land of Fairuz from [ibn?] Kabk, entered Sind, then on to Kirman, claiming he was a prophet. He alleged that he was the prophet of God and that he was an intermediary between God and his creatures. He then came to the land of Persia at the start of the reign of Tahmurath, king of Persia--some say during the reign of Jimm. He was the first to proclaim the religions of the Sabeans, as already mentioned earlier. Budasaf commanded people to become ascetic in this world and to occupy themselves with the higher worlds, for this was where souls originated and where they will end up as they leave this world. Budasaf renewed among people the worship of idols and prostration before them, citing certain false doctrines, and made this more acceptable to their minds by employing certain tricks and deceits.

1372. People experienced in the affairs of this world and the history of its kings state that King Jimm was the first to exalt fire and to call on people to exalt it. He claimed that it resembled the light of the sun and stars because light to him was more virtuous than darkness. He created gradations for the light. When he passed away, people began to quarrel and each group came to exalt those things that were worthy of exaltation, in order to draw near to God. It was then that `Amr ibn Luhayy appeared. He had become lord of the Meccans and in charge of the Sanctuary. He travelled to the city of al-Balqa' in the province of Damascus in al-Sham and saw people worshipping idols. When he

asked about them they replied: “These are gods we have set up to whom we pray for victory and are granted it or pray for rain and are granted it. Whatever we ask them, they grant.” He requested that they give him an idol and they gave him Hubal*. He carried it and set it up in the Ka`ba alongside Isaf and Na’ila* and called on people to worship and glorify it, and they did so until God revealed Islam and sent Muhammad who purified the land, giving people a new life.

1373. The people mentioned above state that the Sacred House is one of the seven greatly honored temples which carry the name of the five planets and the two radiant orbs. The second of these great temples is atop a mountain in Isfahan called Marbin. This temple held idols until king Yustasaf removed them when he converted to Magianism and made it into a fire temple. It is at a distance of three *farsakhs* from Isfahan. This temple is highly esteemed among the Magians until the present day. The third temple is called Mandusan and is in India. This is a temple greatly honored by the Indians and has certain sacrifices offered in it. It contains magnetic stones which attract, propel or repel, along with other attributes which we do not have enough space to mention here. If anyone wishes to find out more about it, let him research the subject, for it is a famous temple in India.

1374. The fourth temple is Nawbahar, built by Manushahr in the city of Balkh, in Khurasan, and dedicated to the moon. Its priests were held in honor by the kings of that region, who obeyed their commands, abided by their judgment, carried monies to the temple and set up endowments for it. The chief and most honored priest who was in charge of it was called the Barmak, a common name for all its chief priests. This is how the Barmakid family* acquired that name, because Khalid ibn Barmak was a descendant of the priests of that temple. In structure, it was one of the tallest buildings and on top of it were placed lances to which were

attached pennants of green silk, each about one hundred *dhira`*s in length or less. Lances and poles were set up so the wind would make these silk pennants flutter. It is said, and God knows best, that the wind once dislodged one of these pennants and carried it away. It was recovered at a distance of fifty *farsakhs* away---some say more. This shows how high in the air that temple rose, and how well constructed it was. The area surrounding the temple stretched for miles but we have omitted mention of it because it is a well-known fact and may be deduced from the height and breadth of its wall.

1375. Certain men of understanding and learning mention that they read at the gate of the Nawbahar in Balkh an inscription in Persian which when translated reads: “Budasaf said: ‘When one is at the gates of kings, three things are needed: a rational mind, patience and money’” Beneath it someone had written in Arabic: “Budasaf is a liar. A free man possessed of even one of these attributes should not linger at the gate of a king.”

1367. The fifth is the temple of Ghumdan in the city of San`a in the Yemen. It was built by al-Dahhak and dedicated to Venus. It was destroyed by the Caliph `Uthman ibn `Affan. At this time, which is the year 336 [947-8], it has fallen into ruin and become a huge mound.

1377. When the vizier `Ali ibn `Isa ibn al-Jarrah* was exiled to Yemen and arrived in San`a he built on the site of Ghumdan a fountain and dug a well. I myself saw Ghumdan as a great ruin and mound, with its edifice turned into an earthen tumulus, as if it had always been such. As`ad ibn Ya`fur, lord of the castle of Kahlan who resided there, and at present chief of the provinces of the Yemen and the most important figure in the land, wanted to rebuild Ghumdan. Yahya ibn al-Husain al-Habashi al-Rassi advised him not to undertake this project in any wise since it was foretold that it will be rebuilt by a young man who will

come out of the land of Saba' and Ma'rib, and will have a vast impact on that region of the world.

1378. The Ghumdan temple was mentioned by the grandfather of Umayya ibn Abi al-Salt, named Rabi`a, where he praises Saif ibn Dhi Yazan, though some say the man being lauded was Ma`dikarib ibn Saif. That line of verse is as follows:

*Drink in joy, and may the crown rise high upon you
Atop Ghumdan, your chosen place of residence.*

Umayya's father was a pre-Islamic figure. It is he who recited the following verses concerning the People of the Elephant:

*The signs of our Lord are evident,
And only the ingrate can deny them.
The elephant was held back at al-Mughammas,
Until he dragged himself like one who is hamstrung,
And lowering his neck-ring, like some compact rock
Thrown down from a boulder.
Around him were young men of Kinda, noble warriors,
In war like falcons.*

It is said that when Yemeni kings used to sit on top of that structure at night and light candles, these were visible from a distance of many days' journey.

1379. The sixth temple was Kawsan, built by king Kawus. It had a wonderful structure and was dedicated to the greatest controller among heavenly bodies, the sun. It was in the city of Farghana in Khurasan and was destroyed by the Caliph al-Mu`tasim. His destruction of this temple has a curious story which we related in *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

1380. The seventh temple is in the highlands of China and was built by the progeny of `Amur ibn Sawbal ibn Yafith ibn Noah who dedicated it to the First Cause since this was the creator and originator of the

heavenly bodies who transmitted light to them. It is also said that it was built by a king of the Turks in ancient days who made it into seven temples, each having seven niches, each niche facing an image set up in the shape of a planet from the five and the two radiant orbs, and made of diverse precious stones that fall under the effect of a particular planet such as sapphire, carnelian or emerald with their diverse colors. They have a secret which they let the people of China know they possess, a secret that Satan had deluded them with, and made it to look attractive to them. In that temple too they claim to possess knowledge of the manner in which heavenly bodies and their effects are related to the world of being and what happens to this world by way of movement and action as a result of the changes that occur in the heavenly bodies. 1381. What brought this near to their understanding is an example that Satan demonstrated to them from that which can be seen to indicate what cannot be seen of the effect of the heavenly bodies in this world. This example is the wooden frame that is used to weave silk brocade. The craftsman, by performing certain movements upon the wooden frame and upon the silk threads, creates a type of action which, when multiplied and is continuous as he weaves a garment of brocade, ends by imprinting it with images. Thus, a certain action of the weaver will produce the wing of a bird; another will produce its head; yet another its legs. The weaver will continue in this manner until the picture is finished according to the design of its maker. So they adopted this example of how silk is connected to the weaving machine and what its operator does by way of actions as a case in point for the actions of the heavenly bodies. Hence, by a certain movement, a bird is created in this world; by another an egg; by yet another a young bird. The same goes for everything else in this world, whether it is at rest or moving, comes into being or disappears, becomes connected or disconnected, comes

together or disperses, increases or decreases. This applies to minerals, plants and animals, speaking or otherwise. All this happens through the movement of the planets as above described when speaking of the weaving of brocade and other crafts. The astrologers do not find it odd to use expressions like “Venus gave him this” or “Mars gave him blond and smooth hair” or “Saturn gave him narrow shoulders and bulging eyes” or “Mercury granted him dexterity in craftsmanship” or “Jupiter endowed him with humility, piety and knowledge” or “the sun granted him this and the moon granted him that.” This is a topic about which much can be said, and it would take us a long time to relate the views of people about it.

Chapter 64

An account of the great temples of the Greeks

1382. The temples whose building is ascribed to the ancient Greeks are three in number. One temple was in Antioch in al-Sham on a mountain inside the city, and surrounded by a wall. The Muslims turned the site into a watch-tower so that the men assigned to it could warn them against any advance by the Byzantines, by land or sea. They held that temple in great honor and offered sacrifices in it, but it fell into ruin when the Muslims arrived. It is also said that Constantine the Great, son of Queen Helen, who proclaimed the religion of Christianity was the person who destroyed that temple. It had effigies and idols made of gold, silver and various precious stones. It is further stated that that temple is now a house in Antioch, to the left of the main mosque, and that it was once a great temple. The Sabeans claim that it was built by Seleucus and that at this point in time, i.e. the year 336, it is a market known as the market of the sellers of javelins and coats of mail. When Thabit ibn Qurra ibn Karaya, the Sabean from Harran, came to see the Caliph al-Mu`tadid Billah in the year 289 [902], and was conveyed to

the Caliph by Wasif the royal servant, it is related that Thabit came to this temple, paid it great honor, and related its history as we described it above.

1383. The second Greek temple is one of the pyramids in Egypt which is seen from al-Fustat and is at a distance of some miles from it.

1384. The third temple is Bait al-Maqdis, as some have claimed, although the people who follow the Muslim law state that it was David who built it and Solomon who finished it. The Magians claim that it was al-Dahhak who built it and that in future time it will be the center of a major event. In it a great king will be installed. This will happen when Shawsan* appears riding a cow of such and such description, and be accompanied by such and such number of people. These are legends propagated by the Magians in this regard, alongside a whole host of nonsense which we want our book to steer clear from mentioning. God is our guide.

Chapter 65

An account of the great temples of the early Romans

1385. The great temples of the early Romans before the appearance of Christianity were as follows: one temple was in the Maghrib, in the town of Cathage, which is Tunis. This lies beyond Qayrawan in what was once a Frankish land. It was dedicated to Venus and built in diverse kinds of marble. The second is in the land of the Franks and is a temple greatly honored among them. The third is in Macedonia whose construction is well known as also its history in Macedonia. We gave an account of this temple and of others in our earlier works.

Chapter 66

An account of the great temples of the Slavs

1386. There existed in the lands of the Slavs temples that they held in great honor. One such temple stood on top of a mountain that

philosophers mention as one of the high mountains of the world. A tale is told about this temple, how it was built, the arrangement of its stonework and their diverse colors, the apertures built into its heights, the sun rising in these crafted apertures, the precious stones deposited in it, and the writings inscribed in it which indicate what the future holds of events to come or the precious stones that emit prior warnings of events, together with the loud noises heard from its summits and what happened to the people when they heard them.

1387. There is another temple which some of their kings built on the Black Mountain and surrounded by strange waters of diverse colors and tastes, with a wide range of benefits. In it they erected a huge idol in the form of a man with bowed head, in the shape of an old man carrying a stick with which he stirred the bones of the dead lying in their sarcophagi. Beneath his right leg were pictures of various types of ants while beneath the other were pictures of black crows of various kinds and other strange pictures of Abyssinians and Zanj.

1388. Yet another temple of theirs is on a mountain surrounded by a gulf of the sea, built in stones of red coral and green emeralds. In its center was a great dome beneath which was an idol whose body parts were made of four precious stones: green chrysolite, red ruby, yellow carnelian and white crystal. Its head was of red gold. Near it was another idol in the form of a slave girl as though offering him sacrifices and millet. That temple was dedicated to a wise man who lived among them in ancient times. In our earlier works, we gave an account of that man and his story in the land of the Slavs and what he introduced among them by way of muddles, tricks and fabricated marvels which engrossed their hearts, overpowered their spirits and captivated their minds, despite the savage character of the Slavs and their disordered temperaments.

Chapter 67. An account of the great temples and hallowed sanctuaries of the Sabeans and others, with a discussion of other relevant matters to do with this topic

1389. The Sabeans of Harran have temples named after the intellectual substances (*al-jawahir al-`aqliyya*) and the stars. Among these are the temple of the First Cause and the temple of the Intellect. I do not know whether this latter refers to the First or the Second Intellect. The author of the *Logic* [Aristotle] speaks, in the third treatise of his book on the Soul, of the First Efficient Intellect and the Second Intellect. This too is mentioned by Themistius in his commentary on the book on the soul by the author of the *Logic*. Similarly, Alexander of Aphrodisias speaks of the First and Second Intellect in a treatise about this topic translated by Ishaq ibn Hunain.

1390. Among Sabean temples, there are the Temple of Government (*siyasa*), the Temple of Necessity (*darura*) and the Temple of the Soul (*nafs*). These three are round in shape. The Temple of Saturn is six-sided, the Temple of Jupiter is triangular, the Temple of Mars is rectangular, the Temple of the Sun is a square, the Temple of Mercury is triangular inside a hollow rectangle, the Temple of Venus is triangular inside a hollow square, and the Temple of the Moon is eight-sided. With regard to these shapes, the Sabeans make use of certain symbols and secrets that they keep hidden.

1391. A Melkite Christian from Harran called al-Harith ibn Sunbat says that the Sabeans of Harran have certain practices which he mentioned, such as animal sacrifices and burning incense to the planets, together with other rituals that we refrain from mentioning in order not to prolong this discussion.

1392. What remains of their hallowed temples at this time, which is the year 336, is a temple in Harran near the Raqqa Gate and known as

Maghlitia, a temple dedicated to Azar, father of Abraham the Friend of God according to them. The Sabeans have much to say about Azar and his son Abraham but this book is not the appropriate place to deal with this topic.

1393. Ibn `Ayshun al-Harrani, the judge, a man of understanding and wide knowledge who died after the year 300 [912-13], composed a long ode where he mentions the beliefs of the Harranians, known as Sabeans. In that ode he mentions the temple referred to above, and the four subterranean vaults beneath it which hold various images of idols that represent the heavenly bodies and what rises above them of heavenly figures, and the secrets of these idols. He further describes how they lead their children inside these vaults and how they expose them to these idols, and how the skin color of these children turns yellow when they hear the various sounds and utterances issuing from the idols and figures, all of which are arranged through tricks and bellows set up for that purpose. The priests stand behind walls and voice certain utterances which pass through bellows and holes and onto these statues and figurines which appear to be speaking. This was also done in ancient times in order to captivate minds and enslave people whereby kings and kingdoms are established.

1394. This sect known as Harranians and Sabeans have their philosophers but these are low-brow and common philosophers who bear no relationship to true philosophers in their doctrines. We called them philosophers in name only but not in regard to true wisdom. Philosophy is Greek but not all Greeks are philosophers. The philosophers are the wise among them.

1395. On the knocker of the gate of the Sabean Assembly in the city of Harran I saw inscribed in Syriac a saying attributed to Plato. It was explained to me by Malik ibn `Uqbun and others and reads as follows:

“Whoever knows himself becomes divine.” Plato has said: “Man is a divine plant and the proof of this is that he resembles an inverted tree with its stem in the sky and its branches bent towards earth.”

1396. Plato and others who followed his path have much to say on the rational soul. Thus, is the soul [*nafs*] in the body or is the body in the soul? Is the sun in the house or is the house in the sun? This discussion would carry us far and lead to a discussion of the transmigration of souls into diverse shapes. Those thinkers who concerned themselves with this matter of transmigration have disputed with one another under two headings. A group of ancient Greek and Indian philosophers who did not accept a revealed scripture or a messenger prophet, like Plato and his followers, are said to have claimed that the soul is a substance but not a body, that it is living, knowing, distinct as to its essence and substance, and that it controls bodies composed of the four contradictory natural characteristics. The soul’s aim from such control is to establish equitableness in the body in order to set it on a straight path of behavior and uniform conduct, and to change its movement from one of irregularity to one of regularity. They claim that the soul is capable of joy and pain and can die. The death of the soul in their view occurs when it migrates from one body to another in a systematic manner. The person who dies and is corrupted is described as dead because the soul’s personal appearance becomes corrupted but the soul as a substance migrates. They further claim that the soul is knowing through its essence and substance and perceives the intelligibles likewise, and that it receives the knowledge of things sensed through the senses. Plato and others have much to say about this matter and it would take too long to explain, and would be too difficult to describe and expound because of its complexity and obscurity. The same is true of the views of the author of the *Logic*, of Pythagoras and of other

philosophers, ancient and modern. This is so because a person seeking knowledge of these matters who wishes to come to a full and complete understanding of their views can only do so by examining the various sciences that lead ultimately to their conclusions, as these preliminary sciences are set out in their books and writings. Thus, one must first understand what is meant by the five terms: genus, species, discreteness, particularity and accident. Then comes knowledge of the ten categories which are: substance, quantity, quality, relatives, which is the relationship and is divided into four simple and six composite and these are time, place, having, which is possession, being in a position, acting, and being acted upon. Then follows other steps which the student must ascend until he reaches metaphysics, which is knowledge of the First and Seconds.

1397. Let us now turn back to discuss the doctrines of the Harranians and mention some scholars who have provided information about their doctrines and revealed their contents. Among these is a book I saw written by Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi*, author of the medical treatise *Al-Mansuri* and other works, where he cites the doctrines of the Sabeans of Harran but not of the other Sabean groups who differed from them, such as the Kimariyyun. Al-Razi speaks of things which it would take too long to relate here and which many people would find objectionable if described, so we have decided not to mention them since this would divert us from the main purpose of this book and into a discussion of religious doctrines and views. I did in fact discuss some of these questions with Malik ibn `Uqbun and others among them who concern themselves with their doctrines, and raised the issues we alluded to above. Some of them confessed to the truth of some doctrines but denied others, such as the question of sacrifices and other doctrines. One example is what they do to the black bull. They

slap his face with salt when his eyes are covered and the bull is slaughtered. Each body part is then carefully examined for any movement or convulsion to determine what the year will bring of events, in addition to their other secrets, mysteries and methods of sacrifice.

1398. Al-Mas`udi said: Some scholars who have reflected upon the affairs of this world and possess a knowledge of its history through research, state that in furthest China there exists a round temple with seven gates. Inside it is a great seven-sided dome, of vast construction and height, on top of which is a precious stone, bigger than the head of a calf, which illuminates all corners of that temple. They add that some kings tried to get hold of that precious stone but anyone who came within a distance of ten *dhira`s* from it would drop dead. If anyone tried to dislodge it using some long implement like a lance, and this came near it to the above-mentioned distance, the implement would be bent and become useless. The same would happen if some object was thrown at it. No trick of any kind to get hold of it was of any use whatsoever. Whoever tried to destroy the temple would die. According to some experienced scientists, this is all due to a repellent and propulsive power generated from types of magnetic stones. In this temple is a well with seven heads. If a person bent his head forcefully over its rim, he would fall head first into the bottom of the well. Atop this well is something resembling a ring on which is written in an ancient script, which I think is *musnad* *, the following: "This is a well that leads to a storehouse of books, in which are recorded the history of the world, the sciences of heaven, and all that has happened in former times and will happen in times to come. The well also leads to the storehouse holding the wonders of this world. None can enter it or learn from it except one whose power equals our own, whose knowledge matches our own or

whose wisdom is similar to ours. Whoso is able to reach this storehouse will know that he has become our equal. Whoso cannot reach it, let him acknowledge that we are more powerful, wiser, more knowledgeable, more perceptive and more skillful than him.” The land on which that temple, dome and well are built is of solid rock, rising high like a towering mountain, a mountain that cannot be dislodged or dug to reveal what is beneath. When the eye falls upon that temple, dome and well, it is filled with anxiety and sorrow, and the heart is drawn to it, arousing a feeling of compassion lest it be corrupted, and of regret that any of it may fall into ruin or be destroyed.

Chapter 68

An account of the history of fire temples and related matters

1399. As regards fire temples and who among First and Second Persian kings was the first to build, the first to be mentioned in this regard is king Afridun. He found that there was a fire held in great esteem by its devotees who worshipped it in seclusion. He asked them about the matter and the wisdom behind its worship, and they told him things which lured him to worship it, as being an intermediary between God and his creation, adding that fire, among other things they mentioned, was of the same species as luminescent gods. We have omitted discussion of this issue because of its complexity. This is because they set up gradations of light, distinguished between the nature of fire and of light, and claimed that an animal is attracted to the light which then burns it, like moths that fly at night or other flimsy insects which throw themselves at a lantern and get burned. They cited other examples drawn from night hunts of gazelles, birds and wild beasts or like the fish that come to the surface if lanterns are brought near them from boats, as happens with night fishing in Basra. There, the fish float on the surface of the water until they fall into the boat with the lanterns placed all

around it. They added that light is what puts this world to right, and that light is nobler than darkness and its opposite; that water has a status higher than fire by putting it out and being opposed to it; that water is the source of all living things and the origin of all things that grow.

1400. When they told Afridun the things we mentioned, he ordered part of that fire to be carried to Khurasan where he built a temple for it in Tus, and another in Bukhara called Barazisawaza. There is another fire temple in Sijistan called Karkukan built by Bahman son of Isfandiyar son of Bistasf, and another in the lands of Shiz and al-Ran which contained idols that Anushirwan removed. It is said that Anushirwan found this temple which contained a sacred fire and had it removed to the site known as al-Baraka. Another fire temple, called Kusajah, was built by king Kaikhusru.

1401. At Qumis there existed a greatly honored fire temple called Jarish. No one knows who built it. It is said that when Alexander conquered that territory, he left the fire as it was and did not extinguish it. It is further related that a great city of wondrous construction once existed on that site which had a temple equally remarkable in shape and contained idols. That city, including its temples, then fell into ruin.

Thereafter, the fire temple was built on the site and a fire was installed in it. There is another temple called Kanjara built by Siyawakhsh son of Kayqawus, the tyrant, during the time he spent in eastern China, near Harkand. There is also a fire temple in the city of Arrajan, in Persia, built by Bustasf, though Qubadh is also mentioned as its builder.

Another fire temple existed in ancient Egypt, the Palace of Wax, which today, i.e. the year 336, has been turned into a mosque. This was built by Luhrasf. Yet another fire temple was built in Persia during the days of Luhrasf.

1402. These eleven fire temples existed before the coming of Zoroaster [Zaradusht] son of Asbitman, the prophet of the Magians. Thereafter, Zoroaster founded fire temples, among them one in Nishapur, in Khurasan, and another in the region of Nasa and al-Baida', in Persia. Zoroaster had ordered king Yastaf to look for a fire held in great honor by king Jamm. They searched for it and found it in the city of Khwarazm. Yastaf then had it removed to the city of Darabjird, a city with its countryside in Persia. At this present time, i.e. the year 336, that temple is called Adhurjway, which means fire of the river. This is so because "adhur" is one of the names for fire in First Persian, while "jway" is one name for a river. The Magians hold this fire in the greatest esteem, and more so than any other fire or temple. The Persians relate that when Kaykhusru set out on his expedition of conquest against the Turks and reached Khwarazm, he asked about that fire. When he found it, he paid it honor and worshipped it. It is also stated that it was Anushirwan who moved it to Kariyan. When Islam appeared, the Magians feared that the Muslims might extinguish it so they moved some of it to Nasa and al-Baida' in the region of Persia and left the rest in Karyan, in order that one might remain lit if the other was extinguished.

1403. The Persians have a fire temple greatly honored by the Magians in Istakhr, in Persia. In ancient days it had idols but these were removed by Humay daughter of Bahman son of Isfandiyar who turned it into a fire temple. When later the fire was removed, it fell into ruin. People today, i.e. the year 336, mention that it is the mosque of Solomon son of David and it is known as such. I myself entered that site which lies at a distance of about a *farsakh* from the city of Istakhr and saw a wondrous structure and a huge temple with amazing stone columns atop of which were charming stone carvings of horses and other animals of great sizes

and shapes. The whole was surrounded by a vast border and a strong wall of stone, with human shapes carved with great skill. Those who live near the site claim that these are images of prophets. The site itself is at the foot of a mountain and the wind never leaves that temple night or day and loudly blows there. Muslims living nearby state that Solomon imprisoned the winds in it and that he used to have lunch in Baalbek, in al-Sham, and dinner in that mosque. In between he would alight at Palmyra and its theater. Palmyra is a city in the wilderness between Iraq, Damascus and Homs, in al-Sham. From Palmyra to Damascus is a journey of five to six days. It contains marvelous structures in stone and also the theater, and is inhabited by a number of Arabs from Qahtan.

1404. In the city of Sabur in Persia there is a fire temple held in great honor by them and built by Darius [*Dara*] son of Darius. In the city of Jur, in Persia, from where is exported Juri rosewater, whence the name *Juri*, is a fire temple built by Ardashir son of Babik. I myself saw this temple which is an hour away from Jur, and near a strange spring. It has a feast day which is one of the feast days of Persia. In the middle of Jur is a great structure honored by the Persians and called Tirbal, which the Muslims destroyed. Between Jur and Kuwar is a distance of ten *farsakhs*. In Kuwar is manufactured Kuwari rosewater, whence the name *Kuwari*. This rosewater made in Jur and Kuwar is the best in the world because of the fertility of the soil and the purity of air. The inhabitants of these two cities have a reddish white skin color found nowhere else. From Kuwar to Shiraz, capital of Fars, is ten *farsakhs*. Jur, Kuwar, Shiraz and other cities of Fars have a long history as do their buildings, too long to relate here but recorded by the Persians. There is in addition the well-known site in Fars called Ma' al-Nar on which a temple was built.

1405. When Christ was born, the then king Cyrus [*Kurush*] sent three people. One carried a bag of frankincense, the second of myrrh and the third of gold dust. He sent them off to be guided by a star he described to them until they finally arrived in al-Sham where they found Christ and his mother Mary [*Maryam*]. The Christians exaggerate the story of these three people, found in the Gospel. They claim that, when Christ was born, king Cyrus looked up and saw that a star had risen. Wherever they travelled the star travelled with them and whenever they stopped the star stopped also. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman* we explained at length this story and what the Magians and Christians say about it, as also the story of the two loaves offered them by Mary, and what the messengers did by hiding the loaves under a rock which then sank in the land of Fars, and how the place was dug for water and how the loaves were found to be two burning flames on the surface of the ground, as well as the other features of that story.

1406. The second day after he had conquered Fars, Ardashir built another fire temple called Barnawa. There is a fire temple on the Gulf of Constantinople in the land of the Byzantines built by Sabur son of Ardashir son of Babik, known as “Sabur of the armies.” This was when he arrived at that Gulf and his armies laid siege to Constantinople. That temple existed until the days of the Caliph al-Mahdi, when it fell into ruin. It has a curious history. Sabur of the armies had made it a condition upon the Greeks to build and fortify that temple while besieging Constantinople. He had marched there leading an army of Persians, Turks and kings of other nations.

1407. He was called Sabur “of the armies” because of the multitudes of soldiers who followed him. On his march to al-Jazira he made a detour and camped at a fort known as al-Hadr, a fort belonging to Satirun son of Usaytirun, king of the Syrians, located in an agricultural district

called Ayajir, in the province of Mosul. Poets have mentioned that king, extolling the greatness of his realm, the large size of his armies and the skill with which that fort known as al-Hadr was built. Among poets who mentioned him was Abu Du'ad ibn Humran ibn Hajjaj al-Iyadi who recited:

I see death hanging down from al-Hadr

Upon Satirun, the lord of its people.

He had once been safe from catastrophes,

A man of riches and well-guarded jewels.

1408. It is said that al-Nu`man ibn al-Mundhir is a descendant of Satirun. His genealogy is given as: al-Nu`man ibn al-Mundhir ibn Imru'ulqays ibn `Amr ibn `Adiyy ibn Nasr ibn al-Satirun ibn Usaytirun. Satirun and Usaytirun are titles. They are Arabs who came to rule over the Syrians. Following those rulers mentioned here, these territories were ruled by people whom time has made to vanish such as al-Dayzan ibn Jabhala, Jabhala being his mother. He was al-Dayzan ibn Mu`awiya and was ruler over his people from the tribe of Tanukh ibn Malik ibn Fahm ibn Taym Allat ibn Asd ibn Wabra ibn Taghlib ibn Hulwan ibn `Imran ibn Alhaf ibn Quda`a. He is al-Dayzan ibn Mu`awiya ibn al-Abid ibn al-Ajram ibn Sa`d ibn Salih ibn Hulwan ibn `Imran ibn Alhaf ibn Quda`a. He had many soldiers and was an ally and friend of the Byzantines and would send his soldiers on expeditions against Iraq and the Sawad.

1409. Sabur held a grudge against Dayzan. When he arrived at his fort, Dayzan fortified himself inside that fort. Sabur laid siege to it for a month but could find no way to conquer it or use some trick to enter it. One day, al-Nadira, daughter of Dayzan, looked down from the fort, saw Sabur, was attracted by his beauty and fell in love with him. Sabur was one of the most beautiful and tallest of men. She sent him a

message to the effect that if he solemnly promised to marry her and prefer her to all his women she would reveal to him how to enter the fort. He agreed to this so she sent him another message; “Go to a river called al-Thirthar and at its head throw some chaff into it, then follow the chaff to see where it enters, and get your men to enter that way, for that place leads right into the fort.” Sabur did so and the people in the fort soon discovered that Sabur’s soldiers were upon them. Al-Nadira had given her father wine to drink until he became drunk, in the hope that he would give her in marriage to Sabur.

1410. Sabur then ordered the fort destroyed, killed al-Dayzan and his followers and entered upon his bride al-Nadira bint al-Dayzan. She spent the night unable to sleep. Sabur asked her: “Why can’t you sleep?” She answered: “My sides flinch from your mattress.” “Why?” he asked, “I swear to God no king has ever slept on a mattress more soft or pliant. It is stuffed with ostrich feathers.” When morning came, Sabur looked at her and found a myrtle leaf in the folds of her stomach. He removed it and her stomach was about to bleed so he said to her: “Damn you! With what did your parents feed you?” She answered: “With butter, egg yolk, ice, honey, and the purest wine.” Sabur said: “It is only proper that I should not keep you alive now that I have killed your parents and people when you were treated by them the way you describe.” So he commanded that she be tied by her braids to two horses which were then released and so cut her in half.

1411. Regarding the killing of that king and those with him in that fort, the poet `Amr ibn Ila ibn Judayy ibn al-Daha’ al-`Absi recited:

*Do you not grieve, and news do travel,
At the fate of the nobles of the tribe of `Abid?
At the killing of Dayzan and his brothers,
And the numerous soldiers from Tazid?*

*Sabur of the armies fell upon them,
With elephants decked out and mighty warriors.*

On this same subject and on the act committed by al-Nadira bint al-Dayzan and her execution by Sabur, `Adiyy ibn Zaid al-`Ibadi recited in a few short lines:

*Upon al-Hadr descended a disaster, from its own palace,
Severe in its adversities.
A girl there was, brought up in luxury, who, for love's sake,
Did not protect her father, a love that destroyed her guardian.
She renounced her parents that very night,
Thinking the king will marry her.
But the bride's lot, when morning came,
Was blood flowing in streams.*

Much poetry has been composed about that story.

1412. In the land of Iraq, and near the City of Peace [Baghdad] is a fire temple built by Queen Buran, daughter of Kisra Abrawiz, in a locality known as Astiniya. There are numerous fire temples honored by the Magians in Iraq, Persia, Kirman, Sijistan, Khurasan, Tabaristan, al-Jibal, Adharbaijan and al-Ran, as also in India, Sind and China which we have decided not to mention, but mentioned merely the most famous among them.

1413. The temples held in great honor by the Greeks and others are numerous such as the Temple of Baal, an idol mentioned in the Qur'an as follows: {Do you worship Baal and turn away from the Best of Creators?}. This Temple is in the city of Baalbek, in the province of Damascus and the district of Sanir. The Greeks chose a site for it between Mount Lebanon and Mount Sanir and adapted it to house the idols. They are two great temples, one older than the other. They have marvelous carvings in stone, the like of which cannot be done in wood

given the thickness of their height, the great size of its stones, its tall columns, the wide spaces between them and its marvelous structure. We have dealt with these temples, the story of the murder that fell upon the head of the king's daughter, and the bloodshed suffered by the people of this city.

1414. There is another great temple in Damascus, called Jairun. We have already mentioned it in this book and that the person who built it was Jairun ibn Sa`d al-`Adi, who transferred to it the marble columns, and that that structure was Iram of the Columns mentioned in the Qur'an. A different version is related by Ka`b al-Ahbar when he came to Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan. This latter asked him about its history and Ka`b proceeded to describe it and its wondrous structure of gold, silver, musk and saffron. He added that it would be entered by an Arab whose two camels were lost, so he sets out looking for them and comes upon that temple. Ka`b described the appearance of that man, then turned around in the hall of Mu`awiya and said: "Here's the man!" A nomad had entered it seeking his lost camels. Mu`awiya accepted Ka`b's story and verified the truth of his statement and the clarity of the proof presented.

1415. If this report about Ka`b in that city is true, it would be significant. However, it is a report that is unconvincing in respect of its transmission and in other ways, and is the fabrication of story-tellers. People have disputed about that city and its location. From among men who came to Mu`awiya with knowledge of ancient history and biography, Arabs or otherwise, many historians regard as authentic only the reports transmitted by `Ubayd ibn Shariya and his accounts, which he related to Mu`awiya, of ancient days and major events of the past, as well as the divisions of genealogies. The book of `Ubayd is still in circulation and is well known among people.

1416. Many who have knowledge of the history of these people argue that these reports are fabricated, embellished and devised by people who wanted to draw near to kings through relating them, and strove to assert their superiority to their contemporaries by stocking up on such stories and propagating them. These fables are similar to the books transmitted to us and translated from Indian, Persian or Greek, and the method of authorship is as we described above. An example is the work called *Hazar Afsaneh*, which when translated into Arabic means One Thousand Legends, since a legend in Persian is called *afsaneh*. People call this book “A Thousand and One Nights”, and in it is found the story of the king and his vizier, and his daughter and her slave girls, called Shirazad and Dinazad. Another example is a work called *Farzahn and Simas* which includes stories of Indian kings and viziers, and also the “Book of Sindibad” and other similar works.

1417. Before the coming of Christianity, the mosque of Damascus used to be a great temple with statues and idols and with statues erected atop its tower. It was dedicated to Saturn, with a lucky star ascending. When Christianity triumphed, it was made into a church, and then, when Islam triumphed, it was made into a mosque. This latter was firmly and well constructed by al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik. Until today, its monks' cells have not changed and are used as minarets for the call to prayer.

Another wondrous construction in the middle of Damascus was called al-Baris, which exists to the present day, i.e. the year 336. In ancient days, wine would flow through it and poets have mentioned it in their eulogies of the kings of Ghassan from Ma'rib and others.

1418. There is a temple in Antioch known as al-Dimas. It is to the right of the congregational mosque, and built in ancient stones enormous in size. Each year the moon as it rises enters through one of its high doors in some summer months. It is mentioned that this al-Dimas was of

Persian construction when the Persians ruled that city and that it was a fire temple.

1419. Al-Mas`udi said: Abu Ma`shar the astrologer mentioned in his book called *Kitab al-Uluf* the great temples and monuments which are built in the world every one thousand years. This too was mentioned by Ibn al-Maziyar, the student of Abu Ma`shar, in his book called *Al-Muntakhab min Kitab al-Uluf*. Other writers, both earlier and later than these two, make frequent mention of the monuments and wonders of the world, which we have decided not to mention. There is also the great barrier, namely the wall of Gog and Magog, and the dispute among people as to how it was built, just as they dispute about Iram of the Columns, as related earlier. These disputes also include the way in which the Pyramids of Egypt were built and the writings carved upon them; the temples in the Sa`id of Egypt and elsewhere in Egypt; the reports concerning the City of the Eagle and what people said about it and its location in the oases of Egypt near the Maghrib and Abyssinia; the report about the column in the land of `Ad from the top of which water flows at a certain season of the year; the report about ants which are the size of wolves and dogs, and the story about the land of gold which lies beyond Sijilmassa in the land of the Maghrib.

1420. There is also the story about the nation that lives beyond the great river and how commerce is conducted with them without seeing or talking to them. It is said that merchants leave their merchandise, then go next morning to find gold veins left next to each merchandise. If the owner of the merchandize wishes, he can take the gold and leave the merchandise. He may also take back his merchandise and leave the gold, but if he wants more for his merchandise, he leaves the gold and merchandise where they are. This is well known in the Maghrib, in the territory of Sijilmassa. From that land merchants carry their

merchandise to the bank of that river which is a vast river with a wide expanse of water. Likewise, in furthest Khurasan, next to the Turks, there is another nation which conducts its commerce in the manner described above, i.e. without speaking and without being seen, and they too live near a great river there.

1421. There are also the reports about the {abandoned well and towering palace} in the Qur'an, which is in the land of al-Shihr, in the region of al-Ahqaf, between Yemen and Hadramawt. That well is said to have holes on top and at bottom connecting it to the air and sky, and how people have interpreted the Qur'anic verse that mentions it. Thus, by "towering palace and well" is this particular palace and construction meant, or is it somewhere else? There are also reports about the *makhalif* of Yemen, which are its fortresses and castles, such as the fortress of Nahl and others.

1422. There are, furthermore, reports about the city of Rome and how it was built and the marvelous temples and churches it contains. For instance, there is the column upon which is a swallow in brass and what is carried to the city of olives when they mature in al-Sham and elsewhere. This bird, known as the swallow [*al-Sudaniyya*] is carried with its claws and beak and placed upon the brass swallow so that the olives of Rome and their oil can increase, in accordance with the accounts of talismans reported in our *Akhbar al-Zaman*, and transmitted from Balinus [Apollonius?] and others.

1423. There are also the reports about the seven temples in al-Andalus and the story about the City of Brass and the Dome of Lead which is in some deserts of al-Andalus, and how earlier kings tried and failed to reach it; then the story of the commander of `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan and how he arrived at that city, and how Muslims who climbed its wall

would throw themselves into it, and how they related that they had thereby reached the paradise of this world and of the hereafter.

1424. Additionally, there is the story of the other city whose walls are made of brass and which lies on the coast of the Abyssinian Sea on the frontier of the deserts of India, and how the kings of India failed to reach it, and how the Valley of Sand flows towards it; the report about the temples in India dedicated to idols in the form of Buddhas which appeared in ancient days in India; the story of the temple greatly honored by the Indians and known as Alluwara which is visited from vast distances and has an entire city as its endowment, around which is a thousand apartments with slave women to accommodate pilgrims who come to worship that Indian idol; the report about the temple with an idol in Multan, on the Mihran river, in Sind; the report about the anvil (*sindan*) of Kisra in the territory of Qarmasin in the province of Dinawar near Mah al-Kufa; along with many other stories to do with the world, the peculiarities of its regions, its buildings, mountains, marvelous creatures, animals and other things, much of which we have treated in our earlier books.

1425. We also discussed what each country has by way of fruits which do not exist elsewhere in the lands of Islam and other kingdoms, and how the inhabitants of each land differ from others in their dress and manners and what each is specially noted for the kinds of food and drink they consume, or for their habits and demeanors; also, the wonders of each land and our mention of stories of the seas and what has been said about their connectedness one to the other, as also the places in which the seas penetrate into lands and the perils of each sea; what precious stones exist in certain seas but not others, such as coral in the sea of the Maghrib but not elsewhere, or pearls in the Abyssinian Sea but not elsewhere.

1426. An ancient king had attempted to dig a canal between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean but could not do so because of the height of the Red Sea and the low-lying Mediterranean, because God informs us in the Qur'an of a barrier placed between them. The place dug at the Red Sea is known as the Crocodile's Tail, a mile from the city of Qulzum, upon which is a great bridge crossed by the Egyptian pilgrims. That king also dug a canal from that sea to a locality called al-Hama, an estate which at present, i.e. the year 336, belongs to Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Madharani, from the land of Egypt. However, he could not connect the Red Sea to the Mediterranean. So he dug from the Mediterranean side another canal near Tannis and Damietta and their lakes. This canal is known as al-Zabar and al-Khabya. The water then flowed in this canal from the Mediterranean and Lake Tannis to a locality known as Na`na`an until it reached near to the region of al-Hama. Ships would then enter from the Mediterranean to near this village and from the Red Sea to the canal known as the Crocodile's Tail. There, merchants on ships would buy and sell, and merchandise could be carried with ease from one ship to another. However, with time, that canal was blocked by the sand blowing into it.

1427. The caliph Harun al-Rashid sought to connect the two seas from the side of the Nile where it flows from on high near the land of Abyssinia and furthest Sa`id of Egypt, but could not divide the waters of the Nile. So he tried from the side of Farama, near the region of Tannis, to serve as the point where the Red Sea flows into the Mediterranean. However, Yahya ibn Khalid the Barmakid* told him: "If this were to happen, the Byzantines would be able to capture people from the Sacred Mosque in Mecca as they circumambulated." This is because Byzantine ships would be able to sail from the Mediterranean to the Sea of Hijaz, disembark military expeditions near Jidda and

capture people from the Sacred Mosque, from Mecca and Medinah, as stated above. So the caliph abandoned his plan.

1428. It is related that when `Amr ibn al-`As* was Governor of Egypt, he planned to do the same thing but the Caliph `Umar ibn al-Khattab forbade him from doing so, citing the same reason as given above of Byzantine expeditions in case `Amr dug that canal during the caliphate of `Umar ibn al-Khattab. The traces of these ancient diggings as commenced by the kings of former days are still visible, their intention being to build up the land, increase prosperity and improve livelihoods and sustenance, so that to each country might be transported what that country did not have by way of foodstuffs and other sorts of beneficial and profitable commodities. God guides to the truth.

Chapter 69

A summary account of the world's history from the beginning of creation to the birth of our Prophet Muhammad and reports relevant thereto

1429. In our earlier works we discussed in broad terms the different views regarding the beginning of the world, both those who affirmed its creation and those who denied it, and the various conclusions arrived at as a result. We stated that the deniers were certain Indian communities and Greek groups as well as others who shared their opinions regarding the eternity of the world among astronomers and natural scientists. We also reported the views of the astronomers regarding the movement of the heavenly spheres that creates individual beings and endows them with souls. They argue that once that movement has traversed the distance from the node (*`uqda*) where it began, it turns back to it, then leaves it again, thereby re-forming everything it had created before in its very shape, individuality, image and diverse appearances. This is because the cause and reason from which things derived their existence

are once more the same as they had been in the beginning. Hence things will appear the same when they return to the beginning as they had been when they first issued from it.

1430. We further reported the views of the naturalists that ensue from this, to the effect that the cause of the existence of all things corporeal or psychic is the movements and mixture of natural characteristics. This is so in their opinion because when nature at its origin moved and became diversified, it produced animals, plants and all other existents in this world. It created for them principles of procreation when it was unable to maintain the lives of individuals, so nature turned to procreation. They argue that natural characteristics move from the complex to the simple and from the simple to the complex, so that when the complex has brought to fruition what is in it, things return to simplicity. The universe began and passed along its designated path because that which caused it to be in the first place has come into being, so it is only logical that it should issue from it once the cause exists which produced it. They gave as an example the appearance of plants in spring and the movement of its efficacy below the soil. This occurs when the sun in spring has reached the head of Aries, thus commencing its elevation and exercising its influence as it passes. The sun is the principal cause in giving life to plants and in warming the air. Hence, the individual plants obtain nourishment and fruits begin at first to appear on trees. So too is the case with the first example which began in winter time with its dryness and cold, because the cause of being is heat and humidity while the cause of corruption is coldness and dryness. When things move from heat and humidity to coldness and dryness, they leave perfected being and enter upon corruption. When they reach the final extent of corruption the universe follows up by getting the sun to reach the head of Aries, so the sun begins once more, as is its habit,

to make things grow and transforms them from the lowly state of corruption to the precious condition of being. Had the senses been able to observe closely the condition of bodies and to detect their transformation from one state to another, they would have seen them passing through the cycle of time, starting from one order of being and returning to it, and forming on the circumference of the circle certain shapes congruent in movement but diverse and different in their states, in accordance with the diversity of causes and reasons. This view, as propounded by that group of scientists, clearly indicates their belief in the eternity of the world.

1431. A thorough examination of this issue will lead to the following necessary conclusion: existent things must belong to one of two categories. They can either have a beginning and an end, or they can have no beginning and no end. If they have no beginning and no end, it follows that their segments and parts must be endless, and that time cannot enumerate them or encompass them all. However, we find that at all times the segments and parts of things have an end and a beginning; that every day we witness new creations and shapes in this world which come into being when they were not there before, and shapes that appear which had been non-existent. All this proves that things are limited in number and that they fall away when their forms have reached their end, necessitating a beginning and an end to things. This disproves the delusion of him who believes that things have no end and no beginning or finality. This is all false and nonsensical. If it were the case that existents have no beginning or end, it would necessarily follow that nothing can move from its place or change its rank, and that there would be no transformation and no oppositeness, which is impossible.

1432. If things had no end, it would be meaningless for us to say today, yesterday and tomorrow, because these times specify what has an end, create in their compass that which is not, and include that which is.

What we have mentioned above suffices to clarify the fact that substances (*ma`ani*) change, and proves the creation of bodies. This proof is derived from the senses and is necessitated by both reason and research. Now that it is established that things are created and come into existence after they had been non-existent, it must necessarily follow that they have a creator who is other than them and has no shape and no equal. This is because the mind does not set up an equivalent for something until it discerns a size and a weight which matches it in likeness and shape. Exalted is God whose essence no language can express, and whom minds are incapable of confining to certain attributes or recognizing through signs! Far be He from having an ultimate purpose or end!

1433. Let us now turn back to speak exclusively of the dating of the world's history and to quote the views of various communities in this regard. We merely discussed the issue of the world's creation because we reported the opinions of those who argued for its eternity and offered proof of that eternity. Earlier in this book, we reported the views of the Indians on this subject. The Jews, on the other hand, allege that the world is six thousand years old and adopted this as a religious dogma. The Christians followed the Jews in this regard. As for the Sabeans, both Harranians and Kimarians, we reported their opinions as forming part of the opinions of the Greeks.

1434. As for the Magians, their views regarding the age of the world is undertermined since it depends on the extinction of the power and potency of Ahriman, who is Satan. Some of them hold the same view as the Dualists as regards the mixture of good and evil and salvation, and

that the world would commence anew and be rid of all evils and tribulations. The Magians claim that from the days of their prophet Zoroaster son of Asbitaman until Alexander is 258 years, Alexander having reigned for six years; from Alexander to the reign of Ardashir is 517 years; and from Ardashir to the *Hijra* is 564 years.

1435. Thus, from the descent of Adam to the *Hijra* is 6126 years. These years include from the descent of Adam to the Flood, 2256 years; from the Flood to the birth of Abraham, 1079 years; from the birth of Abraham to the eightieth year of the life of Moses son of `Imran which is the time he led the Israelites out of Egypt and into the desert, 565 years; from their departure from the desert until the fourth year of the reign of Solomon son of David, that is, the time he commenced the building of Bait al-Maqdis, is 636 years; from the building of Bait al-Maqdis to the reign of Alexander, 717 years; from the reign of Alexander to the birth of Christ, 369 years; from the birth of Christ to the birth of the Prophet, 521 years; from the raising of Christ to heaven at age 33 to the death of the Prophet, 546 years; from the beginning of Christ's ministry to the *Hijra*, 594 years; the death of our Prophet occurred in the year 935 of the years of Alexander, the Two-Horned.

1436. From David to Muhammad, 1702 years, 6 months and 10 days; from Abraham to Muhammad, 2720 years, 6 months and 10 days; from Noah to Muhammad 3721 years, 6 months and 10 days. Thus, according to this view, the total number of years from the descent of Adam to earth to the the beginning of the ministry of our Prophet is 4811 years, 6 months and 10 days. The total number of years from the descent of Adam till today which is the year 332, during the caliphate of al-Muttaqi lillah and his residing in Raqqa, in the district of Diyar Mudar, is 5156 years. We briefly discussed dates and histories in earlier sections of this book so will not repeat what has already been discussed.

1437. The Magians have many tales regarding history and dating which would take too long to relate, and how kingship will revert to them and to other ancient communities, as also regarding the beginning and end of the world. Thus, some of them hold that it is eternal, having no beginning or end while others believe it had a beginning but has no end. We discussed these subjects in our previous works, making it unnecessary to repeat it here since we have made it a condition that this book is a work of abbreviation and précis, and one that draws attention to our earlier books.

1438. Some Muslim researchers and thinkers hold that proof is ready to hand that the world is created and that it came into existence after not having existed; that its creator is the Almighty originator, exalted is He, who created it from nothing and will bring it to an end when He wishes it to end. This is so in order that His promise of salvation and threat of damnation would be fulfilled since He is truthful in His promise and threat, and His words cannot be changed. These thinkers maintain that the beginning of the world is dated from Adam but that the exact numbering and dating of the years is unknown to us. People are in dispute as regards the beginnings of history. The Qur'an has not informed us about the number of years nor enumerated the number of years past, nor is knowledge of this subject something that private opinions can venture to answer without due authority, nor can it be determined through the principles of reason or the results of research or the necessary conclusions of the senses as they discern what is to be sensed. How then can the age of the world be said to be 7000 years when the Almighty tells us, when mentioning the generations of mankind and those who were destroyed: {So too with `Ad and Thamud and the People of al-Rass, and many generations in between}. The Almighty does not use the term "many" unless it is really and truly

many. In the Qur'an God informs us of His creation of Adam and his story as well as the stories of prophets after him, and further informs us about the beginning of creation but does not tell us the number of years involved in order that we gain knowledge of this as of other matters He told us about. This is especially so because we know that the distance between us and God is incommensurate, and that the earth has witnessed many nations, kingdoms and wondrous events. So let us not enumerate or count what the Almighty has not enumerated nor accept the opinions of the Jews in this regard when we recall what the Qur'an said about them, namely, that {they distort the words of revelation from their contexts} and suppress {the truth knowingly}. Furthermore, they denied the prophets and rejected the miracles that the Almighty made to appear at the hands of Jesus son of Mary and our Prophet Muhammad who produced amazing proofs and signs. The Almighty informs us of the nations he destroyed because of their acts and blasphemy towards God, as in the following Qur'anic verses: {The Hour of Truth! What is the Hour of Truth? But how can you know what is the Hour of Truth? Thamud and `Ad cried lies to the Blast. As for Thamud, they were destroyed by the Scream; as for `Ad, they were destroyed by a raging, howling gale} till where it says: {Do you see of them any remnant?} The Prophet also says "The genealogists tell lies" and commands us to go back in genealogy only to Ma`add and not go beyond, because he knew of past eras and vanished nations.

1439. Were it not that the human spirit is more fond of curious stories, charming tales and short reports and more inclined to them, we would have included many more reports of the ancients and stories of past kings which we have not included in this book. However, we have mentioned in it what was ready to hand and in an allusive manner but without a full and detailed explanation, since our reliance in this work is

entirely on our previous works and books. If God knows our true intention and purpose He will make us secure from all fear. In this book we mention something from every branch of knowledge and every type of literature according to our ability and our investigations, doing so in an abbreviated and concise manner, thus producing an abridged work that anyone who examines it with care will recognize its true import. 1440. Now that we have assembled a compendium of knowledge needed by both the beginner and the accomplished scholar as regards the sciences and history of the world, let us turn to a mention of the pedigree of the Prophet of God, his birth, his ministry, his emigration and his death, and follow this up with the history of caliphs and kings age by age until this present day, which is the year 332. We have not included many historical incidents in this book but merely alluded to them, fearing prolixity and in order not to cause boredom. For a man of reason should not overburden a body with what it cannot bear, nor subject the spirit to what is not in its nature. Words should conform to meanings: thus, many words for many meanings and less words for less. This is a large subject and some of it can do service for the rest, while a part can inform you of the meaning of the whole. In God is success.

END OF VOL 2

Mas`udi Vol. 3

Chapter 70

An account of the birth of the Prophet and his lineage together with reports relevant thereto

1441. In our earlier books we made mention of the beginning of history with the creation of the world, the histories of prophets and kings, the wonders of lands and seas, a summary history of Persians, Romans and Copts, the months of the Romans, and events from the birth of our Prophet to his ministry, together with an account of those who believed in him before his ministry. In this book, we treated the interval between him and Christ and those who lived in that period of time. Let us now turn to his birth, for he is the Pure One, the Purified, the most Noble and Luminous, whose prophetic signs spread far and wide, whose proofs of prophecy were multiple, and whose truth was attested even before his mission.

1442. He is Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn `Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim ibn `Abd Manaf ibn Qusayy ibn Kilab ibn Murra ibn Ka`b ibn Lu`ayy ibn Ghalib ibn Fihr ibn Malik ibn al-Nadr ibn Kinana ibn Khuzaima ibn Mudrika ibn Ilyas ibn Mudar ibn Nizar ibn Ma`add ibn `Adnan ibn Udad ibn Muqawwim ibn Nakhur ibn Tirah ibn Ya`rub ibn Yashjub ibn Nabit ibn Isma`il ibn Ibrahim, the Friend of the All-Merciful, ibn Tarah, who is Azar ibn Nakhur ibn Sarukh ibn Ar`u ibn Falagh ibn `Abir ibn Shalikh ibn Arfakhshad ibn Sam ibn Noah ibn Lamak ibn Mattushalakh ibn Akhnukh ibn Yarad ibn Mihla`il ibn Qainan ibn Anush ibn Shit ibn Adam. This is what Ibn Hisham* copied in his book of *Expeditions and Biographies* from Ibn Ishaq*.

1443. The ascending order of names from Nizar upwards differs in different versions. In the version of Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Ghallabi al-Misri, he is Nizar ibn Ma`add ibn `Adnan ibn Udad ibn Sam

[sic] ibn Yashjub ibn Ya`rub ibn al-Hamaisa` ibn Sanu` ibn Yamid ibn Qaidar ibn Isma`il ibn Ibrahim ibn Tarih ibn Nakhur ibn Ar`u ibn Asruj ibn Faligh ibn Shalikh ibn Arfakhshad ibn Sam ibn Noah ibn Mattushalkh ibn Akhnukh ibn Mihla`il ibn Qainan ibn Anush ibn Shit ibn Adam. In the version of Ibn al-A`rabi* related from Hisham ibn Muhammad al-Kalbi, it is given as Nizar ibn Ma`add ibn `Adnan ibn Add ibn Adad ibn al-Hamaisa` ibn Nabt ibn Salaman ibn Qaidar ibn Isma`il ibn Ibrahim, the Friend of God, ibn Tarih ibn Nakhur ibn Ar`u ibn Faligh ibn `Abir ibn Shalikh ibn Arfakhshad ibn Sam ibn Noah ibn Lamak ibn Mattushalah ibn Akhnukh ibn Yarad ibn Mihla`il ibn Qainan ibn Anush ibn Shith ibn Adam.

1444. In the Torah it is stated that Adam lived for 930 years. It follows, and God knows best, that Adam was 874 years old when Lamak father of Noah was born, while Shit was 744 years old. This calculation would mean that Noah was born 126 years after the death of Adam. The Prophet forbade, as reported above, that we should go beyond Ma`add, so it is settled that genealogies should stop at Ma`add. Genealogists differ, as reported above, so it is incumbent upon us to abide by the Prophet's commands and prohibitions.

1445. Al-Mas`udi said: I found the following genealogy of Ma`add in the book written by Baruch son of Nariya, the scribe of Jeremiah the prophet: Ma`add ibn `Adnan ibn Adad ibn al-Hamaisa` ibn Salaman ibn `Us ibn Yaru ibn Mitsawil ibn Abi al-`Awwam ibn Nasil ibn Hara ibn Yildarim ibn Badlan ibn Kalih ibn Fajim ibn Nakhur ibn Mahi ibn `Asqa ibn `Anf ibn `Abid ibn al-Ra`a ibn Hamran ibn Yasan ibn Hara ibn Yahra ibn Yalkha ibn Ar`u ibn `Aifa` ibn Hassan ibn `Isa ibn Afnad ibn Aiham ibn Mu`sar ibn Najib ibn Razah ibn Samay ibn Murr ibn `Us ibn `Awwam ibn Qaidar ibn Isma`il ibn Ibrahim, the Friend of God. Many stories are related about Jeremiah and Ma`add ibn `Adnan and what happened to

them in al-Sham but these are too long to mention here, though this is mentioned in our earlier books. We cited this genealogy in this order only to show how people differ in this regard. This is why the Prophet forbade us to go beyond Ma`add because he knew how diverse genealogies are, and how many opinions there are regarding these long eras of time.

1446. The patronymic of the Prophet is Abu'l Qasim. Regarding this matter a poet recited:

*Among God's creatures there is an elite,
And the elite of mankind are the clan of Hashim.
The elite of the elite of the Hashim,
Is Muhammad the Luminous, Abu'l Qasim.*

His other names are Muhammad, Ahmad, and Cleanser (*al-Mahi*) because through him God cleanses sins, the Ultimate (*al-`Aqib*) after whom there is no prophet, and the Gatherer (*al-Hashir*) because God gathers mankind behind him on the Last Day.

1447. He was born in the Year of the Elephant. Between the Year of the Elephant and the Year of the Fijar was a period of twenty years. The Fijar was a war between the tribes of Qais `Ailan and Kinana, where they profaned the sacred months by fighting, so the war was called the *Fijar* [wicked]. Kinana is ibn Khuzaima ibn Mudrika and is `Amr ibn Ilyas ibn Mudar ibn Nizar. Ilyas had fathered `Amr, `Amir and `Umayr. `Amr is Mudrika, `Amir is Tabikha and `Umayr is Qama`a. Their mother was Laila bint Hulwan ibn `Imran ibn al-Haf ibn Quda`a, and Laila is Khindif. The names mentioned above were better known by their nicknames and the children of Ilyas were referred to by their mother's name, Khindif.

1448. Regarding this matter, Qusayy ibn Kilab ibn Murra recited:

*I, my clan and my father, when at war, and they call out "Clan of Wahb",
War finds me resolute in combat, noble in pedigree.
My mother is Khindif and my father is Ilyas.*

1449. Quraish has thirty-five clans: Banu Hashim ibn `Abd Manaf, Banu al-Muttalib ibn `Abd Manaf, Banu al-Harith ibn `Abd al-Muttalib, Banu Umayya ibn `Abd Shams, Banu Nawfal ibn `Abd Manaf, Banu al-Harith ibn Fihri, Banu Asad ibn `Abd al-`Uzza, Banu `Abd al-Dar ibn Qusayy, who are the guardians of the Ka`ba, Banu Zuhra ibn Kilab, Banu Taym ibn Murra, Banu Makhzum, Banu Yaqaza, Banu Murra, Banu `Adiyy ibn Ka`b, Banu Sahm, and Banu Jumah. This is where Quraish of the Valley (*Bitah*) ends, as already explained in this book.

1450. Then there are: Banu Malik ibn Hisl, Banu Ma`is ibn `Amir ibn Lu`ayy, Banu Nizar ibn Ma`is ibn `Amir, Banu Sama ibn Lu`ayy, Banu al-Adram, who is Taym ibn Ghalib, Banu Muharib ibn Fihri, Banu al-Harith ibn `Abdullah ibn Kinana, Banu `A`ida, who is Khuzaima ibn Lu`ayy, Banu Bunana, who is Sa`d ibn Lu`ayy, and from the Banu Malik to the end of the clans of Quraish of the Outskirts (*Zawahir*), as already explained in this book when we mentioned the Perfumed Ones and other clans of Quraish.

1451. The Fijar War proceeded as we mentioned, due to mutual boasting and assertions of strength among the clans. The Fijar war ended in the month of Shawwal. The Alliance of the Virtuous (*Hilf al-Fudul*) took place after they departed from the Fijar War. A poet recited:

*We were the kings from the clans of Najd,
The defenders of the weak when catastrophe struck.
We protected al-Hajun from all clans,
And prevented wickedness on the Day of Fijar.*

Regarding the same matter, Khidash ibn Zuhair al-`Amiri recited:

*Do not threaten me with the Day of Wickedness [Fijar]
For it left behind shameful memories in the valley of al-Hajun.*

1452. The Alliance of the Virtuous happened in the month of Dhu`l Qa`da. It was brought about by a man from the town of Zabid in the

Yemen who had sold an item of merchandise to al-`As ibn Wa'il al-Sahmi. This latter procrastinated in paying him until the man lost all hope. So he ascended Mount Abi Qubais as Quraish sat in groups around the Ka`ba and called out loudly and in verse, describing the injustice he had suffered:

*O men, will you not restore his merchandise to a man unjustly treated,
In the valley of Mecca, far from clan or kin?*

Sanctity belongs to one who is fully decent,

But no sanctity can attach to a place that wears a robe of treachery.

1453. Quraish then gathered together and the first to initiate the meeting was al-Zubair ibn `Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim ibn `Abd Manaf. Some Quraish clans gathered in the House of Deliberation which was a place where matters were decided. The clans gathered there were the Banu Hashim ibn `Abd Manaf, al-Muttalib ibn `Abd Manaf, Zuhra ibn Kilab, Taym ibn Murra and al-Harith ibn Fihir. They agreed to exact justice from the unjust, walked over to the house of `Abdullah ibn Jud`an and formed an alliance there. Regarding this matter, al-Zubair ibn `Abd al-Muttalib recited:

Let him who owns this Sacred House know

That we reject all injustice and prevent all shameful deeds.

In our book *al-Awsat* we related the history of the alliances and the four *Fijars*: the *Fijar* of the Leg, or *Fijar* of Badr ibn Ma`shar, the *Fijar* of the Woman, the *Fijar* of the Ape and the fourth is the *Fijar* of al-Barrad.

1454. Between the fourth *Fijar* in which fighting took place and the building of the Ka`ba was a period of fifteen years. A period of four years, nine months and six days intervened between the Prophet's presence and his witnessing the fourth *Fijar* and between his departure to al-Sham, when he traded on behalf of Khadija, and when the monk Nastur saw the Prophet shaded by a cloud, and accompanied by

Maysara*. This was the occasion when Nastur said: “This is a prophet and he shall be the last of the prophets.” From this point in time to his marriage to Khadija bint Khuwaylid was an interval of two months and twenty-four days; and an interval of ten years before he witnessed the building of the Ka`ba and the quarrel among the Quraish as to the placing of the black stone in it. A flood had destroyed the Ka`ba, and a gazelle made of gold together with some ornaments and precious stones were stolen from it when it was destroyed. Quraish demolished it and its walls contained many images painted in marvelous colors, among which was a picture of Abraham, Friend of God, holding divining arrows in his hand, facing which was a picture of Isma`il on a horse leading the people as he pressed on from `Arafat while the diviner stood amidst the crowds divining their fortunes for them. There were in addition many other pictures of the progeny of Quraish down to Qusayy ibn Kilab and others, a total of some sixty pictures. With each picture there was an image of the god of the person pictured, how he worshipped, and his most famous deeds.

1455. When Quraish rebuilt the Ka`ba and raised its roof, they completed their building plans through the use of the timber they removed from a ship that was wrecked on their coast. This was a ship that the king of the Byzantines had sent from al-Qulzum in Egypt to Abyssinia to be used for building a church there. The Quraish finally arrived in building at the point where the stone was to be placed, as mentioned before, and a dispute arose as to who was to put it in its place. They then agreed to entrust the matter to the first person who entered upon them from the gate of the Banu Shaiba. The first person they saw was the Prophet entering from that gate. They used to call him *Al-Amin* (trustworthy) because of his dignity of bearing, his wisdom, honesty and avoidance of all filth and

obscenities. So they made him arbitrate their dispute and accepted his verdict.

1456. He then spread out his outer garment---some say he wore a Taruni garment---took the stone, put it in its middle, then called on four men of Quraish, who were prominent leaders of the tribe and said to them: “Let each one of you take one corner of this garment.” The four were `Utba ibn Rabi`a ibn `Abd Shams ibn `Abd Manaf, al-Aswad ibn al-Muttalib ibn Asad ibn `Abd al-`Uzza ibn Qusayy, Abu Hudhaifa ibn al-Mughira ibn `Abdullah ibn `Umar ibn Makhzum, and Qays ibn `Adiyy al-Sahmi. The four lifted the garment until it rose above the ground and brought it near to where it was to be placed. The Prophet then took the stone and placed it in its place. The whole of Quraish witnessed his act. This was one of his earliest public acts, a sign of his virtue and sound judgment. A bystander from Quraish was astonished at their behavior and at how they submitted to the judgment of the youngest among them, saying: “I am truly amazed at a people who are noble and preeminent, with venerable and wise old men, resorting to the youngest and least wealthy among them, and setting him up as chief and arbiter. I swear by al-Lat and al-`Uzza that he will surpass them in the race and will apportion among them their fortunes and will hereafter win a truly great reputation.”

1457. There is a dispute as to the identity of the above-mentioned speaker. Some say it was the Devil who appeared to them that day in the guise of a man of Quraish who had died but the goddesses al-Lat and al-`Uzza had resurrected him to be a witness of that event. Others say it was a wise and perceptive man from Quraish.

Once Quraish completed the building of the Ka`ba, they covered it with the Yemeni garments (*wasal*) of their leading men and returned the pictures that had been painted inside the Ka`ba, doing all this with great skill.

1458. Hence, there were five years between the building of the Ka`ba as described and the beginning of the Prophet's divinely inspired mission. From his birth to his mission was a period of forty years and a day. The most accurate date for his birth is that it took place fifty days after the arrival of the People of the Elephant in Mecca, which occurred on Monday, the 13th of Muharram in the year 882 of the era of Alexander the Two-Horned. Abraha arrived in Mecca on the 17th of Muharram and in the year 216 of the era of the Arabs, which begins with the Pilgrimage of Treachery, and the year 40 of the reign of Kisra Anushirwan. The Prophet was born on the 8th of Rabi` al-Awwal of that year, in Mecca, and in the house of Ibn Yusuf, which was later turned into a mosque by al-Khaizaran, mother of the caliphs al-Hadi and al-Rashid.

1459. His father, `Abdullah, was away in al-Sham but returned from there sick and died in Medinah, while the Prophet was still in his mother's womb. But this has been disputed. Some say his father died one month after the Prophet's birth and others that he died in the second year after his birth. His mother was Amina bint Wahb ibn `Abd Manaf ibn Zuhra ibn Kilab ibn Murra ibn Ka`b. In his first year of life he was handed over to Halima bint `Abdullah ibn al-Harith, a wet nurse. In the second year of his stay with the clan of Sa`d, `Abu `Abdullah [`Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim] recited:

God be thanked who gave me

This child, who is pure in character.

In his cradle, he is lord of all children.

I place him under the protection of the Sacred House with its four corners.

1460. In the fourth year of his life the two angels split his stomach, removed his heart, cut it open and removed a black clot, washed his heart and stomach with snow, and then one of them said to the other: "Weigh

him against ten of his nation.” He did so and he tipped the scales. He continued to increase the weight until he reached one thousand, then exclaimed: “By God, if I weigh him against his entire nation he would still tip the scales.” In the fifth year of his life his wet nurse Halima returned him to his mother, though some say at the start of his sixth year. Between this event and the Year of the Elephant was a period of five years, two months and ten days. In his seventh year, his mother took him on a visit to his maternal uncles and died in al-Abwa’. Umm Ayman then brought him back to Mecca, five days after the death of his mother. In his eighth year, his grandfather `Abd al-Muttalib died and his paternal uncle Abu Talib took him in and brought him up. At age thirteen he travelled with his uncle to al-Sham, then later, at age twenty-five, went as a trader for Khadija bint Khuwaylid to al-Sham in the company of her servant Maysara. We dealt with the events of this chapter in great detail in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*.

Chapter 71

An account of his mission and reports relevant thereto until his emigration

1461. Five years after the building of the Ka`ba, as already mentioned, God sent his Prophet, honoring him by choosing him in person for prophecy. He had completed his fortieth year. He resided in Mecca for thirteen years, hiding his mission for three years, and married Khadija bint Khuwaylid when aged twenty-five. While in Mecca, eighty-two chapters of the Qur’an were revealed to him, though some were completed in Medinah. The first verses of the Qur’an revealed to him were: {Recite, in the name of your Lord! He who created!} The Angel Gabriel came to him on Saturday night, then on Sunday night, then addressed him as a prophet on Monday. This was in the cave of Hira’, the place where the Qur’an first descended. Gabriel addressed him with the

beginning of that chapter, as above, but proceeded only to the verse {He taught man what he knew not}. The rest was revealed later. He was instructed with the duty of prayer with two *rak`as* at each prayer but was later commanded to complete them. The two *rak`as* while travelling were instituted, and these were increased for prayers in cities.

1462. His prophetic mission began at the start of the twentieth year of the reign of Kisra Arawiz, which was the start of the two hundredth year following the alliance at al-Rabadha*, coinciding with the 6113th year following the descent of Adam. The same dating is related from a wise Arab in early Islamic times who had read ancient books and derived relevant information from them. In a long poem in the *rajaz* meter he recited:

*At the start of the tenth year, to which three are added with certainty,
Plus one hundred years exactly, to which six thousand are supplemented,
God sent him to us as a Messenger,
And he guided us to the right path.*

1463. There is a dispute concerning `Ali ibn Abi Talib and his embracing Islam. Many people state that he never was a polytheist so as to convert to Islam but followed the Prophet in all his acts and held him as his model, reaching adulthood in this respect. They hold that God granted him sinlessness, guided him aright and disposed him to virtue, just as God had made his Prophet sinless. This is because the two of them were not forced or predestined to follow divine commandments but did so voluntarily and out of choice. They freely chose to obey God, abide by His commands and avoid what He prohibited. Some say that `Ali was the first to believe, and that the Prophet invited him to the faith when he was of an age to assume legal responsibilities, as evidenced in the Qur'anic verse: {and warn your closest relatives}. So the Prophet began with `Ali because he was the closest person of all to him and the one most dutiful

towards him. Others have advanced different views to ours, this being a point of contention among people such as the Shi`a, the Ibadiyya* and others among the Sunnites who adopted a median position. Each party advanced arguments in support of their views such as those who argued that the imamate takes place by designation (*nass*) or by popular choice (*ikhtiyar*); each also held differing views about how `Ali embraced Islam and how old he was when he did so. We discussed all these views in full in our books called *Al-Safwa fi'l Imama*, *Al-Istibsar*, *Al-Zahi* and in our other works that deal with this issue.

1464. Then Abu Bakr embraced the faith and called on his people to do so. Embracing the faith at his hands were `Uthman ibn `Affan, al-Zubair ibn al-`Awwam, `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf, Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas and Talha ibn `Ubaidullah. He brought them to the Prophet and they embraced Islam. This group was the first among people to come to the faith. A poet in early Islamic times mentioned them in the following verses:

*You who ask me about the most virtuous of worshippers:
You have come to one who knows the answer and is experienced.
The best of all worshippers are the Quraish,
And the best of Quraish are those who emigrated.
The best of Emigrants, those with precedence,
Are eight in number, who alone came to his [Muhammad's] aid:
`Ali, `Uthman, then al-Zubair, and Talha and two from the clan of Zuhra,
And two venerable old men who stood beside him,
And their tombs stand next to his.
If any after them are boastful,
Compared to these others, no boast of theirs is worth mentioning.*

1465. The first person to embrace the faith is also a point of dispute. Some hold that Abu Bakr al-Siddiq was the first Muslim and the first who

preceded all others to the faith. Then came Bilal ibn Hamama, then `Amr ibn `Absa. Others state that the first Muslim woman was Khadija and the first man was `Ali. Still others argue that the first to embrace Islam was Zaid ibn Haritha, “The Beloved of Muhammad”, then Khadija then `Ali. We have mentioned the version that we ourselves have chosen to accept regarding this matter in our above-mentioned works.

Chapter 72

An account of his emigration and a general narrative of his life and times until his death

1466. The Almighty ordered his Messenger to emigrate, then imposed the duty of *jihad* upon him in the year 1 of the Hijra, the year when the call to prayer was also revealed from on high. This was year 14 from the start of his mission. Ibn `Abbas used to say: “The Messenger of God received his mission when forty years old. He stayed in Mecca for thirteen years, and his emigration lasted ten years. He was sixty-three years old when God caused him to die.” Year 1 [July 16, 622] of the Hijra was the thirty-second year of the reign of Kisra Arawiz, the ninth year of the reign of Herakles, king of Christianity, and the year 933 from the reign of Alexander of Macedon.

1467. Al-Mas`udi said: In our book *al-Awsat*, we mentioned how the Prophet acted when he left Mecca and entered the cave, and how he deputized `Ali who slept in his bed. The Prophet left Mecca with Abu Bakr and `Amir ibn Fuhaira, client of Abu Bakr, and with Ibn Uraiqit al-Di`li, their guide, who was not a Muslim. `Ali stayed behind in Mecca for three days until he carried out all that he was instructed to do, then followed the Prophet. The Prophet entered Medinah on Monday, the 12th of Rabi` al-Awwal [September 24, 622] and remained there ten full years. When he first arrived in Medinah he alighted at Qaba`, a guest of Sa`d ibn Khaithama, and there built a mosque. He remained in Qaba` on

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday then journeyed on as the sun rose on Friday. The Ansar* came up, clan by clan, each group asking him to stay with them and hanging on to the halter of his camel as the camel pulled away from them. The Prophet would tell them: "Leave the camel alone for it is divinely commanded." Prayer time then came upon him while he was with the clan of Salim, so he led them in Friday prayers, and this was the first Friday prayer in Islam.

1468. This is a point of dispute among jurists as to the number of worshippers needed to complete Friday prayers. Al-Shafi`i * and others with him argue that Friday prayers can only be licit if the worshippers are at least forty in number but cannot be licit if less. Other jurists of Kufa and elsewhere have disputed this argument.

1469. The Prophet's prayer took place in the middle of the valley which until today is called Ranuna'. He then mounted his camel which marched in a straight line and undeterred by anyone until it reached the site of the Prophet's mosque. The site at that time belonged to two orphaned boys from the clan of al-Najjar. There the camel squatted, then rose up, walked for a little distance and returned to where it had squatted, squatted once more and remained at rest. The Prophet meanwhile was closely following the commandments of the Creator and His guidance. He dismounted and walked to the house of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, whose full name was Khalid ibn Zayd ibn Kulayb ibn Tha`laba ibn `Abd ibn `Awf ibn Ghanm ibn Malik ibn al-Najjar. He stayed in his house for a month until the mosque was built and after he had bought the site. The Ansar surrounded him, were delighted with him and regretted that they had missed the chance to come to his aid.

1470. Regarding this matter, Sarma ibn Abi Anas, a member of the clan of `Adiyy ibn al-Najjar, recited the following verses:

He remained with the Quraish for some ten seasons of pilgrimage,

*Reminding them of God. If only he had found a friend to comfort him!
When he came to us, God caused his religion to triumph,
And he became happy and satisfied in Taiba*.
We are enemies to all whom he declares to be his enemies,
Even if these are the most beloved of our friends.*

1471. Fasting in the month of Ramadan was made obligatory and the direction of prayer was changed towards the Ka`ba eighteen months after his arrival. It has been said that only thirty-two chapters of the Qur`an were revealed to him in Medinah. God caused him to die on Monday, the twelfth of Rabi` al-Awwal, in the year 10* [June 18, 631], at the same hour as when he entered Medinah. He died in the chamber of `A`isha, after an illness lasting thirteen days.

1472. The raids in which he took part amounted to twenty-six, though some say twenty-seven. Those who argue for twenty-six count his march from Khaibar to Wadi al-Qura as one raid while those who make them twenty-seven count the raid on Khaibar as a separate raid, while the raid on Wadi al-Qura is counted as distinct from Khaibar. This is how that dispute arose regarding the number of raids. This is because when God caused him to conquer Khaibar, he marched from it to Wadi al-Qura without coming back to Medinah. The very first raid from Medinah led by him was to Waddan, known as the raid of al-Abwa'; then the raid of Buwat towards Radwa; then the raid of al-Qushaira in the valley of Yanbu`; then the First Badr, when he went out in pursuit of Kurz ibn Jabir; then the Great Badr raid, which is the Second Badr, when God caused the heroes of Quraish to be killed and many of their leaders to be captured; then the raid of the Banu Sulaim when he reached a place known as al-Kadid, a water spring belonging to Sulaim; then the raid of al-Sawiq, in pursuit of Abu Sufyan ibn Harb where he reached the place known as Qarqarat al-Kudr; then the raid of Ghatafan in Najd and known

as the raid of Dhi Amar; then the raid of Bahran, a mine in Hijaz above al-Furu`; then the raid of Uhud; then the raid of Hamra' al-Asad; then the raid of the clan of Banu al-Nadir; then the raid of Dhat al-Rifa`, in Nakhil; then the Last Badr; then the raid of Dumat al-Jandal; then the raid of al-Khandaq; then the raid of Banu Quraiza; then the raid of Banu Lihyan ibn Hudhail ibn Mudrika; then the raid of Dhu Qarad; then the raid of Banu al-Mustaliq from Khuza`a; then the raid of Hudaibiyya, where he did not intend to fight but the polytheists turned him back; then the raid on Khaibar; then the Prophet performed the lesser pilgrimage (*`umra*) agreed by previous treaty; then the conquest of Mecca; then the raid of Hunain; then the raid of al-Ta'if, then the raid of Tabuk.

1473. The Prophet fought in nine of these raids: Badr, Uhud, al-Khandaq, Quraiza, Khaibar, the conquest of Mecca, Hunain, al-Ta'if and Tabuk.

This is the view of Muhammad ibn Ishaq. As for al-Waqidi*, he agreed with Ibn Ishaq that the Prophet fought in these nine raids and added that he also fought in the raid of Wadi al-Qura, because his servant, called Mud'im, was struck by an arrow and killed. He also, according to al-Waqidi, fought at the raid of Yawm al-Ghaba where he killed six polytheists and when Muhriz ibn Nadla was also killed. So according to al-Waqidi he fought in eleven raids and to Ibn Ishaq in nine. They agree that he fought in nine and al-Waqidi added what is mentioned above. It is also said that the first raid undertaken by the Prophet was the raid of al-Ushaira.

1474. Earlier historians and biographers dispute the number of the small military forays and expeditions that he dispatched. Muhammad ibn Ishaq, transmitting from `Abdullah ibn Abi Bakr, stated that the number of his small forays and expeditions between the time he arrived in Medinah and the time God caused him to die was thirty-five. Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari* mentions the following in his *History* from Al-Harith>Ibn Sa`d>

al-Waqidi that the Prophet's minor forays were forty-eight and also that it is said that these, together with his expeditions, amounted to sixty-six in number.

1475. The Prophet died at the age of sixty-three, as already mentioned at the start of this chapter, and quoting Ibn `Abbas. His only surviving issue was Fatima who died forty days after his death, though seventy days and other figures are also mentioned. `Ali ibn Abi Talib had married Fatima one year after the Hijra, though some say less. The first woman the Prophet married was Khadija bint Khuwaylid ibn Asad ibn `Abd al-`Uzza ibn Qusayy. She died in Shawwal, ten years after the start of his mission and three years before the Hijra.

1476. The Prophet was taken on his Night Journey when fifty-one years, eight months and twenty days old. The death of his uncle Abu Talib, whose name was `Abd Manaf ibn `Abd al-Muttalib, took place three days after the death of Khadija. The Prophet was then forty-nine years and eight months old. It is said that Abu Talib was in fact his name. After Khadija's death, the Prophet married Sawda bint Zam`a ibn Qais ibn `Abd Shams ibn `Abd Wudd ibn Nasr ibn Malik. He married `A'isha two years before the Hijra but it is also said that he married her after Khadija's death but consummated the marriage seven months and nine days after the Hijra. In our book *al-Awsat* we listed all his wives, which makes it unnecessary to repeat this here.

1477. Muhammad ibn Ja`far>his father Ja`far ibn Muhammad>his father Muhammad ibn `Ali>his father `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib who said: "God Almighty nurtured Muhammad and nurtured him well. God said: {Conduct yourself with forbearance, command to virtue and forsake the ignorant}. When this was accomplished, God said: {You are of a character most noble}. When he accepted what God had charged him with, God said: {Whatever the Messenger bestows upon you, accept it;

whatever he disallows, desist}. He would, on behalf of God, assure people of paradise, and he was allowed to do so.”

1478. The total number of women he married was fifteen. He consummated his marriage with eleven of them, did not consummate with four and, when taken to God, left nine behind.

1479. Al-Mas`udi said: His age at death has been a subject of dispute. We have cited above what was related by Ibn `Abbas, a report transmitted by Hammad ibn Salama from Abu Jamra from Ibn `Abbas. A report from Abu Huraira agrees with Ibn `Abbas. It is related from Yahya ibn Sa`id that he heard Sa`id ibn al-Musayyab* say that the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet when forty-three years old, that he remained in Mecca for ten years and in Medinah for ten, and died at age sixty-three. This also was reported from `A`isha as transmitted by al-Zuhri*from `Urwa*from `A`isha who said that the Prophet died aged sixty-three. Another report from Ibn `Abbas, through a different line of transmitters, states that the prophet died aged sixty-five. This is also mentioned by Ibn Hisham>`Ali ibn Zaid>Yusuf ibn Mihran>Ibn `Abbas.

1480. We mention this dispute because we want readers of this book to know that we have not ignored or left unmentioned any view expressed on this subject without mentioning it in passing or alluding to it as far as was possible, aiming for brevity and conciseness. We found that the family of Muhammad and their party are agreed that the Prophet died aged sixty-three, in conformity with the above-mentioned view of Ibn `Abbas. When his body was washed for burial, he was shrouded in three garments, two Suhari cloths and one Yemeni garment into which he was enfolded. Into his grave descended `Ali ibn Abi Talib and al-Fadl and Qutham, the two sons of al-`Abbas, and Shuqran, the client of the Prophet. Other versions of the cloths used as shrouds are also given, and

God knows best how this was. Let us now turn to speak in broad terms of his times and his history from his birth to his death.

Chapter 73

An account of reports concerning certain matters and events that took place from the Prophet's birth until his death

1482. In earlier sections of this work we mentioned his birth, ministry, emigration and death. We did so in general terms sufficient for a scholar seeking specialized knowledge and for a student seeking guidance. We mentioned in brief a number of events that took place in that span of time. This chapter is now devoted to a broad chronology spanning his birth until his death and a summary account of events that happened in his days so that all this information can become easy to consult for all who wish to do so, though we have already treated in earlier chapters and in broad terms what we will explain in detail in this chapter.

1483. During his first year of life, he was given for nursing to Halima bint `Abdullah ibn al-Harith ibn Shijna ibn Jabir ibn Rizam ibn Nasira ibn Fusayya ibn Nasr ibn Sa`d ibn Bakr ibn Hawazin ibn Mansur ibn `Ikrima ibn Khasafa ibn Qais ibn `Aylan ibn Mudar ibn Nizar ibn Ma`add ibn `Adnan. In the fifth year of his life Halima returned him to his mother as already mentioned in this work. In his sixth year, his mother Amina took him on a visit to his maternal uncles and died at al-Abwa', between Mecca and Medinah. When Umm Ayman heard this, she went out to get him and returned with him to Mecca. Umm Ayman was a servant of the Prophet, inherited from his mother. In his ninth year, he travelled with his paternal uncle Abu Talib to al-Sham; it is also said that he was thirteen when he went on that trip with his uncle. Abu Talib was the full brother of `Abdullah, father of the Prophet, so it was he among all his other brothers who acted as the guardian of the Prophet. Abu Talib's other brothers were: al-`Abbas, Hamza, al-Zubair, Hajl, al-Muqawwam, Dirar,

al-Harith and Abu Lahab, these being the ten sons of `Abd al-Muttalib. `Abd al-Muttalib had sixteen children, the ten sons we named and six daughters: `Atika, Safiyya, Umaima, al-Baida', Barra and Arwa. The only one to embrace Islam was Safiyya, mother of al-Zubair ibn al-`Awwam. There is a dispute about Arwa: some say she too became a Muslim but others deny this. When the Prophet travelled with his uncle that year, Bahira the monk looked at him and advised them to protect him from the Jews who would be his enemies since they would know about his prophetic mission, as already explained above when we mentioned the monk Bahira and how he predicted the prophecy of the Prophet. We related this incident in the chapter about the people of the interval between Christ and Muhammad.

1484. We related earlier that Muhammad witnessed the War of the Wicked when twenty-one years old, and that it was a war between Quraish and Qais `Aylan, as already mentioned in this and in our other works. We further recounted that it acquired that name, i.e. wicked, because it took place during the sacred months. Qais was winning the war against Quraish but when the Prophet came to witness it, Quraish overcame Qais. Leading Quraish at that time was `Abdullah ibn Jud`an al-Taymi who was a slave-seller in the Jahiliyya period who sold female slaves. This was one of the signs of Muhammad's coming prophecy since good fortune accompanied his presence. At age twenty-six, he married Khadija bint Khuwaylid, who was then forty years old, though other ages are also mentioned. At age thirty-six, Quraish built the Ka`ba and agreed to abide by his judgment, so he placed the stone in the manner already related.

1485. At age forty-one, God sent him as a prophet and messenger to all mankind. This took place on Monday, the tenth of Rabi` al-Awwal, a point of disagreement which relates to the time of the start of his mission.

At age forty-six, Quraish besieged the Prophet as well as the Hashim and `Abd al-Muttalib clans in the valley. At fifty years of age, he and his followers left the valley. In that same year, Khadija his wife died. In it too he went out to al-Ta'if, as already mentioned. At age fifty-one he was carried by night to Bait al-Maqdis, as related in the Qur'an. At age fifty-four he emigrated to Medinah where he built his mosque and consummated his marriage with `A'isha bint Abi Bakr, who was nine years old. It is said that he married her before the Hijra when she was seven years old, or six in other versions, and consummated the marriage in Medinah seven months after the Hijra. It is reported that `A'isha was eighteen years old when the Prophet died, and that she herself died in Medinah in the year 58 [677-8] of the Hijra. Abu Huraira prayed over her body in the days of Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan. She was approximately seventy years old.

1486. In this year, the first of the Hijra, the Prophet commanded Bilal to announce the call to prayer. `Abdullah ibn Zaid had been shown in his sleep how this call was to be announced. In it too, `Ali ibn Abi Talib married Fatima daughter of the Prophet, a disputed date as already mentioned.

1487. In year two of the Hijra [623-4], the fast of Ramadan was made obligatory upon the believers. In this year too the Prophet ordered that the direction of prayer be changed to Mecca. In it the Prophet's daughter Ruqayya died. Towards the end of this year, `Ali consummated his marriage with Fatima. In it also was the Battle of Badr which took place on Friday, the seventeenth day of Ramadan.

1488. In year three [624-5], the Prophet married Zainab bint Khuzaima who died two months later. In this year too he married Hafsa bint `Umar ibn al-Khattab. In it also `Uthman ibn `Affan married Umm Kulthum daughter of the Prophet. In it al-Hasan ibn `Ali was born, a disputed date.

In it the Battle of Uhud took place, at which Hamza ibn `Abd al-Muttalib was martyred.

1489. In year four [625-6] there occurred the Prophet's raid known as Dhat al-Riqa`. During that raid he led the people in the Prayer of Fear, though there is a dispute as to how he did so. In it, the Prophet married Umm Salama bint Abi Umayya. In it too was his raid against the Jews of the clan of Nadir. They fortified themselves against him in their fortresses so he cut their palm trees and orchards and kindled fires on them. When they saw this they agreed to a truce. In it too was the raid on Banu al-Mustaliq. In it also, i.e. the year four, al-Husain ibn `Ali was born. It is said that the birth of Fatima took place eight years before the Hijra.

1490. In year five [626-7] was the raid of al-Khandaq and the ditch (*khandaq*) that was dug in it. In that year was the raid on the Jews of the clan of Quraiza with its well known events. In it too the Prophet married Zainab bint Jahsh. In it also was the Affair of the Lie (*Ifk*) when some people spread rumors regarding `A'isha.

1491. In year six [627-8], the Prophet performed the prayer for rain when much harm had befallen people because of drought. In it the Prophet performed the lesser pilgrimage (*`umra*) known as the `Umra of al-Hudaibiyya, and concluded a truce with the polytheists. In it he took over the oasis of Fadak. In it too he married Umm Habiba bint Abi Sufyan and sent messengers to Kisra and Caesar. The Prophet paid the ransom money for Juwayriyya bint al-Harith, then married her.

1492. In year seven [628-9], the Prophet raided and captured Khaibar, selecting Safiyya bint Huyayy ibn Akhtab for himself. In it he married Maymuna bint al-Harith al-Hilaliyya, maternal aunt of `Abdullah ibn `Abbas. This took place while travelling on the lesser pilgrimage (*`umra*) agreed by previous treaty (*qada`*) and the subsequent dispute among jurists as to whether he married her while in a state free from sacredness

(*hill*) or one of sacredness (*ihram*). In it too, Hatib ibn Abi Balta`a returned from al-Muqawqas, king of Egypt, bringing with him Marya the Copt, mother of Ibrahim, son of the Prophet, together with other presents sent by al-Muqawqas. In it also Ja`far ibn Abi Talib returned from Abyssinia with his children, wife and other Muslims who had been in Abyssinia and journeyed back by sea.

1493. In year eight [629-30], Ja`far ibn Abi Talib, Zaid ibn Haritha and `Abdullah ibn Rawaha were all martyred in the land of Mu'ta, in the district of al-Balqa' in al-Sham and the province of Damascus, in a battle against the Byzantines. In it too, Zainab daughter of the Prophet died though other dates are mentioned. In this year, the Prophet conquered Mecca. There is a dispute as to whether Mecca was conquered by force (*`anwatan*) or peacefully (*sulhan*). In it, the idols were smashed and the shrine of al-`Uzza was destroyed. The Prophet then said: "O Quraish, what do you think I will do to you?" They answered: "All that is good. You are a noble brother and a noble nephew." He said: "Go! You are set free." In it too he raided the raid called Hunain. Leading the tribe of Hawazin was Malik ibn `Awf al-Nasri and with him was Duraid ibn al-Samma. In it too was the raid on Ta'if in which he was generous in his gifts to the ones whose hearts he wanted to win, including Abu Sufyan and his son Mu`awiya. In it also was born Ibrahim, son of the Prophet, whose mother was Marya the Copt.

1494. In year nine [630-31], Abu Bakr led the faithful in pilgrimage, and `Ali read out to them the Qur'an chapter called *Repudiation* [Repentance]. The Prophet ordered that no polytheists can any longer perform the pilgrimage or enter the sacred mosque or circumambulate the Ka`ba in the nude. In it Umm Kulthum, daughter of the Prophet, died.

1495. In year ten [631-2], the Prophet led the pilgrimage, known as the Farewell Pilgrimage, and said: "Time has come full circle and now

resembles the time when God first created the heavens and the earth.” In it was the death of Ibrahim, son of the Prophet aged one year, ten months and eight days old. Other ages are also mentioned. In it too the Prophet sent `Ali to the Yemen and he adopted a state of sacredness just like the Prophet’s.

1496. In the year eleven [632], there occurred the death of the Prophet, as previously mentioned in this book in an earlier chapter devoted to his death and age, and what people said about this topic. In it too occurred the death of Fatima, daughter of the Prophet, and the above-mentioned dispute among people as regards her age and the period she lived on after the death of her father, and whether prayers were pronounced upon her body by al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib or by her husband `Ali. When Fatima died, her husband `Ali mourned her with great grief and much weeping and moaning. He recited the following verses:

All companionship between two intimates must come to an end,

And all lifespans are short before death occurs.

The loss to me of Fatima, after the loss of Muhammad,

Is proof that no intimacy ever lasts long.

1497. All Muhammad’s children were from Khadija, except Ibrahim. His eldest child was al-Qasim, hence the Prophet’s patronymic. Then came Ruqayya and Umm Kulthum who were married to `Utba and `Utayba, sons of his paternal uncle Abu Lahab, and he divorced them in an incident too long to relate here, so they were married by `Uthman ibn `Affan, one after the other. Then came Zainab who was married to Abu’l `As ibn al-Rabi` but Islam separated them. When Abu’l `As embraced Islam the Prophet returned her to him in accordance with their first marriage. This is a point of dispute among jurists as to how the Prophet returned Zainab to Abu’l `As. From Abu’l `As she was the mother of Umama, whom `Ali ibn `Abi Talib married after the death of Fatima.

After the start of his mission, there was born to the Prophet `Abdullah who is also known as al-Tayyib and al-Tahir, three names given to him because he was born under Islam, then Fatima and Ibrahim.

1498. In our books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat* we gave a year by year account of the Prophet's life from his birth to his mission and from his mission to his Hijra, and from his Hijra to his death, and from his death to the present day, which is the year 332 [943-44]. That account includes his raids, conquests, forays and expeditions as also the major events of his life. In this book we merely give summary accounts, referring back to our earlier works and reminding readers of our earlier books.

Chapter 74

An account of his words, uttered for the first time and unrecorded by any human being before him

1499. Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah al-Mas`udi said: God sent his Prophet as a mercy and announcer of good tidings to all mankind, and attended him with luminous signs and proofs. To him the miraculous Qur'an was revealed with which he challenged his people, a people who were supreme in eloquence and rhetoric, and possessed of a profound knowledge of language and types of discourse such as epistles, oratory, rhymed prose, rhymed speech, prose, poetry, odes, and composing verse in the *rajaz* meter on virtuous topics, and expert in such modes of speech as encouraging good, forbidding evil, urging to action, tempting, promising, threatening, praising and defaming. He sounded the Qur'an in their ears and with it overpowered their minds; with it he declared their acts to be wicked and defamed their opinions; with it he pronounced their wisdom to be nonsensical and with it he overturned their religious beliefs and declared their gods to be spurious. He then informed them of their inability to produce its like even if they came to

each other's aid: {even if they back one another up}. It is not the intention of this work to describe the views of those who dispute this or to report the speech of polemicists, since this is a book of history and not of research and investigation.

1500. It has been firmly established about the Prophet, through both inherited knowledge and transmission of later scholars from earlier ones, that, once proof was confirmed of his truth, as also his miracles, together with the signs and wonders that God revealed at his hands in order that he might deliver God's messages to mankind, that he said: "I was given the perfection of speech". He also said: "All speech was made concise for me." This is how he indicated that he was endowed with wisdom and clarity of speech apart from the inimitable Qur'an. This refers to his gifts such as wisdom, concision of speech and brevity of expression which carry numerous meanings and diverse aspects of wisdom and the common good. So his speech is the best and most precise, given its brevity and its rich meanings. An example is his speech when he presented himself to the clans of Mecca with Abu Bakr and `Ali, and how he stood before the clan of Bakr ibn Wa'il and Abu Bakr walked towards them and the argument he had with Daghfal about pedigrees. The Prophet said: "Great harm is associated with speech." This had never been said before nor ascribed to any other human being.

1501. Then there is his verdict on war: "War is trickery". With this concise and brief statement he taught that the last deceptions of war are by the sword if war begins with a trick. This is something known to all people of sound mind and wise policy and leadership. He also said: "Taking back a gift is like taking back vomit", forbidding one who gives a gift to take back what he gifted, since vomit cannot be taken back by the vomiter. Much has been said about this topic and much is spoken about it, but our purpose here is merely to quote his words that no one

else had uttered before him. He also said: “Throw dust in the face of those who praise.” What is intended here is a deceitful praiser but the Prophet did not mean one who thanks another for a favor given, or who praises a person for a quality he truly possesses or says what he may appropriately say to another. These should not have dust thrown in their faces. Had this been the intention behind that saying, no one would ever praise anyone else since the prohibition here is general and applies both to the truth teller as well as the liar, and all would have dust thrown in their faces. But this would contradict what is found in the Qur’an where God speaks about his prophet Joseph and his telling the king: { Appoint me to oversee the treasures of the land for I am a careful guardian and well qualified }. For this counts as self-praise and a description of his qualities.

1502. All that we mention in this chapter is very widely reported in biographies and histories, well known among scholars and commonly quoted by the wise. Many people quote these sayings and the commoners employ many of them in their everyday speech, proverbs and discourse, but most are unaware that it was the Prophet who first coined the expression and used it. Examples include: “It is unjust for a rich man to delay payment. If a rich man is asked to act as a guarantor, let him do so”; “Souls are like massed troops. Those who recognize each other become allies; those who do not, clash”; “The most sublime wisdom is knowledge of God”; “War horses of God, charge, and with glad tidings of paradise!”; “ The battlefield is blazing”; “No two bucks would lock horns about this matter”; “A true believer will not be stung twice from the same hole”; “No one can offend except by his own hand”; “Hearing about something is not like close examination”; “The truly valiant person is he who conquers himself”; “My community has been blessed in their first-born.”

1503. “He who gives to drink should be the last to drink himself”;
“Intimate conversations presuppose confidentiality”; “If one mountain acted unjustly against another, the unjust one will be demolished”; “Start with your dependents”; “He died through his nose” which means he died suddenly without being ill or diseased or through any other prior cause of death; “My community will continue to flourish so long as they do not regard a safe deposit as booty and the alms tax as a fine”; “Put knowledge on record by writing it down”; “The best of wealth is a wakeful eye that takes care of an eye that is asleep”; “One Muslim is a mirror for another”; “May God have mercy on one who speaks well and gains thereby or remains silent and is safe”; “A man grows in strength through his brother”; “The upper hand [of giving] is better than the lower hand [of receiving]”; “Abandoning evil is like a charitable gift”; “The value of knowledge is superior to the value of worship”; “True wealth is self-sufficiency of spirit”; “Actions are judged by intentions”.

1504. “What disease is worse than miserliness?”; “Modesty is good in every respect”; “Horses have goodness tied to their forelocks”; “Happy is he who is admonished by another’s example”; “A believer’s oral promise is as binding as a promise made by striking the hand of another”; “Some poetry contains wisdom; some eloquence is magical”; “A king’s pardon guarantees lasting kingship”; “Have mercy on those who live on earth and you will be shown mercy by him who is in heaven”; “Deceit and treachery lead to hell”; “A person [in the hereafter] will keep company with one whom he loves, and will be rewarded according to his deeds”; “He who does not show mercy to our young, or show proper respect to our old, does not belong to our community”; “He whom one consults is bound to confidentiality”; “If a person is killed defending his property, he is counted as a martyr”; “A believer should not absent himself from his brother for more than three days”; “He who draws attention to an act of

virtue is like the one who does it”; “Remorse is a kind of repentance”;
“A child belongs to the bed where he was conceived and an adulterer is to
be stoned”; “Every act of charity is an almsgiving”; “He who does not
thank people does not thank God”; “Only the lost can shelter the lost ”;
“Your passion for something blinds you and makes you deaf”; “Travel is
something of a torture”.

1505. To the Ansar he said: “Your numbers decrease when there is profit
to be made and increase when there is fear”; “The Muslims must abide by
their promises except a promise that makes the illicit licit or the licit
illicit”; “A man has more right to sit in the middle of his own assembly
and on the back of his mount”; “People are mines, like mines of gold”;
“Injustice leads to the darkness of the Day of Resurrection”; “A greeting
is completed by a handshake”; “Hearts are prone to love those who show
them kindness”; “Mild reproof makes you free from stumbling”;
“Voluntary charity never decreases wealth”; “He who repents his sin is
like one who is sinless”; “The person present sees what the absent does
not”; “Take what rightfully belongs to you in modesty, whether in full or
not”; “Pay the laborer his wage before his sweat is dry”.

1506. “Those who do good in this life are those who do good in the
afterlife”; “Paradise is beneath the shadow of swords”; “He whose
neighbors fear his mischief is not a believer”; “Avoid the fires of hell
even by offering a slice from a date”; “Honor women by veiling them”;
“A kind word is like a voluntary almsgiving”; “No good comes from
keeping company with one who does not care for you as he cares for
himself”; “This world is the prison of the believer and the paradise of the
unbeliever”; “No honest merchant will experience poverty”; “Prayer is
the weapon of the believer”; “The mid-course is best”; “Be generous to a
guest”; “He who intercedes in a good cause will be praised or rewarded”;
“Faith is patience and liberality”; “The best among you is the most

learned”; “No man perishes if he consults another”; “No man becomes a dependent if he restricts his spending”; “No man is lost if he knows his true worth”; “The worst kind of blindness is blindness of the heart”; “Lying is antithetical to faith”; “What is scarce but sufficient is better than what is plentiful but harmful”; “He who praises has recompensed”; “Lack of modesty is unbelief”; “The true believers are easy-going and gentle”.

1507. “The worst kind of repentance is repentance on the Day of Resurrection”; “The worst of repentance is the one made at death’s door”; “Forgive the stumbling of noble men”; “Seek goodness among the handsome of face”; “This world is lovely and green, and God has made you to act in it so be careful how you act”; “Patiently awaiting relief from hardship is a form of worship”; “Poverty could almost be the equivalent of unbelief”; “Nothing remains of this world but calamity and civil strife”; “Every year you draw closer to decrepitude”; “Make your visits infrequent and affection for you will grow”; “Good health and free time are two gifts of grace which deceive many people ---or he said “all people”; “No one meets God except as a repentant. He who did good will say: ‘I wish I did more good’ and he who did otherwise will say: ‘I wish I had desisted’”. This last resembles his other saying: “Beware of procrastination, putting people off with promises, and letting people hope for too long, for this was the cause of the destruction of nations.”

1508. He also said: “He who deceives us is not of our number”. This saying can have several meanings. For instance, it can refer to someone who deceived the Muslims at a certain place or time, although it may refer to someone from the People of the Book or a hypocrite whose deceit he reported. It could also be interpreted as a rebuke or a warning against deceit in general. Other interpretations are also found, and God knows best. This is similar to another saying of his transmitted by Abu Mas`ud

al-Badri: “None will remain alive on the face of the earth after a hundred years.” This saying transmitted from the Prophet by Abu Mas`ud became widely known, and most people panicked. When `Ali heard of this he said: “Abu Mas`ud reported the saying accurately but misunderstood its meaning. What the Prophet meant to say was that no one who had seen the Prophet will remain alive once a hundred years have passed.”

1509. Al-Mas`udi said: Many ancient scholars and others whom we met have collected many of the Prophet’s sayings and recorded them in their books and specialized works. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Husain ibn Durayd* devoted a book to this subject called *Al-Mujtaba*, where he mentions a large number of the Prophet’s expressions, as was also done by Abu Ishaq al-Zajjaj al-Nahwi*, friend of Abu`l `Abbas al-Mubarrad*, Abu `Abdullah Niftawayh* and Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn Hamdan al-Mawsili, together with other scholars both ancient and modern. In this book, we merely cited what was ready to hand and worthy of mention in accordance with the need for it and its appropriate place in this work, though we have in our earlier books and works cited what needs to be known regarding this topic. Hence it would be redundant to repeat it here. God through his grace brings success and right guidance.

Chapter 75

An account of the caliphate of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq

1510. Al-Mas`udi said: The people paid homage to Abu Bakr in the covered porch of the clan of Banu Sa`ida ibn Ka`b ibn al-Khazraj al-Ansari, on Monday, i.e. the same day on which the Prophet died. Abu Bakr died on Tuesday, eight days before the end of Jumada II, in the year 13 of the Hijra [August 22, 634], aged sixty-three, reaching the same age as the Prophet. All accounts agree about this fact. Abu Bakr was born three years after the Year of the Elephant, so his rule lasted two years, three months and ten days. He was buried next to the Prophet with his

head lying on the Prophet's shoulder. This was reported by `A`isha. It has also been stated that his caliphate lasted two years, three months and twenty days. In what follows in this work, we shall mention in broad terms the events of the caliphs' days and the length of their reigns. Once we have given an account of the days of Umayyads and Abbasids, we will devote a chapter to a summary account of another history from the Hijra to the present, i.e. the year 332 [943-44], in the caliphate of al-Muttaqi Lillah or perhaps some later date where our work will end. We will include in it what the authors of almanacs of the stars have established as regards the number of years, months and days, and their disagreements with the dating of biographers, historians and others, since the disparity between the two groups is very evident. We shall depend in this regard on the authors of almanacs of the stars.

A mention of Abu Bakr's pedigree with a brief history and biography

1511. Abu Bakr's name was `Abdullah ibn `Uthman, who is Abu Quhafa ibn `Amir ibn `Amr ibn Ka`b ibn Sa`d ibn Taym ibn Murra ibn Ka`b. At Murra, he joins the Prophet's pedigree. His nickname is `Atiq (freed) because the Prophet brought him the glad tidings that he was freed from hellfire, hence the name `Atiq, which is the correct meaning. It has also been said that he was called `Atiq because of the beauty of his maternal line. He became caliph while his father was still alive.

1512. He was the most ascetic of men, and the most modest in his moral conduct, dress and food. As caliph, he dressed in a wrap and coarse outer garment. There came to him Arab leaders and nobles and Yemeni kings, all dressed in fine garments and striped Yemeni fabrics and embroidered raiments weighed down with gold and crowns. When they saw his dress, ascetic appearance, modesty and austerity, together with his dignity and the awe he inspired, they copied his style and took off their fine clothes. Among those who came to visit him from the kings of the Yemen was

Dhu al-Kila`, king of Himyar, accompanied by a thousand slaves, not counting the royal clan. When that king, with a crown on his head and dressed in the fine garments described above, saw Abu Bakr as above described, he took off his garments and adopted Abu Bakr's mode of dress to the point where he was once seen in a market of Medinah with a sheepskin on his shoulders. His clan was alarmed and said: "You have disgraced us in the eyes of the Emigrants*, Ansar and Arabs." He answered: "Do you wish me to be a tyrant in the Jahiliyya and a tyrant in Islam? No indeed. I swear to God that obedience to God can only be through modesty before him and an ascetic attitude in this ephemeral world." Kings and other delegations who came to see Abu Bakr adopted a humble and meek attitude after they had been high and mighty.

1513. Abu Bakr once heard that Abu Sufyan ibn Harb* had done something reprehensible, so he summoned him and began shouting at him, and all the while Abu Sufyan was flattering him and acting obsequiously. Abu Quhafa, by then a blind man, came by and heard Abu Bakr shouting, so asked his guide: "Who is my son shouting at?" "At Abu Sufyan," said the guide. He came up to Abu Bakr and said: "Are you really raising your voice at Abu Sufyan, O you who are freed by God from hell? Only yesterday he was the lord of Quraysh in the days of Jahiliyya. You have indeed overstepped your limit and station in life." Abu Bakr and the Emigrants and Ansar who were with him all smiled and Abu Bakr said: "Father, God has, through Islam, raised some people and abased others."

1514. No one has ever become caliph while his father was still living except Abu Bakr. The mother of Abu Bakr was Salma, known as "Mother of Goodness", the daughter of Sakhr ibn `Amir ibn Ka`b ibn Sa`d ibn Taym ibn Murra. The Arabs apostasized ten days after he became a caliph. He had three sons: `Abdullah, `Abd al-Rahman and

Muhammad. `Abdullah was present at the Battle of Ta'if with the Prophet and suffered some wounds. He survived into the caliphate of his father and died during it, leaving behind seven dinars. Abu Bakr thought this was excessive. He left no issue.

1515. `Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr was present with the polytheists in the Battle of Badr, then embraced Islam and became a good Muslim.

`Abd al-Rahman has a history, and left much issue, both nomad and settled, in the Hijaz near the road from Iraq, at a locality called al-Safiniyyat and al-Mash. Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr's mother was Asma' bint `Umays al-Khath`amiyya. From her descend the issue of Ja`far ibn Abi Talib. When Ja`far was martyred, he had fathered from her `Abdullah, `Awn and Muhammad, the sons of Ja`far. Muhammad and `Awn, the sons of Ja`far, were killed at the Battle of al-Taff with Husain ibn `Ali, leaving no issue. Ja`far ibn `Abdullah ibn Ja`far begat `Ali, Isma'il, Ishaq and Mu`awiya. Abu Bakr then married Asma' and begat Muhammad. `Ali ibn Abi Talib next married her and begat children who passed away without leaving issue.

1516. The mother of Asma', known as the "Old Lady from the clan of Jurash", had four daughters. This old lady had the most noble sons-in-law. Maimuna al-Hilaliyya was the wife of the Prophet. Umm al-Fadl was the wife of al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib. Salma was the wife of Hamza ibn `Abd al-Muttalib who begat a daughter from her. Asma' was the wife of the men we mentioned, i.e. Ja`far, Abu Bakr and `Ali. The issue from Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr are few. Thus, the mother of Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn `Abi Talib was Umm Farwa bint al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr al-Siddiq. Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr was called the "Hermit of Quraish" because of his devout and ascetic life. He was raised by `Ali ibn Abi Talib. We will revert later in this work to his death when we come to the history of Mu`awiya ibn

Abi Sufyan. Abu Quhafa died in the caliphate of `Umar, aged ninety-nine years, in year 13 of the Hijra [634-5], the year when `Umar ibn al-Khattab became caliph. It is also said that he died in year 14 of the Hijra [635].

1517. When Abu Bakr received homage on the Day of the Covered Porch and general homage was renewed on Tuesday, `Ali came out and said to him: “You have bypassed us, did not consult anyone and did not take our rights into consideration.” Abu Bakr replied: “Yes I did. but I was afraid of civil strife.” A long argument and dispute ensued in the Covered Porch between the Emigrants and the Ansar concerning leadership (*imama*) of the community. Sa`d ibn `Ubada* left that meeting without paying homage, headed to al-Sham and was killed there in the year 15 of the Hijra. This book is not the right place to relate how he was killed. No member of the Hashim clan paid homage to Abu Bakr until after the death of Fatima. When the Arabs apostasized, all except the people of the two holy mosques and the inhabitants of the land in between, together with some other Arabs, `Adiyy ibn Hatim came to Abu Bakr, leading the camels of voluntary almsgiving. About this, al-Harith ibn Malik al-Ta`i recited:

*We were true to our word, in a manner never witnessed before,
And `Adiyy ibn Hatim has covered us in glory.*

1518. The Jews had put poison in some of Abu Bakr’s food. Eating with him was al-Harith ibn Kalada, who became blind. The poison lasted for a year. Abu Bakr fell ill fifteen days before he died. On his death bed he said: “I regret nothing except three things I did which I wish I hadn’t done, three I did not do which I wish I had done, and three things I wish I had asked the Prophet about. The three things I did and wish I hadn’t done is I wish I had not searched the house of Fatima, about which he spoke at great length; I wish I had not burned al-Fuja’a* and either

released him quickly or killed him outright; and I wish on the Day of the Covered Porch of the Banu Sa`ida I had tossed the leadership around the neck of either of two men* so he would be leader and I become his aide. The three things I did not do which I wish I had done are: I wish the day al-Ash`ath ibn Qais was brought before me as a prisoner I had cut off his head for it seemed to me that there was no evil which he did not aid and abet; I wish I had sent off `Umar ibn al-Khattab to conquer the East, for then both my right and left hands would have been stretched forth in the cause of God. I wish when I prepared an army to face the Apostasy but turned back, I had stayed behind. If the Muslims were safe, then well and good but if not I would have been in the vanguard of the army or as an auxiliary to it----this is because Abu Bakr had marched out with the army until they reached one station from Medinah, a place called Dhu'l Qassa. The three things I wish I had asked the Prophet about were: I wish I had asked him who was to lead the community so that its rightful holder is not a subject of dispute; I wish I had asked him about the portion of inheritance to the paternal aunt and fraternal niece, for I still feel the need to know; and I wish I had asked him if the Ansar had a share in power in order to give it to them.”

1519. His daughters were: Asma' "of the two girdles"* who is the mother of `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair. She lived for a hundred years then went blind, and `A`isha wife of the Prophet. There is a dispute as to whether `Ali ibn Abi Talib paid homage to Abu Bakr. Some say he did so ten days after the death of Fatima and some seventy days after the death of the Prophet. Other versions state he did so three months, or six months, after her death and other dates also exist.

1520. When Abu Bakr sent his military commanders to al-Sham he instructed one of them, Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan, as follows, as he walked out to bid him farewell: "When you arrive at your field of operations,

promise people everything good, and if you promise, carry it out. Do not speak at great length to them for some speech will cause some other speech to be forgotten. Conduct yourself well and people will conduct themselves well towards you. If messengers from your enemy arrive to see you, receive them well for this would be your first act of goodness towards them. Do not detain them long so that they will leave you without knowing your strength. Prevent your people from talking to them and let it be only you who talks to them. Do not mix what you say in secret with what you say in public, for this would compromise your position of leadership. If you consult, give the facts accurately to whomever you consult and you will get good advice. Do not hold back anything from the person you consult because you will harm yourself. If you hear of some weakness in enemy ranks, keep it to yourself until you actually experience it, and keep the news from your army. Keep your watchmen on the alert, and inspect them suddenly and often by day and night. Be steadfast in battle, and do not show any cowardice or else the others with you will show cowardice.”

1521. We have omitted mention of many historical incidents in this book, seeking brevity and conciseness. For instance, there is the story about the Liar called al-`Ansi, and known as `Ayhala, and his affair in Yemen and San`a, and his prophesying and murder. There is also the report about Fairuz and other Persian-Arabs (*abna`*), the story of Tulaiha* and his prophesying, and of Sajah* bint al-Harith ibn Suwaid, or bint `Uqfan in some versions. Her nickname was Umm Sadir and it was about her that Qais ibn `Asim recited:

*Our prophet is now a female, around whom we gather,
While the prophets of other people are males.*

About her the poet recited:

May God lead astray the undertakings of the Tamim tribe,

As Sajah was led astray by her discourse.

1522. Claiming prophecy, Sajah first considered Musaylima* the Liar to be a false prophet, but later believed in his prophecy. Before claiming to be a prophetess she was a sort of soothsayer, and alleged that she followed the same path as Satih, Ibn Salama, al-Ma'mur al-Harithi, `Amr ibn Luhayy and other soothsayers. She went to see Musaylima and he slept with her. There is also the story of Musaylima the Liar, from the region of al-Yamama, and his war against Khalid ibn al-Walid*, and how Wahshi* and a man from al-Ansar killed him in the year 11 [632-3].

There is also the story of the Ansar and the Emigrants on the Day of the Covered Porch of the clan of Sa`ida and the words uttered by al-Hubab ibn al-Mundhir: "I am their much-rubbed and small rubbing post, and their propped up little palm tree! I swear to God, if you so wish, we will return things to where they were before."*

1523. Again, there is the story of Sa`d ibn `Ubada and what happened with Bashir ibn Sa`d, and how the Aws* clan abandoned the support of Sa`d fearing that the Khazraj* clan would win the leadership, and the reports about who paid or failed to pay homage, and what the Hashim clan said; there is also the story of the oasis of Fadak*, and the views of those who argue for the designation* of the imam as opposed to those who argue for popular choice*; the views of those who argue for the imamate of the second-best *(*al-mafdul*) and other opinions; the story of Fatima and her words and how, when visiting her father's grave, she quoted the verses of Safiyya bint `Abd al-Muttalib:

After you, certain things took place, certain secrets,

Which, had you witnessed, words and speeches would have been few,

To the end of that ode. We have omitted to mention these and other historical reports in this book since we have already mentioned them all

in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, making it unnecessary to repeat them here.

Chapter 76

An account of the caliphate of `Umar ibn al-Khattab

1524. Homage was now paid to `Umar ibn al-Khattab. In the year 23 [643-4] of the Hijra, he went out on pilgrimage and led the pilgrimage that year. When he arrived back in Medinah, he was assassinated by Fairuz Abu Lu'lu'a the servant of al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba*, on Wednesday, the 26th of Dhu'l Hijja, at the end of the year 23 [November 3, 644]. He thus ruled ten years, six months and four nights and was assassinated during morning prayers, aged sixty-three. He was buried alongside the Prophet and Abu Bakr, at the feet of the Prophet, and it is said that their graves are in a row: Abu Bakr next to the Prophet and `Umar next to Abu Bakr. During his caliphate, he performed the pilgrimage nine times. Following his murder, `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf* led the congregational prayers, and prayers were said over his body by Suhaib the Greek*. `Umar stipulated that his successor be chosen from among six people who constituted a consultative council: `Ali, `Uthman, Talha, al-Zubair, Sa`d and `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf. This council met three days after `Umar's death.

His pedigree and a summary account of his history and conduct

1525. His full name is `Umar ibn al-Khattab ibn Nufail ibn `Abd al-`Uzza ibn Riyah ibn `Abdullah ibn Qurt ibn Rizah ibn `Adiyy ibn Ka`b. At Ka`b his pedigree joins that of the Prophet. His mother was Hantama bint Hashim ibn al-Mughira ibn `Abdullah ibn `Umar ibn Makhzum. She was black. He was called the "Distinguisher" (*al-Faruq*) because he distinguished between (*farraqa*) truth and falsehood. His patronymic was Abu Hafs. He was the first to be called *Amir al-Mu'minin* (Commander of the Believers) and was called such by `Adiyy ibn Hatim, though other

names are mentioned, and God knows best. The first to greet him with this title was al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba. The first to mention him by this title on a mosque pulpit was Abu Musa al-Ash`ari*. He was also the first to address him as such in a letter, as follows: "To the servant of God, `Umar, Commander of the Believers, from Abu Musa al-Ash`ari". When `Umar read this he said: "I am indeed the servant of God, and my name is `Umar, and I am the Commander of the Believers, God be thanked!" He was a humble man, coarse in dress and fervent in executing the commands of God, and his governors imitated him in all his actions, manners and moral conduct. Everyone imitated him, whether or not they were in his presence. He would wear a woolen garment patched with leather or other material and wrap an outer garment around him and carry a water skin on his shoulder, but had a natural awe-inspiring bearing. He rode mostly on camels with his saddlebag tied with fibers, as did his governors, even though God had made them conquer so many lands and acquire so much wealth.

1526. Among his governors was a man called Sa`id ibn `Amir ibn Hidham. The people of the city of Homs complained about him and asked `Umar to dismiss him. `Umar prayed: "O Lord, do not disappoint me today in my intuitive perception of his character". He then asked the people of Homs: "What is your complaint against him?" They answered: "He only comes out to us when the day is well advanced." `Umar turned to him and said: "What do you say to that, O Sa`id?" He responded: "O Commander of the Believers, my wife has no servant, so I need to prepare my dough, sit and wait till it rises, then I bake my bread, perform my ablutions and only then go out to meet them." "So what is your complaint against him?" said `Umar. They answered: "He does not answer any call at night." Sa`id said: "I hate to mention this but I devote the entire night to my Lord and the daytime to them." "So what is your

complaint against him?” asked `Umar. They answered: “There is one day every month where he does not come out at all.” Sa`id said: “Yes, I have no servant, so I wash my garment then dry it and the night passes without my seeing them.” `Umar said: “I thank God for not disappointing my intuition regarding your character. People of Homs, take good care of your governor.” `Umar then sent him one thousand dinars and told him to use the money to help him out. His wife said to him: “God has made it unnecessary for you to serve us.” He said to her: “Should we not rather hand this money over to those who come and beg for it from us and are more in need of it than we are?” “Yes,” she answered. So he divided the money in purses then gave them to a person he trusted and said to him: “Give this purse to so-and-so, and that one to the orphan of that clan, and that one to the needy person of that other clan.” A very small sum remained which he handed to his wife and told her to spend it. He then went back to serving himself. His wife said: “Should we not spend this sum by purchasing a servant for us?” He answered: “A poor man is sure to call on you who will be more in need of it than you are.”

1527. Among his governors of al-Mada'in was Salman al-Farisi who wore wool, rode on a donkey, wore a sleeveless shirt, ate barley bread and was a devout and ascetic person. When on his death bed in al-Mada'in, Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas said to him: “Counsel me, O Abu `Abdullah.” Salman said: “Yes. Remember God when you undertake anything, your tongue when you pronounce judgment, and your hand when you take an oath.” Salman then began to weep so was asked: “O Abu `Abdullah, why are you crying?” He answered: “I once heard the Prophet say: ‘In the afterlife, there is a mountain pass which can only be crossed by those who are alone and in a hurry, and I see all these dark shadows [i.e. earthly possessions] around me.’” They looked but saw

nothing in his house except a small leather cup, a small water bag, a cooking pot and a vessel for ablutions.

1528. `Umar's governor of al-Sham was Abu `Ubaida ibn al-Jarrah. He would appear in public wearing coarse wool. When criticized for this and told: "You are here in al-Sham as the governor of the Commander of the Believers and commander of the army, and we are surrounded by enemies. So change your mode of dress and alter your general appearance." He responded: "I am not the sort of person who will change what I looked like in the days of the Prophet."

1529. Al-Waqidi stated in his book on the conquests of the lands that `Umar stood up in the mosque, praised and thanked God, called on people to go on jihad and urged them to do so, saying: "Here in the Hijaz is a place where you no longer ought to linger. God has promised you that you will conquer the lands of Kisra [Chosroes] and Caesar, so go forth into the land of Persia." Abu `Ubaid ibn Mas`ud stood up and said: "O Commander of the Believers, I shall be the first to volunteer." When he did so, others followed suit. `Umar was told: "Appoint as commander a man from the Emigrants or the Ansar." He answered: "I will only appoint to command them the first volunteer," and Abu `Ubaid was duly appointed commander. Another version of this incident goes as follows. `Umar was asked: "Are you to appoint a man of Tha'if* to lead the Emigrants and Ansar?" He answered: "He was the first to volunteer so I appointed him. I commanded him to take no decision without first consulting Maslama ibn Aslam ibn Harish and Salit ibn Qais, and informed him that they were veterans of the Battle of Badr*."

1530. Abu `Ubaid marched forth and met a Persian force led by a man called Jalinus, whom he defeated. Abu `Ubaid continued his march and crossed the Euphrates river. Some Persian gentry had built a bridge for him. Crossing the Euphrates, he ordered the bridge destroyed. Maslama

ibn Aslam said to him: "You're clearly a man who has no idea what he's doing and you're ignoring our advice. Your bad stratagem will cause the death of the Muslims who are with you. You have ordered a bridge to be destroyed and the Muslims will find no refuge in this desert and wilderness." Abu `Ubaid replied: "You there, step forward and fight, for what you see is foretold". Salit said to him: "The Arabs have never met such a Persian force before, nor do they have any experience of fighting them. Let them at least have a safe haven and a point of retreat in case they are defeated." Abu `Ubaid said: "By God I will not! Are you being a coward, O Salit?" Salit answered: "By God I am not a coward. I am more courageous than you, both in my person and my tribe. I simply gave you sound advice." As Abu `Ubaid crossed over and the two armies clashed and the fighting grew intense, the Arabs saw the elephants covered in stiff leather armor, a sight they had never seen before. So the Muslims were routed and more people drowned in the Euphrates than were killed by the sword. Abu `Ubaid had disobeyed Salit although `Umar had instructed him to take his advice and not to disobey him. Salit's view had been that Abu `Ubaid should not cross over but wait for the enemy to do so, and should not destroy the bridge, but Abu `Ubaid had disobeyed him. Salit said, among other things: "Were it not that I hate to break the chain of command, I would have led the army away, but I hear and obey, even though you are mistaken and `Umar associated me with you." Abu `Ubaid said to him: "Go forward, man, and fight!" Salit said: "I will do so." So they both stepped forward and both were killed. Abu `Ubaid that day had dismounted, after six thousand Persians had been killed. He approached the elephant with a spear in hand and struck it in its eye. The elephant stamped on Abu `Ubaid with its leg, the Muslims advanced and the Persian troops retreated. However, when `Abu `Ubaid was killed, the Muslim army was put to the sword. A man from Bakr ibn Wa'il stepped

forward and protected people as they repaired the bridge. They crossed back, among them al-Muthanna ibn Haritha, after four thousand Muslims had drowned or were killed.

1531. The commander of the Persian army in that battle was Jadhawayh. He carried the pennant of the Persians which had belonged to Afridun when the people revolted against al-Dahhak, a pennant known as *Darfash Kawiyān*. It was made of leopard skin and was twelve *dhira*'s long and eight wide, and stretched on long wooden beams. The Persians regarded it as a good omen and would bring it out in crises. We related the story of this pennant in the section on First Persians earlier in this work.

1532. When Abu `Ubaid al-Thaqafi was killed, `Umar and the Muslims were greatly distressed. So `Umar preached and urged people to jihad, commanding them to prepare to head once more to Iraq. `Umar camped at Sirar, intending to march there in person. He appointed Talha ibn `Ubaidullah to command the vanguard, al-Zubair ibn al-`Awwam the right wing and `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf the left wing. He then summoned the people and consulted them and they advised him to march forward. Turning to `Ali, he asked: "What do you think, O Abu'l Hasan? Should I march with the army or send it forward as an expedition?" `Ali answered: "Go forward in person for this would be more awesome and terrifying to the enemy." `Ali then left. `Umar next summoned al-`Abbas among a group of Quraish elders and consulted them. They said: "Stay behind and send someone else to command the army so that if the Muslims are defeated a remnant would be left behind." That group then left. The next to enter was `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf, whom `Umar then consulted and who said: "I sacrifice my father and mother for your sake! Stay behind and send someone else. If your army is defeated, it would not be as bad as being defeated yourself. If you are defeated or killed, the Muslims will revert to unbelief and will never again witness that there is

no god but God.” `Umar said: “Advise me as to whom I should appoint as commander.” `Abd al-Rahman answered: “Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas.” `Umar said: “I know he is a courageous man but I fear he has no experience in the conduct of war.” `Abd al-Rahman replied: “He is, as you say, a man of courage and has accompanied the Prophet, and fought at the Battle of Badr. Entrust him with this job and consult us as to your detailed instructions to him and he will not disobey your orders.” He then left.

1533. `Uthman ibn `Affan then entered and `Umar said to him: “O Abu `Abdullah, advise me. Should I march with the army or stay behind?”

`Uthman replied: “Stay behind, O Commander of the Believers. If some calamity befalls you I can’t be certain the Arabs will not renege and abandon Islam. But send the armies forth and let them coordinate their operations, and send as commander someone with experience and expertise in war.” “And who might that be?” asked `Umar. “`Ali ibn Abi Talib,” replied `Uthman. `Umar said: “Go and see him, talk to him and sound him out to see if he will quickly agree or not.”

1534. `Uthman left, met `Ali and raised the subject but `Ali utterly refused, so `Uthman went back to `Umar and told him. `Umar said: “Who else?” `Uthman said: “Sa`id ibn Zaid ibn `Amr ibn Nufail.” “He’s not the right person,” said `Umar. `Uthman said: “Then Talha ibn `Ubaidullah.” `Umar said: “Yes indeed, a man of courage, a swordsman and an archer but, I fear, with no knowledge of the conduct of war.” `Uthman said: “Who then will it be, O Commander of the Believers?” “Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas,” said `Umar. `Uthman replied: “Yes, he is the right person but he is absent and I failed to mention his name only because I said to myself that he is away and acting as governor.” `Umar said: “I intend to send for him and will write to him to march forward from wherever he is.” `Uthman said: “Order him to take advice from people experienced and knowledgeable in military matters and not to take any decision before

consulting them.” `Umar did so and wrote to Sa`d commanding him to proceed to Iraq.

1535. Jarir ibn `Abdullah al-Bajali had come to see `Umar, accompanied by a group from Bajila, so `Umar sent them to Iraq and promised them one quarter of whatever they conquered of the Sawad* and regular pay like the other Muslims. `Umar went out to bid them farewell. Jarir then marched to the district of al-Ubulla and thence ascended to the region of al-Madhar. News of Jarir’s arrival reached the Persian Marzuban of al-Madhar. His army included ten thousand knights; this was after the Battle of the Bridge and the death of Abu `Ubaid and Salit. The Bajila clan said to Jarir: “Cross the Tigris to al-Madhar.” Jarir replied: “This is not the right course of action and you ought to have learned your lesson from remembering what happened to your comrades in the Battle of the Bridge. But give them time. They have a large army. Wait until they cross to your side and when they do victory will be ours, God willing.” The Persians remained for some days in al-Madhar without crossing, but then began to cross. When about half their number had crossed, Jarir and those who moved quickly with him from Bajila charged them. The Persians stood their ground for a time, the Marzuban was killed, the other Persians were put to the sword, and the Muslims captured what the Persians had in their camp.

1536. Jarir then marched and joined forces with al-Muthanna ibn Haritha al-Shaibani in Nukhaila. Mihran approached with his armies but the Muslims refrained from crossing over to them. Mihran crossed and sought battle with the Muslims. The two sides met and both stood their ground until Mihran was killed by Jarir ibn `Abdullah al-Bajali and Hassan ibn al-Mundhir ibn Dirar al-Dabbi. Jarir struck him down and Hassan stabbed him, and Jarir acquired his belt and other armor. A dispute ensued between Jarir and Hassan as to who had killed Mihran.

Jarir had struck him after Hassan had stabbed him. Hassan recited some verses among which was the line:

*Did you not see how I furtively took the life of Mihran,
With a spear, sharply pointed, and with notches?*

1537. Biographers and historians disagree about Jarir and al-Muthanna. Some assert that Jarir commanded the army while others say that each commanded his own tribal contingents. When Mihran was killed, the Persians were greatly alarmed, and Shirzad marched with a major Persian army mobilized by Queen Buran while the Persian knights were led by Rustam. When the Muslims heard this, they retreated, with Jarir camping at Kazima, and al-Muthanna leading his troops composed of the tribe of Bakr ibn Wa'il and camping at Shiraf. This is a locality with many wells between Kufa and Zubala, three miles distant from the road station known as Waqisa. Al-Muthanna had received many body wounds during the Battle of the Bridge and died in Shiraf.

1538. When Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas received `Umar's letter, he marched and camped at Zubala as ordered by `Umar, then moved to Shiraf where he received contingents coming from al-Sham and elsewhere. He then marched and camped at al-`Udhaib, where he was on the border between the desert and the Sawad, near al-Qadisiyya. The two armies then met, with Rustam commanding the Persians. The Muslims numbered thirty-eight thousand and it is said that thirty thousand of them were on regular pay, while the polytheists were sixty thousand. Leading the Persian army were the elephants with their drivers. The troops then urged each other forward and Muslim heroes came out and commenced the fighting. They were met by their peers from among the brave Persian warriors, and blows and thrusts were exchanged. Among others that day, Ghalib ibn `Abdullah al-Asadi came out and recited:

She who comes to see an army,

*Exuding perfume and frankincense,
Knows full well that I am like poison to an enemy hero,
And one who brings relief in every terrible conflict.*

1539. Coming out to meet him was Hurmuz, one of the kings of al-Bab wa'l Abwab, who wore his crown. Ghalib took him prisoner and brought him to Sa`d, then turned round and quickly rejoined the pursuit. The fighting grew more intense and `Asim ibn `Amr came out, reciting:

*A white maiden, with yellow necklace,
Like silver covered in gold,
Knows full well that I am one,
Who relies on no pedigree.*

1540. A famous Persian knight came out to fight him and they circled each other. Then the Persian fled, so `Asim pursued him until he reached the Persian ranks and was lost to sight. He plunged so deep into their ranks that people gave him up for dead. He then emerged from the sides of their army's center, pushing before him a mule loaded with boxes emblazoned with beautiful implements, and brought this to Sa`d. The mule was ridden by a servant wearing a silk brocade garment cut from many cloths and a gold-threaded cap. It turned out that he was the king's baker, and the boxes contained fine royal foods such as sweetmeats and compacted honey. When Sa`d saw this he said: "Take all this to the troops stationed with `Asim, and tell them the commander has sent you this food, so eat it," and they did so.

1541. I found another version which holds that the Battle of al-Qadisiyya was in the month of Muharram in the year 14 [February/March, 635]. Sweeping down towards the clan of Bajila were seventeen elephants, each ridden by twenty men, and with the elephants covered in protective armor and twisted cord, and appareled in brocade and silk. The elephants were surrounded by infantry and horsemen. When Sa`d saw the chariots

and elephants heading towards Bajila, he ordered the Asad clan to go to their aid. Twenty elephants now headed to the Muslim center. Talha ibn Khuwailid al-Asadi rode out with the horsemen of the Asad clan and began to attack the elephants until they were forced to stop. The fighting grew very intense for the Asad clan, and five hundred of them died, not counting those who fell from other tribal contingents. This battle is known as the Battle of Aghwath. When morning came, Muslim horsemen were seen arriving from al-Sham, a continuous line of reinforcements whose spears hid the sun. Leading them was Hashim ibn `Utba ibn Abi Waqqas at the head of five thousand horsemen from the tribes of Rabi`a and Mudar, and a thousand from the Yemen. With them came al-Qa`qa` ibn `Amr. This was a month after the conquest of Damascus.

1542. `Umar had written to Abu `Ubaida to dispatch the contingents fighting with Khalid ibn al-Walid to Iraq but made no mention of Khalid. Abu `Ubaida was too attached to Khalid to let him go, so sent Khalid's men, led by Hashim ibn `Utba, as already mentioned. `Umar had held a grudge against Khalid since the days of Abu Bakr regarding certain incidents, such as the story of Malik ibn Nuwaira and other events. Khalid was the maternal cousin of `Umar. Al-Qa`qa` was in the forefront of the reinforcements, so the army in Qadisiyya became certain of victory, and their sufferings of the previous day with their dead and wounded vanished. Al-Qa`qa` rode out before the ranks and cried: "Anyone for single combat?" A prominent Persian hero rode out to meet him. "Who are you?" asked al-Qa`qa`. The Persian replied: "I am Bahman son of Jadhawayh." He was known as the "Masked One". Al-Qa`qa` then cried out: "Revenge for Abu `Ubaid and Salit and their comrades in the Battle of the Bridge!" The Masked One was the one who had killed them, as already mentioned. They circled each other and al-

Qa`qa` killed him. It is said that al-Qa`qa` on that day killed thirty warriors in thirty sallies, where in each sally he killed one man.

1543. The last to be killed by al-Qa`qa` was a great Persian hero called Buzurjmihir, regarding whom al-Qa`qa` that day recited:

I let him have it with a blow that convulses the soul,

Swooping down upon him like a sun-beam.

On the Day of Aghwath, that dead Persian

Brought upon his people the worst of ill omens,

In order to satisfy my comrades and myself.

That day, al-A`war ibn Qutba fought in single combat against Shahriyar of Sijistan and both were killed.

1544. Sa`d fell ill and remained behind in the fortress of al-`Udhaib. He sat on top of the fortress overlooking the two armies as they took up battle positions and, when night fell, the Muslim soldiers began to boast of the prowess of their respective tribes. When Sa`d heard this, he said to those with him on top of the fortress: "If the soldiers go on with their boasts, do not wake me, for this means that their morale is high against the enemy. If they fall silent, wake me because this would be an evil sign." The fighting grew intense during the night.

1545. Abu Mihjan al-Thaqafi had been held as a prisoner in the dungeon of the fortress. He heard the troops boasting about the prowess of ancestors and tribes, the clash of weapons and the intensity of the fighting, and was filled with sorrow for having missed the fighting.

Anxious to join the fray, he crawled up to Sa`d, asking for pardon and for his sentence to be revoked, and pleading to be released so that he could go out and fight. Sa`d rebuked him severely and ordered him returned to his dungeon. As he descended in tears, he saw Salma bint Khasafa, former wife of al-Muthanna ibn Haritha al-Shaibani, now wife of Sa`d after al-Muthanna's death. He said to her: "Daughter of Khasafa, would

you do me a favor?” She answered: “What might that be?” He said: “Remove my chains and lend me the mare called al-Balqa’, and I swear to God, if God spares my life, that I will come back to you and place my legs again in my chains.” Salma said: “What have I to do with this?” So Abu Mihjan went back, dragging his chains, and recited:

Enough sorrow it is for me to see horsemen with their spears,

While I am left behind, bound in chains.

I was a man of great wealth and property,

But am now abandoned, all alone and friendless.

If I stand up, my iron chains chafe,

And I am locked behind gates where no call can be heard.

Here is a vow to God, a vow I will not betray:

If I am released, I will never again visit wine shops.

1546. Salma said: “I asked God’s guidance, and I am satisfied with your vow.” So she freed him and said: “Go and fulfill your wish.” Abu Mihjan led out al-Balqa’, Sa`d’s mare, and brought her out from the fortress gate next to the moat, then mounted her and galloped until he came up to the Muslim right wing, where he cried out: “God is great!” then charged the enemy’s left wing, twirling his spear and arms between the two battle lines. He stopped the advance of their left wing and killed many of their great warriors and routed others. Both armies stared at him. As regards al-Balqa’, some say he rode upon it without a saddle, others that he had a saddle. He then dived into the ranks of the Muslims and emerged on their left wing and charged the right wing of the enemy, stopping their advance. He would flip and toss his spear and weapons and kill any knight who came out to fight him. So he stopped the enemy’s advance and was an object of fear to them.

1547. He turned back, disappeared into the Muslim center then reappeared in front, facing the enemy center. He performed the same

maneuver as before on the right and left wings, stopping the advance of the Persian center until he killed every Persian knight who came out to fight him. He thus waged war on behalf of all the Muslims. The people were amazed, saying: “Who is this knight whom we have not seen before in our ranks?” Some said: “He is a comrade who came from al-Sham in the contingent of Hashim ibn `Utba al-Mirqal.” Others said: “If al-Khudr* is currently fighting in this war it would be him. God has graciously lent him to us and he is an omen of victory over our enemy.” Yet others said: “Were it not that angels do not engage in war we would have said he was an angel!” Meanwhile, Abu Mihjan, like a ferocious lion, had slaughtered the enemy’s knights and passed among their corpses like a vulture.

1548. Prominent Muslim warriors who were present like `Amr ibn Ma`dika'rib, Talha ibn Khuwailid, al-Qa`qa` ibn `Amr, Hashim ibn `Utba al-Mirqal and other Arab daredevils and heroes would stare and be perplexed. Sa`d, observing the fray from atop the fortress, began to wonder and say to himself: “By God, if Abu Mihjan had not been imprisoned, I would have said this must be him and that mare must be al-Balqa’!” At midnight, the two armies separated, the Persians retreated and the Muslims turned back to reassume their normal preparedness and positions.

1549. Abu Mihjan then turned back, went into the fortress by the same route he had left it, and without anyone noticing, returned al-Balqa’ to where she was tied up, went into his prison cell, placed his legs inside the chains and recited the following in a loud voice:

*Thaqif [his tribe] knows well, and this is no empty boast,
That we are the most magnificent swordsmen,
The most fitted out in body armor,
The most steadfast when others recoil from fighting.*

*On the night of Qadis, they did not recognize me,
And I did not announce my appearance to the armies.
If I am to be imprisoned, that would be my calamity,
If set free, I will make them taste death.*

Salma asked him: “On what charge did the man imprison you?”---
meaning Sa`d. He answered: “I swear to God, it was not for any illicit
food that I ate or drank. But I was a wine drinker in the Jahiliyya and I
am a poet, so verses would crawl onto my tongue and I would describe
wine. I would feel relaxed and a delight in describing it and that’s why I
am imprisoned. These are the guilty verses:

*If I die, bury me next to a vine,
Whose roots would water my bones once I am dead.
Do not bury me in a wilderness for I fear that, once dead,
I might not taste it again.”*

These are verses from a longer ode.

1551. Harsh words had been exchanged between Salma and Sa`d which
made him angry with her for having mentioned al-Muthanna when spear
thrusts were being exchanged. She remained angry and not on speaking
terms with him on the eve of the Battle of Aghwath, the Night of al-Harir
and the Night of al-Sawad. When morning came, she went to see him,
begged his pardon and made it up with him. She then told him about her
story with Abu Mihjan. Sa`d summoned him, freed him and said: “Go,
for I shall not take you to task for anything you might say until you
actually do it.” Abu Mihjan replied: “Yes, indeed. I swear to God I will
never abet my tongue if it describes anything reprehensible.”

1552. The morning of the third day of the battle, called the Day of `Amas,
found the Muslims and Persians standing firm in their battle stations.
Between the two lines and along their length ran the Tigris, called the
“One-Eyed”, and the Euphrates. There were two thousand Muslim

casualties, wounded or dead, while the Persians suffered countless casualties. Sa`d addressed the army: “O people, whoever wishes may wash the dead martyrs and wounded and whoever wishes may bury the martyrs in their bloodied state”. The Muslims then picked up their dead and handed them to the rearguard where the women and young men would bury the martyrs and carry the wounded to the women who would treat their wounds.

1553. Between the site of the battle near al-Qadisiyya and al-`Udhaib there rose a palm tree. Whenever a wounded man who was still sound of mind was carried out and saw that palm tree---at that time there was no other palm tree but today there are plenty----he would tell the person carrying him: “I have drawn near to the Sawad, so let me rest beneath the shade of this palm tree.” He would then be rested beneath it. A wounded man called Bujair from the tribe of Tay’ was heard reciting, while near to death:

O palm tree between Qadis and al-`Udhaib,

May you be safe from harm,

And may no other palm tree be your neighbor.

1554. Another wounded man from the tribe of Taym Allah, resting beneath it, with his entrails spilling out of his belly, was heard reciting:

O palm tree of the wounded, O death coming near from the enemy,

May the rains water you, pouring in torrents.

Others were also heard, reciting other verses.

1555. When morning came, the morning preceding the Night of al-Harir, called the Night of al-Qadisiyya, as these battles were called, it found people restless, not having slept the entire night. The tribal chiefs encouraged their clans and the fighting became intense until noon. When midday arrived, the first to retreat were al-Hurmuzan and al-Birazan who fell back then stood their ground where they had reached. At midday, the

Persian center collapsed, a dust storm enveloped them and a high wind blew, carrying off the canopy above the throne of Rustam which fell into the `Atiq canal, the wind blowing from the west. The dust storm engulfed them and al-Qa`qa` and his warriors ended up at the throne, which they stumbled upon. When the canopy had been blown off, Rustam had stepped down and gone over to some mules that had arrived carrying money to him and were standing there. He took shelter under a mule and the load it was carrying. A man called Hilal ibn `Ullafa struck the load beneath which Rustam was hiding, severing the ropes which held the loads, one of which fell upon Rustam. Hilal meanwhile neither saw nor felt the presence of Rustam. The load fell and broke some vertebra in Rustam's back. Hilal struck him a blow and a scent of musk was diffused. Rustam then headed to the canal and threw himself into it but Hilal pursued him, dragged him out by his leg, pulled him into a ditch and struck him with his sword until he killed him. He then pulled his body over, threw it between the legs of the mules, ascended the throne and called out: "By the Lord of the Ka`ba, I have killed Rustam! Come to me! Come to me!"

1556. The people gathered around but did not feel or see the throne. They called to one another, the hearts of the polytheists grew weak and they fled, pursued by the sword. Some were drowned, others killed. Some thirty of them had tied themselves to each other with chains and ropes, and had taken a vow to the light and the fire temples that they would not move until they conquered or were killed. They knelt down and emptied before them their quivers, and all were killed. The killer of Rustam is a subject of dispute. Most hold that it was Hilal ibn `Ullafa from the tribe of Taym al-Rabab, as we mentioned. Some say his killer was a man from the Asad tribe, and this is why their poet, `Amr ibn Shas, recited that day the following verses from among many more:

We led our horses from near Naiq to Kisra, accompanied by knights.

We killed Rustam and his crowd in battle,

As our horses stirred the dust above them.

Where we met in battle, we left behind those

Who will always remain in place, unwilling to depart.

In that battle, Dirar ibn al-Khattab captured from the Persians the great pennant, mentioned earlier as being made of skins of leopards and known as *Darfash Kawiyān*. It was studded with rubies, pearls and various precious stones. He was given thirty thousand for it though it was worth a million and two hundred thousand. During that battle, some ten thousand Persians who surrounded that pennant were killed, not counting those who had chained themselves to one another.

1557. People past and present have differed as to the date of the Battles of al-Qadissiyya and al-`Udhaib. Many hold that these took place in the year 16 [637], this being the opinion of al-Waqidi who transmitted this from others. Some say they took place in the year 15 [636] and some in the year 14 [635]. Muhammad ibn Ishaq affirmed that they took place in the year 15. In the year 14, and in the month of Ramadan, `Umar ibn al-Khattab ordered that the prayers called *Tarawih**be instituted, and those who hold that the Battle of al-Qadisiyya took place in the year 14 use this order of `Umar as evidence, i.e. the letters sent by `Umar to the various cities instituting the *Tarawih*.

1558. Many scholars, among whom are al-Mada'ini* and others, state that `Umar dispatched `Utba ibn Ghazwan in the year 14 to Basra, who settled it and made it into a camp-city. Many biographers, however, assert that Basra was made into a camp-city in the month of Rabi` of the year 16 [April, 637]; that `Utba ibn Ghazwan went out to Basra from al-Mada'in once Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas had completed the campaigns of Jalula and Takrit; that `Utba came to Basra, which was then known as the "Land of

India” in which were white stones, and camped on the site of the later Khuraiba; that Sa`d made Kufa into a camp-city in the year 15; and that the site of Kufa was indicated to them by Ibn Buqaila al-Ghassani who said to Sa`d: “I will show you a piece of land which is higher than the plain but lower than the desert,” and pointed out to him where Kufa is located today.

1559. Al-Mas`udi said: `Umar would not allow any Persian to enter Medinah. Al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba wrote to him: “I have a servant who is a carpenter, a mason and a blacksmith and would be of use to the city’s inhabitants. Should you permit me to send him, I will do so.” `Umar gave permission. Al-Mughira paid him two *dirhams* a day. He was called Abu Lu’lu’a, a Magian from the city of Nihawand. He remained in Medinah for a period of time as ordained by the Almighty then came to `Umar to complain about the heavy tax he had to pay. `Umar asked him: “What is your profession?” He answered: “I am a mason, a carpenter and a blacksmith.” `Umar said: “Your tax is not that heavy given the work you do.” Abu Lu’lu’a departed discontented. One day, he passed by `Umar while seated. `Umar said: “Is it true what I am told about you that you said ‘If I wish, I could construct a mill that grinds with wind power?’” Abu Lu’lu’a answered: “By God, I shall construct a mill that people will talk about!” then walked away. `Umar said: “That servant has given me prior warning.”

1560. When Abu Lu’lu’a finally decided to carry out his design, he obtained a dagger which he hid in his clothes, then waited for `Umar in a corner of the mosque just before daybreak. `Umar was in the habit of going out at daybreak to wake people up for the prayers. Passing by Abu Lu’lu’a, the latter sprang up and stabbed him three times, one of which, below the navel, was fatal. He then stabbed twelve other men in the mosque, six of whom died, then cut his own throat with the dagger and

died. `Umar's son, `Abdullah, came to his father as he was about to die and said to him: "O Commander of the Believers, appoint a successor to rule over Muhammad's community. If the man shepherding your camels or sheep were to come to you and leave the camels and sheep without a shepherd you would reprimand him and say to him: 'How can you abandon your trust?' And what if the matter concerns the community of Muhammad, O Commander of the Believers? Appoint a successor."

`Umar answered: "If I appoint a successor I would be acting like Abu Bakr, and if I do not I would be acting like the Prophet." When his son heard these words he gave up.

1561. `Umar embraced Islam four years before the Hijra. His children were: `Abdullah, Hafsa, wife of the Prophet, `Ubaidullah, `Asim and Zaid from one mother, and Fatima and other daughters and `Abd al-Rahman the Younger, who was punished for drinking wine and nicknamed Abu Shamma, from another mother.

1562. `Abdullah ibn `Abbas stated that `Umar sent for him and said: "O Ibn `Abbas, the governor of Homs has died. He was a man of virtue and virtuous men are rare. I am confident that you are among them. I harbor within me something about you that I have not seen you do and yet fear for you. What do you say about assuming a governorship?" Ibn `Abbas answered: "I will not accept until you tell me what you harbor." `Umar said: "Why do you want to know this?" Ibn `Abbas said: "I want to know because if it is something I fear in myself, I would fear for it what you fear. If I am innocent of such, I would know I am not one of the guilty, so I would accept your governorship, for I have rarely seen you set your mind on some course of action without doing it quickly." `Umar said: "I fear that if I were to meet my inevitable end while you are a governor you would say 'Rally around us [i.e.our family] and do not rally around anyone else'. I saw the Prophet appointing people as governors but not

appointing any member of your family.” Ibn `Abbas responded: “You have spoken the truth, by God, and I observed this as you did. The Prophet acted precisely as you described.” `Umar continued: “By God, I do not know his reasons. Did he begrudge you public appointments, though you are worthy of assuming such posts, or did he fear that you would demand allegiance through your family connection to him and this would inevitably result in resentment and censure? I have now finished what I had to say to you, so what do you think?” Ibn `Abbas responded: “My view is that I will not accept this governorship.” “Why?” asked `Umar. Ibn `Abbas answered: “If I accept your appointment and you harbor in yourself what you have revealed, I will never cease to be a mote in your eye.” “So advise me,” said `Umar. Ibn `Abbas answered: “Choose someone who is the right person in your view and the right person for the job.”

1563. `Alqama ibn `Abdullah al-Muzani>Ma`qil ibn Yasir, who said: “`Umar consulted Hurmuzan as regards the regions of Faris, Isbahan and Adharbaijan and the latter said to him: ‘Isbahan is the head and Faris and Adharbaijan are the two wings. If you cut one of the wings the head will bear its burden with difficulty with the other wing. But if you cut off the head, the two wings will fall. Therefore, begin with the head.’ `Umar entered the mosque to find al-Nu`man ibn Muqarrin praying, so he sat next to him. When the latter finished his prayer, `Umar said: ‘I am resolved to appoint you.’ `Uthman said: ‘As a tax-collector? No. But as soldier.’ “So shall you be,” said `Umar. So he dispatched him, wrote to the people of Kufa to provide him with troops, and sent with him al-Zubair ibn al-`Awwam, `Amr ibn Ma`dikaib, Hudhaifa, Ibn `Umar and al-Ash`ath ibn Qais.

1564. “Al-Nu`man then sent al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba to the Persian king, called the “Two-Winged”. Al-Mughira crossed the river and came to

them. The Two-Winged was informed that the ambassador of the Arabs had arrived. Consulting his courtiers as to whether he should receive him in royal splendor or in a military bearing, he was advised to receive him in splendor. So he sat on his throne, placed the crown over his head, seated royal princes in two rows before him, all decked in golden earrings and bracelets and brocade, then ordered al-Mughira to be admitted. Al-Mughira wrapped his cloak under his armpits, was barefooted and carried his sword and spear. As he advanced he stabbed their carpets with his spear and tore them up making sure they saw him doing so, and in order to annoy them, until he arrived in the king's presence and began to converse with him, with a translator translating the conversation. The king said: 'You Arabs have suffered from drought. If you wish, we can supply you with provisions and you can return to your country.' Al-Mughira began by praising and thanking God then said: 'We Arabs were a humiliated nation whom others invaded but who invaded no one, and used to eat dogs and carrion, until the Almighty sent us a prophet of noble pedigree amongst us, and the most truthful of us all in discourse. He began his mission and told us about things that turned out to be as he had foretold. Among the things he promised us is that we will own and conquer all that is hereabouts. Around me here I see all sorts of fine things that the people behind me will not abandon until they possess them or die.'"

Al-Mughira then said to himself: 'Why don't I collect myself together then leap up and sit with this lout on his throne so that he would regard it as an ill omen?' He added: 'So I leapt up and landed right next to him on his throne. They kicked me and pulled me away so I said to them: 'We don't treat your ambassadors like this. If I did wrong or acted stupidly, I beg your pardon but ambassadors should not be treated thus.'"

said: 'If you wish we will cross to your side or if you wish you can cross to ours.' Al-Mughira responded: 'No, we will cross over to your side.'

1565. "So we crossed over to their side. Every five, six or seven of their soldiers would be chained together in order not to escape. As we crossed over and began to harass them they shot their arrows at us and we suffered many casualties.' Al-Mughira then said to al-Nu`man: 'The troops have suffered many dead and wounded so why don't we charge them?' Al-Nu`man answered: "You are a man of many accomplishments and you were present with the Prophet in his battles. If he did not fight in the morning, he would wait until the sun descended and the winds blew and victory would be his.' He added: 'I shall shake my pennant three times. When I shake it the first time, let each soldier answer the call of nature and perform his ablutions. When I shake it the second time, let each soldier fasten his sandals and buckle on his weapons. When I shake it the third time, charge and let no one be distracted by anyone else, even if al-Nu`man is killed. I offer up to God a prayer and I hold each one of you to a promise to which you should say 'Amen'.' He then prayed thus: 'O God, let al-Nu`man gain martyrdom today as we win victory over them.' The people said 'Amen'. Al-Nu`man then shook his pennant three times, hugged his shield and charged, as did his soldiers. He was the first to die."

1566. Ma`qil continued: "I passed by, remembered his injunction not to be distracted by him, and asked his pages to let me know where he fell, then we went on to slaughter the enemy. The "Two-Winged" fell from a gray mule he was riding and split his stomach, and God granted victory to the Muslims. I then came back to where al-Nu`man had fallen and found him at the point of death. I brought out a bowl of water and washed his face. 'Who is this?' he asked. 'Ma`qil ibn Yasar,' I replied. 'How did God deal with the Muslims?' he asked. 'He granted them victory,' I

replied. ‘God be greatly thanked. Write and inform `Umar.’ He then expired, and may God show him mercy. People then agreed to be led by al-Ash`ath ibn Qais. They sent word to the wife of al-Nu`man to ask if al-Nu`man had given her any oral instructions or had left something written with her. She replied that she had a pouch containing a written text. When they took it out, they found the following written instructions: ‘If al-Nu`man is killed then so-and-so is to command, and if he is killed then so-and-so.’ They followed these instructions and the Almighty granted the Muslims a great victory.”

1567. Al-Mas`udi said: This was the Battle of Nihawand. The Persians had assembled a vast army and the Muslims suffered many casualties, among them al-Nu`man ibn Muqarrin, `Amr ibn Ma`dikaarib and others. Their tombs can still be seen and are well known, lying at about one *farsakh* from Nihawand and between it and Dinawar. We described this battle in our earlier works.

1568. Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya* states: When `Amr ibn Ma`dikaarib came from Kufa to see `Umar, the latter asked him about Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas. `Amr praised him highly. He then asked him about arms and he answered him with what he knew of this subject. He then asked him about his tribe, Madhhij, and he responded: “Ask me which of their clans you wish to know about.” “Tell me about `Ula ibn Khalid,” asked `Umar. “They are the horsemen who protect our honor, the archers who hit our targets, the healers of our diseases. They are the most handsome amongst us, the most intelligent, the quickest to answer a call, the least likely to run away from battle. They are the people of weapons, of liberality and of spears.” `Umar asked: “What have you left for Sa`d al-`Ashira?” “They have the largest army, and are the most generous and the best of leaders.” “What have you left for Murad?” asked `Umar. “Their lands are the most extensive, they are the most urbanized and the most famous. They are

pious, virtuous, and perform honorable deeds.” “Tell me about the clan of Zabid,” said `Umar. “I am loath to say anything about them, but if you ask people they will tell you that they are the head and all others are the tail.” “Tell me about Tay’,” said `Umar. “They were singled out for generosity and are the most united of the Arabs.” “What have you to say about `Abs?” asked `Umar. “Great in size and the best of followers”.

“Tell me about Himyar,” said `Umar. “They followed green pastures and drank pure water.” “Tell me about Kinda,” said `Umar. “They ruled men and established their power in the land.” “Tell me about Hamdan,” said `Umar. “They are sons of the night and achieve their desires. They protect their neighbor, fulfill their pledges and exact revenge.” “Tell me about the Azd,” said `Umar. “They are the most ancient among us and the most extensive in territory.” “Tell me about al-Harith ibn Ka`b [Bilharith],” said `Umar. “They are the most courageous. You will meet death at the point of their spears.” “Tell me about Lakhm,” said `Umar. “They are the last of us to rule and the first to die out.” “Tell me about Judham,” said `Umar. “They are like a grey-haired old woman. They are eloquent and achieved certain things.” “Tell me about Ghassan,” said `Umar. “They were lords in the Jahiliyya and are stars in Islam.” “What of the Aws and the Khazraj?” asked `Umar. “They are the Ansar. Their home is the most honorable and they are the greatest defenders of neighbors. God has made it unnecessary for us to praise them since God says {And those who, before them, had settled in this town and embraced the faith}. “Tell me about Khuza`a,” said `Umar. “They are to be counted with Kinana. We have the same pedigree and they come to their aid.”

“Which Arabs would you least wish to meet in battle?” asked `Umar. “If from my own people, it would be Wada`a from Hamdan, Ghutaif from Murad, and Bilharith from Madhhij. If from Ma`add, it would be `Adiyy from Fazara, Murra from Dhubyan, Kilab from `Amir, Shaiban from

Bakr ibn Wa'il, Shaqq from `Abd al-Qais, and the Araqim from Tha`lab ibn Wa'il. Then if I raid with my horse the waters of Ma`add I would fear no one's anger provided I am not met by their two free men or two slaves." "Who are they?" asked `Umar. "The two free men are `Amir ibn al-Tufail and `Utaiba ibn al-Harith ibn Shihab al-Tamimi. The two slaves are `Antara al-`Absi and Sulaik 'of the wolves'".

1569. `Umar said: " O Abu Thawr, describe war to me." `Amr laughed and said: "You have in truth asked an expert! O Commander of the Believers, it is indeed bitter in taste once it begins in earnest. He who endures it becomes famous and he who cannot endure it is killed. A poet described it well in the following verses:

*War at first is like a young girl,
Appearing all decked in finery to every reckless man.
Once it heats up and its flames fan out,
It becomes like an old hag, friendless,
Grey-haired, hairless, unrecognizable,
Hateful to smell or kiss."*

`Umar then asked him about weapons and as he related what he knew about them and came to the sword, he said: "Ah, may your mother draw lots*to avoid being bereaved of you!" `Umar raised his whip and cried: "May your own mother draw lots to avoid her bereavement! By God, I am ready to cut your tongue!" `Amr said: "Excess of enthusiasm has abased me before you." He left `Umar's presence reciting:

Do you threaten me as if you are Dhu Ru`ayn,
When in the prime of life, or Dhu Nuwas?
How many a great king there was,
Glorious, tyrannical, cruel,
Whose people became extinct and he himself
Wandered from one people to another.*

Do not be deluded by your kingly power:

Every kingship will be humiliated following glory.

`Umar apologized to him and said: “I only did what I did in order for you to know that Islam is better and more exalted than the Jahiliyya.” `Umar then gave him precedence over the other delegations.

1570. Thereafter, `Umar became friendly with `Amr and asked him many questions about the wars of the Jahiliyya period. He once asked him: “O `Amr, did you ever flee in fright from any knight in the Jahiliyya period?” “Yes, by God,” he answered. “I never permitted myself to tell lies in the Jahiliyya, so how can I do so in Islam? I will tell you a story that I have never told to anyone before you. I once rode out with a sally of horsemen from the Zabid clan and headed towards the clan of Kinana, where we encountered a rich clan.” “How did you know they were rich?” asked `Umar. `Amr replied: “I saw feeding troughs for horses, cauldrons mounted on cobbles, red leather tents and much cattle and sheep.” `Amr added: “After we had seized captives from several tents, I swooped down on the largest tent and found a woman of great beauty on her bed. When she saw me and the other horses, she began to cry. ‘Why are you crying?’ I asked her. She answered: ‘By God, I do not cry in sorrow for myself but out of envy of my female cousins who are safe and I alone am suffering this calamity.’ I swear I believed she was telling the truth so I asked her: ‘Where then are they?’ She answered: ‘They are in this valley.’ Turning to my companions, I said: ‘Do nothing until I return.’ I spurred my horse on until I ascended a sandy hillock where I found a young man with reddish hair, long eyelashes, and a flat stomach mending his sandals, with his sword near to hand and his horse alongside. He rose, taking no notice of me, picked up his weapon and gazed at a high road. When he saw horsemen surrounding his tent, he turned towards me and charged, reciting:

*I say, now that she has given me her mouth,
And wrapped me, a virgin, in her cloak:
Today I shall possess whoever has possessed her.
I wonder who today has caused her misfortune.*

1571. "I in turn charged at him reciting:
*It was `Amr who brought about her misfortune,
And long-lasting death, with his horsemen.
He shall keep her in mind until,
When he comes to her, he shall possess her.*

As I charged on my mare, I found him more elusive than a male cat. He dodged then attacked, striking me with his sword and wounding me. Recovering from his blow, I charged again, but he dodged again, attacked me and knocked me down, then recovered all that we had captured. When I was once more mounted on my mare, he saw me and approached, reciting:

*I am `Ubaidullah, praiseworthy in conduct,
The best of all who walk on leg and foot.
He relieves his enemy from every illness.*

I charged him saying:

*I am the son of the man garlanded in the holy month of Rajab,
I am the son of the crowned man, slayer of heroes.
Whoso meets me in battle will perish, as did Iram,
And I leave him like meat on a spit.*

1572. "He once again, I swear, eluded me, then charged and struck me another blow, and uttered a loud scream. By God, O Commander of the Believers, I saw death staring me in the face, with nothing to stop it. A fear of him gripped me such as I had never feared anyone before. I said to him: 'Who are you, may your mother be bereaved of you? I swear no one has ever dared to face me except `Amir ibn al-Tufail, because of conceit,

and `Amr ibn Kulthum, because of his age and experience. So who are you?' He said: 'You tell me first who you are or I'll kill you.' I said: 'I am `Amr ibn Ma`dika'rib'. He said: 'I am Rabi`a ibn Mukaddam.' I said: 'I give you a choice between three courses of action: if you wish, we can fight with our swords until the weaker of us is killed; or else we can wrestle; or, finally, we can be at peace. You, my nephew, are still young and your clan will need you.' He replied: 'No, it's up to you. You choose.' I chose peace. He said: 'Throw your sword over here.' I did so. Then he said: 'Dismount from your horse'. I said: 'Nephew, you wounded me twice and I cannot dismount.' He would not leave me in peace until I dismounted. He took the horse's bridle in one hand and my hand in the other and dragged me back to his encampment until we came in view of the horsemen. When they saw me they spurred their horses in my direction so I called out: 'Wait! Wait!' They charged Rabi`a but I swear to God he attacked them like a lion until he split their ranks then came back to me and said: 'O `Amr, perhaps your friends want something other than what you want.' I swear they all fell silent, and no one dared to speak, being in awe of what they'd seen he had done. I said: 'O Rabi`a ibn Mukaddam, they only want what is good.' I called him by his name so that the others would recognize him. He turned to them and said: 'What do you want?' They answered: 'What do we want?! You wounded the knight of the Arabs and took his sword and horse.' He left and we left with him until he came to his woman who approached him laughing and wiped his face. He then ordered some camels to be slaughtered and housed us in his tents. When evening came, the shepherds returned leading horses belonging to Rabi`a the like of which I'd never seen before. When he saw me admiring them he asked: 'How do you find these horses?' I answered: 'I've never seen their like.' He said: 'If I had some of them I would not remain in this world except for a short while.' I

laughed but none of my friends said a word. We stayed with him for two days, then departed.””

1573. Some time later, `Amr ibn Ma`dikaṛib raided the Kinana clan with some brave warriors of his clan, and captured their properties, among them the wife of Rabi`a ibn Mukaddam. When news reached Rabi`a, who was not very far, he galloped in pursuit on a horse without a saddle, carrying a spear without a spear-head until he caught up with `Amr. Seeing `Amr, he said to him: “Give up the woman and all that you have captured.” `Amr took no notice of him. He repeated his words and again `Amr took no notice. He then said: “O `Amr, you either stand and fight me or I will stand and fight you.” `Amr stopped and said: “He who elects to exchange arrow shots with the tribe of Qarra does them justice.* Stand and face me, my nephew.” So Rabi`a stood his ground and `Amr charged him, reciting:

I am Abu Thawr, who restrains those quick to anger.

I am neither weak in judgment, nor stupid.

I attack the enemy when eyes turn red,

Or when men are gripped by fear of death.

There will you find me, tearing apart coats of mail.

When `Amr thought his spear-point had pierced him, it turned out he had merely grazed Rabi`a’s horse, the spear passing over the horse’s back.

`Amr then stood his ground and Rabi`a charged him, reciting:

I am the youth from Kinana. I do not boast.

How many a hero has seen me and was crushed!

1574. He struck `Amr’s head with his spear and said: “Take this, `Amr! Were it not that I hate to kill someone like you, I would have killed you.”

`Amr replied: “Only one of us will leave this place alive. Stand your ground!” Rabi`a did so and `Amr charged. When he thought his spear had pierced him, it turned out he had merely scraped his horse’s girth, the

spear passing over the horse's back. Rabi`a then charged and struck `Amr's head again, saying: "Take this once more, `Amr! Pardon can only be granted twice." Rabi`a's wife called out to him: "The spear head! And may your deed come from God!" Rabi`a pulled out a spear head from the store of his belt looking like a flame of fire, and fixed it to his spear. When `Amr saw this and recalled the blows he had suffered without a spear head, he said: "O Rabi`a, take back our booty." Rabi`a replied: "Leave it there and escape with your life." The Zabid clan said: "Are we to abandon our booty to this youngster?" `Amr said to them: "By God, I saw red death in the point of his spear and heard it click as it was being fixed to the shaft." The Zabid answered: "Let not the Arabs say that a contingent from Zabid, which included `Amr ibn Ma`dikarib, abandoned their booty to such a kid." `Amr said: "You are no match for him, and I have never seen his like." So they left, and Rabi`a recovered his wife and the booty, and returned to his people.

1575. Al-Mas`udi said: Numerous tales are told of `Umar, his journeys to Iraq and al-Sham in the Jahiliyya, his encounters with many kings, Arabs and non-Arabs, and also his conduct in Islam and his sound policies, the major events of his days, and the conquest of Egypt, al-Sham and Iraq as well as other regions. We dealt at length with all these histories in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In this book we merely mention in brief what we failed to mention in our earlier works. In God is success.

Chapter 77

An account of the caliphate of `Uthman ibn `Affan

1576. `Uthman was paid homage on Friday, the beginning of the month of Muharram, or else the last day of Dhu'l Hijja, in the year 23 [November 19 or 18, 643] . He was killed on the twelfth day of Dhu'l Hijja in the year 35 [June 11, 656], though other dates are also given

which we will mention later, but the month in any case was Dhu'l Hijja. His total reign lasted 12 years minus eighteen days. He was murdered aged eighty-two years and was buried in Medinah in a place called Hushsh Kawkab.

His pedigree and a summary account of his history and conduct

1577. His full name is `Uthman ibn `Affan ibn Abi'l `As ibn Umayya ibn `Abd Shams ibn `Abd Manaf. His patronymics were "Abu `Abdullah" and "Abu `Amr", though the first was the more common. His mother was Arwa bint Kuraiz ibn Rabi`a ibn Habib ibn `Abd Shams. His children were: `Abdullah the Elder and `Abdullah the Younger. Their mother was Ruqayya daughter of the Prophet; then Aban, Khalid, Sa`id, al-Walid, al-Mughira, `Abd al-Malik, Umm Aban, Umm Sa`id, Umm `Amr and `A`isha. `Abdullah the Elder was nicknamed "The Exquisite" for his beauty. He was a much-married and much-divorced man. Aban was leprous and cross-eyed, from whom Hadith scholars transmitted many Prophetic traditions. He was a governor of Mecca and other cities for the Umayyads. Sa`id was cross-eyed and a miser and was killed during the time of Mu`awiya. Al-Walid was a wine drinker, puerile and reckless in behavior. At the time of his father's murder, his face was drenched in perfume, he was drunk and wearing much-dyed garments. `Abdullah the Younger was aged seventy-six* when a rooster pecked his eye and killed him. `Abd al-Malik died young and left no issue.

1578. `Uthman was excessively generous, liberal, open-handed and a lavish spender on people near and far. His governors followed his example as also many of his contemporaries. He built up his house in Medinah, constructing it in stone and plaster, with its doors made of teak and juniper. He owned property, orchards and springs in Medinah. `Abdullah ibn `Utba mentioned that at the time `Uthman was killed, his treasurer held for him the sum of 150,000 dinars and one million dirhams,

while the value of his estates in Wadi al-Qura, Hunain and elsewhere was 100,000 dinars. He also owned a large number of horses and camels.

1579. In the days of `Uthman, a group of the Prophet's Companions (*Sahaba*) came to own houses and estates. Among them was al-Zubair ibn al-`Awwam who built his house in Basra, well known to the present day, which is the year 332 [943-44]. It is now a place where merchants, men of wealth and people who transport merchandise by sea and others, stay. He also built houses in Kufa, old Cairo and Alexandria. What we have mentioned regarding his houses and estates is a widely known fact until the present day. His wealth after his death amounted to 50,000 dinars, and he left behind a thousand horses and a thousand male and female slaves, as well as real estate in the above-mentioned cities.

1580. The same holds for Talha ibn `Ubaidullah al-Taimi, who built his house in Kufa in the quarter of Kunasa, currently known as the House of the Talhids. His daily income from Iraq was one thousand dinars, some say more, and from the region of Sharat more than what was mentioned. He built up his house in Medinah with plaster, brick and teak. `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awwf al-Zuhri also built and expanded his house. His stables held a hundred horses and he had one thousand camels and ten thousand sheep. Following his death, the revenue from his properties amounted to 84,000 dinars.

1581. Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas built his house in al-`Aqiq, elevating its height and expanding its area, and constructed galleries on its roof. Sa`id ibn al-Musayyab mentioned that when Zaid ibn Thabit* died he left behind gold and silver in heaps which could only be split with axes, in addition to wealth and estates valued at 100,000 dinars.

1582. Al-Miqdad built his house in Medinah in the place called al-Jurf, some miles from the city. He built galleries on its roof and plastered the house inside and out. Ya`la ibn Munya died leaving 500,000 dinars and

with many people indebted to him, in addition to real estate and other wealth valued at 300,000 dinars. This is a subject that would us take long to mention and describe, that is to say the wealth accumulated in the days of `Uthman. This was a far cry from the era of `Umar ibn al-Khattab, where righteous conduct was clear and apparent. For example, it is said that `Umar once went on pilgrimage and spent on his journey to Mecca and back the sum of sixteen dinars. To his son `Abdullah he remarked: “We spent far too much on this trip of ours.”

1583. In the year 21 [642], the people of Kufa complained about their governor Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas. `Umar dispatched Muhammad ibn Maslama al-Ansari, an ally of the clan of `Abd al-Ashhal. He burnt the gate of Sa`d’s mansion in Kufa while Sa`d was inside then investigated him in the mosques of Kufa, asking the people about Sa`d. Some praised him while others complained about him. So `Umar dismissed him and replaced him as governor of that frontier city with `Ammar ibn Yasir, with `Uthman ibn Hanif in charge of taxation and `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud in charge of the public treasury. `Umar ordered `Ammar to teach people the Qur’an and acquaint them with the commandments of the religion, and assigned one sheep a day to these officials. One side of the sheep with its parts would go to `Ammar and the other side was to be divided between `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud and `Uthman ibn Hanif. So how can one compare all these developments we described above under `Uthman with the days of `Umar? Where is `Umar in all of this?

1584. `Uthman’s uncle, al-Hakam ibn Abi’l `As, accompanied by his son Marwan and other members of the Umayyad family, came to see `Uthman. Al-Hakam had been banished by the Prophet who exiled him from Medinah and forbade him to come anywhere near him. `Uthman’s governors over the provinces were a gang who included such men as al-Walid ibn `Uqba ibn Abi Mu`ayt, governor of Kufa. He was a man whom

the Prophet named as a denizen of hell, as well as `Abdullah ibn Sa`d ibn Abi Sarh, governor of Egypt, Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufian, governor of al-Sham, and `Abdullah ibn `Amir, governor of Basra. He dismissed al-Walid ibn `Uqba from Kufa and appointed Sa`id ibn al-`As.

1585. It is said that the reason why al-Walid ibn `Uqba was dismissed and replaced by Sa`id was that al-Walid had spent the entire night and until the morning drinking wine with his drinking companions and singers. When the *muezzin* called for morning prayer, al-Walid came out with his undershirt wrapped around his shoulders. He went to the prayer niche at the morning prayers, led them in praying four *rak`as* then said: "Do you want me to increase them?" It is said that while bowing long in prayer he said: "Drink and give me to drink." Some who were praying behind him in the first row said: "What do you want to increase, may God not increase you in virtue? By God, the true wonder is him who sent you as our governor and commander!" The man who said this was `Attab ibn Ghailan al-Thaqafi. The people then pelted him with the pebbles on the mosque floor so he went into his palace muttering threats and quoting verses by Ta'abbata Sharran*:

*I cannot stay far from wine and a singing girl,
Nor will I be kept away from wine by burning rocks.
But I water my head with wine,
And walk through the assembly,
A tattered garment dragging behind me.*

On this subject al-Hutay'a* recited:

*Hutay'a will confess, when meeting his God,
That al-Walid is more deserving of forgiveness.
Once prayers ended, he called out, while drunk and insensible,
"Shall I increase the prayers?"
He would have lengthened prayers and, had they accepted,*

You would have joined odd to even prayers.

When you ran away, O al-Walid, they held back your reins;

Had they let go, you would still be running now.

1586. Al-Walid's conduct, depravity and constant wine drinking became widely known in Kufa. A group, including Abu Zainab ibn `Awf al-Azdi, Jundab ibn Zuhair al-Azdi and others, accosted him in the mosque and found him dead drunk and lying on a bed. They attempted to wake him up but he wouldn't wake, then vomited his wine on them. So they removed his ring from his finger and, departing at once to Medinah, they came to see `Uthman ibn `Affan and testified before him that al-Walid was a wine drinker. `Uthman asked: "How do you know he's a wine drinker?" They answered: "It is the same wine we used to drink in the Jahiliyya." They then removed his ring and gave it to him. He reprimanded them and pushed them in their chests, saying: "Get away from me!" They left, went to see `Ali and told him the story. `Ali came to `Uthman and said: "You dismissed the witnesses and annulled legal punishments." `Uthman asked him: "So what do you suggest?" `Ali replied: "I suggest you write and get your friend to come. If the two men give witness against him face to face and he does not defend himself with an acceptable excuse, you should administer the legal punishment."

1587. When al-Walid arrived, `Uthman summoned the two men who had testified against him, and he was unable to produce any defense. `Uthman threw the whip to `Ali who said to his son al-Hasan: "Stand up and administer the punishment ordered by God." Al-Hasan said: "Can someone here do this instead of me?" When `Ali saw how reluctant the people were to administer punishment, fearing `Uthman's anger because of the kinship between him and al-Walid, `Ali took the whip and approached him. As he drew near, al-Walid cursed him and said: "You tax-collector!" `Aqil ibn Abi Talib, who was present, said to al-Walid:

“Are you the one to talk, son of Ibn Abi Mu`ayt? You lout from the village of Saffuriyya”---this is a village between Acre and al-Lajun in the province of al-Urdunn and the district of Tiberias and it was said that his father was a Jew from that village. Al-Walid tried to wriggle out of `Ali’s way, but `Ali grabbed him by the hand, threw him to the ground and stood over him with the whip. `Uthman said: “You have no right to treat him thus.” `Ali answered: “Indeed worse! He has sinned and tried to evade God’s punishment.”

1588. The next governor of Kufa was Sa`id ibn al-`As. As he entered Kufa, he refused to mount the pulpit except after he had ordered it to be washed, saying: “Al-Walid was unclean and filthy.” As his days as governor of Kufa grew long, some of his conduct became clearly reprehensible. He kept back public wealth to himself and at one time said, or wrote to `Uthman in another version: “This Sawad is the exclusive property of Quraish.” Al-Ashtar, that is, Malik ibn al-Harith al-Nakha`i said to him: “Do you turn what God gave us as booty, beneath the shadow of our swords and the points of our spears, into an orchard for you and your clan?” He then left to see `Uthman, accompanied by seventy mounted Kufans. They mentioned Sa`id’s reprehensible conduct and asked `Uthman to dismiss him. Al-Ashtar and his group remained for several days in Medinah without receiving any news from `Uthman regarding Sa`id. Their stay in Medinah grew long and `Uthman’s governors began arriving from the various cities, including `Abdullah ibn Sa`d ibn Abi Sarh from Egypt, Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan from al-Sham, `Abdullah ibn `Amir from Basra and Sa`id ibn al-`As from Kufa.

1589. The Kufan group remained in Medinah for many days and `Uthman would not permit them to return to their city, reluctant to return Sa`id to Kufa, and equally reluctant to dismiss him. This situation lasted until the populations of the camp cities wrote to him complaining about

the interruptions in collecting taxes and the precarious position of the frontier posts. So `Uthman gathered the governors together and asked for their advice. Mu`awiya answered: "My province is quite satisfied with me." `Abdullah ibn `Amir ibn Kuraiz said: "Let him [Sa`id] manage his affairs to your satisfaction and I will manage mine to your satisfaction." `Abdullah ibn Sa`d ibn Abi Sarh said: "It is no big thing if a governor is dismissed at the instigation of the population and another is appointed in his place." Sa`id ibn al-`As said: "If you dismiss me it would be the people of Kufa who appoint and dismiss governors. They have now gathered in circles in the mosque and all they are up to is idle talk and gossip. Get them to go on military expeditions so that the main concern of each man becomes how to amass booty on the back of his mount." `Amr ibn al-`As heard these words and went out to the mosque to find Talha and al-Zubair sitting in a corner of it. They said: "Come and join us." He did so and they asked him: "What news?" "Very bad news," he answered. "He [`Uthman] has left nothing reprehensible without commanding it to be done." Al-Ashtar then came and they told him: "Your governor whom you thundered against has been restored to you and has ordered that you be prepared to be sent on military expeditions, and commanded this and that." Al-Ashtar replied: "By God, we used to complain of his conduct and did not get up and make speeches, so how will it be now that we have made all these speeches? I swear to God, had it not been that I have exhausted my finances and worn out my energy, I would have preceded him to Kufa and prevented him from entering it." Talha and al-Zubair said to him: "We can supply you with what you need for your journey." He answered: "Then lend me a hundred thousand dirhams."

1590. Each then lent him fifty thousand which he split among his companions. He then headed to Kufa, arrived before Sa`id, ascended the

pulpit with his sword hung around his neck which he did not remove, then said: "Greetings. Your governor whose transgressions and evil conduct you found shameful has been restored to you, and has ordered that you be made ready to go on military expeditions. So give me a solemn pledge that he will not be allowed to enter the city." Ten thousand Kufans gave him that pledge. He then rode out in disguise, heading in the direction of Medinah or Mecca, and found Sa`id in al-Waqisa. He told him the news and Sa`id turned back to Medinah. Al-Ashtar wrote to `Uthman: "We swear to God we did not prevent your governor from entering Kufa because we intend to undermine your authority but because of his evil conduct and the severe punishments he inflicts. So send us any other governor you please." `Uthman wrote back: "Find out who was your governor in the days of `Umar ibn al-Khattab and let him be your governor." They discovered that this was Abu Musa al-Ash`ari, and so made him their governor.

1591. In the year 35 [655-6], the complaints against `Uthman increased and the accusations against him became frequent as a result of actions people claimed he'd committed. There was for instance the episode with him and `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud for the sake of which the tribe of Hudhail turned against `Uthman; then again, there was the violence meted out to `Ammar ibn Yasir for the sake of which the clan of Bani Makhzum turned against `Uthman; then there was the incident of al-Walid ibn `Uqba in the mosque of Kufa. This is how it happened. Al-Walid was in the mosque of Kufa when he heard from some Jewish inhabitants of a village in the Kufan countryside, near the Babil bridge, called Zurara, that a Jew practiced certain types of magic, delusions and sleights of hand, known as batruni. He summoned the Jew to the mosque who showed al-Walid a kind of hallucinatory trick whereby he made him see at night a great Yemeni hero riding a horse in the courtyard of the mosque. The Jew

then turned himself into a she camel walking on a rope. He then showed him the image of a donkey which entered into his mouth and left from his backside. He then struck a man on his neck, severing his head from his body, then passed the sword over him and the whole man rose up once more.

1592. A number of Kufans were present, including Jundab ibn Ka`b al-Azdi, who began to say: "God protect me from the works of the devil and from anything that distances me from the All-Merciful!" He realized that this was a type of magic and hallucination, so he drew his sword and struck the Jew a blow which severed his head from his body and quoted the Qur'anic verse: "{The truth has come and falsehood has vanished for falsehood is bound to vanish}". It is also said that this incident took place in daytime and that a soldier went out to the market, came to a sword-seller, took a sword, went back into the mosque and struck the Jew's neck, saying: "If you are truthful, restore yourself to life!" Al-Walid found his act objectionable and wanted to kill him in retaliation for the murdered Jew but the Azd [his tribe] prevented him. So he imprisoned Jundab and intended to kill him by stealth. The jailer observed him at his prayers all night and until the morning and said to him: "Go ahead and escape." Jundab said: "But you will be killed in my place." The other replied: "This would not be such a great act of devotion to God and of protecting one of his truly pious worshippers." When morning came, al-Walid summoned the prisoner, intending to kill him, but could not find him. He asked the jailer who told him that Jundab had escaped, so he ordered the jailer's head to be struck off and his body to be mounted on a cross in the Kunasa quarter.

1593. Among `Uthman's other acts was what he did to Abu Dharr.* The latter was present at his council one day when `Uthman said: "What is your view of a person who paid the alms-tax on his wealth: does someone

else have a right to it?" Ka`b answered: "No, O Commander of the Believers." Abu Dharr pushed Ka`b in the chest and said: "You lie, son of a Jew!" He then recited a Qur`anic verse: {Piety does not consist in turning your faces towards east or west} to the end of the verse. `Uthman then asked: "Do you think it is permissible for me to take some money from the public treasury and spend it on issues that might arise from time to time, and to give it to you?" Ka`b said: "Nothing's wrong with that." Abu Dharr raised his cane and pushed it into Ka`b chest saying: "Son of a Jew, what made you so bold as to pronounce on a point of law of our religion?" `Uthman said to Abu Dharr: "You have annoyed me a great deal! Get out of my sight for you have truly offended me."

1594. Abu Dharr departed for al-Sham. Mu`awiya, the governor, wrote to `Uthman: "Abu Dharr is attracting great crowds and I can't be sure he will not turn people against you. If you need these people, I will send him back to you." `Uthman ordered Mu`awiya to send him back. He had him mounted on a camel, on a dried up saddle with five Slav soldiers driving it on, until, when they reached Medinah, the insides of his thighs were flayed and he almost died. He was told: "You will die of this," and replied: "Little do you know! I shall not die until I am sent into exile." He proceeded to give a summary account of what was to happen to him in future and who will undertake to bury him. `Uthman treated him kindly for a few days in his house. He was then taken into `Uthman's presence where he knelt down and spoke of various things, including a report about the children of Abi'l `As* and how, when they reach thirty in number, they would turn the believers into their slaves. He related the entire report at length and spoke about many other things.

1595. That day, the money left behind by `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf al-Zuhri was brought to `Uthman. The heaps of money were scattered and so large that they hid `Uthman from the man in charge of it. `Uthman

said: "I hope `Abd al-Rahman will meet with a good end in the hereafter for he used to give alms and be generous to guests, and he has left what you see before you." Ka`b al-Ahbar said: "You have spoken the truth, O Commander of the Believers." Abu Dharr, ignoring his own pain, raised his cane and struck the head of Ka`b, saying: "You son of a Jew, you speak of a man who died leaving all this wealth, and that God gave him the best of this world and the next, and you affirm this of God? I once heard the Prophet say: 'I will not be happy if I die leaving behind what is one *qirat** in weight.'" `Uthman said to Abu Dharr: "Be gone!" Abu Dharr said: "Should I go to Mecca?" "No, by God," answered `Uthman. "So you would prevent me from going to the House of my Lord where I can worship him until I die?" "Yes, by God!" answered `Uthman. "Shall I go to al-Sham?" "No, by God!" answered `Uthman. "What about Basra?" "No, by God, so choose some other region," said `Uthman. Abu Dharr said: "I will not choose other than what I mentioned. Had you left me where I had settled before, I would not have desired any other place. So you choose where to send me." `Uthman said: "I shall send you to al-Rabadha." Abu Dharr exclaimed: "God is great! The Prophet has spoken the truth! He foretold everything that will happen to me." "So what did he tell you?" asked `Uthman. "He told me I will be prevented from going to Mecca or Medinah, that I shall die in al-Rabadha and that I will be buried by some travellers travelling from Iraq to Hijaz."

1596. Abu Dharr then called for his camel to be brought forward and made his wife ---some say his daughter---mount on it. `Uthman ordered people to avoid his company until he reaches al-Rabadha. As he left Medinah, with Marwan ibn al-Hakam leading him out of it, they were met by `Ali ibn Abi Talib, his two sons al-Hasan and al-Husain, `Abdullah ibn Ja`far and `Ammar ibn Yasir. Marwan objected saying: "O `Ali, the Commander of the Believers forbade people from accompanying

Abu Dharr to bid him farewell. If you have not heard this order, I am telling it to you now.” `Ali raised his whip and struck Marwan’s she-camel between the ears, saying: “Move away, may God move you to hell!” `Ali then accompanied Abu Dharr, bade him farewell and returned. When `Ali was about to leave him, Abu Dharr wept and said: “God have mercy on you, members of the House of the Prophet. When I see you, O Abu’l Hasan, and see your sons, I am reminded of the Prophet.”

1597. Marwan complained to `Uthman regarding `Ali’s action and `Uthman said: “O Muslims, who will excuse me and not blame me if I deal harshly with `Ali? He prevented my messenger from carrying out his instructions and did this and that. By God, we shall give him what is his due!” When `Ali returned, people met him and said: “The Commander of the Believers is angry with you for going out to bid Abu Dharr farewell.” `Ali answered: “Like the anger of horses with their reins!”* He then left. In the evening, he went to see `Uthman who said to him: “Why did you behave thus with Marwan and why did you presume to challenge my authority and turn away my messenger?” `Ali replied: “Where Marwan is concerned, he faced me and tried to turn me back so I prevented him from doing so. As regards your orders, I did not contravene them.” `Uthman said: “Did you not hear my instructions forbidding people from accompanying Abu Dharr to bid him farewell?” `Ali answered: “Are we to obey your every single command if we find that obedience to God and the right course of action impels us to disobey it? By God, we shall not!” `Uthman said: “Allow Marwan to retaliate.” “How should he retaliate against me?” asked `Ali. “You struck his she camel between the ears and you cursed him, so he will curse you and strike your she camel between the ears.” `Ali said: “Here is my she camel and he can strike her if he wishes as I struck his. As for cursing me, I swear if he does so I will counter with cursing you in such a way that I will not be telling a lie and

will be speaking only the truth.” `Uthman said: “Why shouldn’t he curse you back if you have cursed him? I swear you are not better than him in my estimation.” `Ali became angry and said: “Do you really mean what you say and equate me with Marwan? By God, I am better than you, my father is better than your father, and my mother is better than your mother! Here are my arrows that I have strewn, so go ahead and strew yours!” `Uthman was enraged and his face reddened, so stood up and entered his house and `Ali departed. Around `Ali gathered his family and a group of Emigrants and Ansar. The following day, people came to see `Uthman who complained to them about `Ali and said: “He denounces me and supports those who denounce me”, meaning Abu Dharr and `Ammar. People then intervened and made peace between the two men and `Ali said: “By God, I only intended to please God when I went out to bid farewell to Abu Dharr.”

1598. When `Uthman received general homage, `Ammar was told about the words uttered by Abu Sufyan* Sakhr ibn Harb in `Uthman’s house shortly after the homage. `Uthman had entered his house accompanied by the Umayyad family. Abu Sufyan, by that time a blind man, asked: “Is there anyone among you who is not an Umayyad?” When he was told that there was not, he said: “O Umayyads, catch this [power] as you would catch a ball. By him whom Abu Sufyan swears*, I have always wanted this to come to you and to descend to your sons through inheritance!” `Uthman scolded him and was annoyed by his words. Abu Sufyan’s words reached the Emigrants and Ansar together with other words that were uttered, so `Ammar ibn Yasir stood up in the mosque and said: “O Quraish, if you continue to allow supreme power to bypass the family of your Prophet, through one pretext after another, I cannot be sure that God will not divest power from you and place it with some

others, just as you yourselves divested it from its rightful owners and placed it where it does not belong by right.”

1599. Al-Miqdad stood up and said: “I have never witnessed an injustice like the one meted out to the family of the Prophet after his death.” `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf said to him: “What has this to do with you, Miqdad?” Miqdad replied: “By God, I love them because of the Prophet’s love for them. They have right on their side, O `Abd al-Rahman. I am truly amazed at Quraish since their claim for supremacy derives from the Prophet’s family. And yet they have agreed to wrest the authority that belonged to the Prophet from their hands. I swear to God, O `Abd al-Rahman, if I could find people to support me, I would fight the Quraish as I fought them with the Prophet at the Battle of Badr!” Many words were exchanged on that occasion all of which we reported in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman* where we recounted the events surrounding the Consultative Council set up by `Umar and the later murder of `Uthman.

1600. In the year 35 [655-6], Malik ibn al-Harith al-Nakh`i set out from Kufa with two hundred men. With him came a hundred men of Basra led by Hukaim ibn Jabala al-`Abdi. From Egypt came six hundred men led by `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Udais al-Balawi. Al Waqidi and other historians state that al-Balawi was one of those who paid homage under the tree.* Others also set out from Egypt like `Amr ibn al-Hamiq al-Khuza`i and Sudan ibn Humran al-Tajibi, accompanied by Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr. This latter had spoken out in Egypt against `Uthman, turning people against him for reasons too long to relate here but mainly on account of Marwan ibn al-Hakam. They camped at a place known as Dhu Khushub.

1601. When `Uthman learned of their arrival, he sent for `Ali ibn Abi Talib, told him the news and asked him to go and see them, and to give them firm assurances that all their demands for justice and virtuous conduct would be met. `Ali set out to see them and, following lengthy

discussions, they acceded to what he asked of them and departed. Arriving at a place called Hisma, they saw a rider on a camel approaching from Medinah. They looked closely and discovered he was Warsh, a servant of `Uthman. They interrogated him and he confessed, producing a letter addressed to Ibn Abi Sarh, governor of Egypt, which read as follows: "When the army returns, cut off so-and-so's hand, kill so-and-so and do this or that to so-and-so." The letter mentioned most members of the army and gave specific orders regarding each. The people recognized Marwan's handwriting so turned back to Medinah and reached an agreement with the Iraqi contingent. They all came to the mosque and spoke about what they had suffered at the hands of their governors.

1602. The rebels then went out, besieged `Uthman in his house and did not permit water to be carried to him. `Uthman appeared from on high and called out to the people: "Will no one give us water to drink?" He added: "Why do you find it permissible to shed my blood? For I have heard the Prophet say: 'The blood of a Muslim can only be shed in one of three cases: lapsing into unbelief after believing, adultery after marriage and killing someone not in revenge.' By God, I never committed any of these crimes, either in the Jahiliyya or in Islam." `Ali heard that he requested water so sent him three waterskins. When the waterskins reached him, a group of allies of the Hashim and Umayya clans came out, there was a loud clamor and much shouting, and they surrounded his house and demanded that he surrender Marwan to them, but `Uthman refused to hand him over. Among those surrounding the house were the clan of Zuhra for the sake of `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, who was its ally; the clan of Hudhail because `Abdullah belonged to it; the clan of Makhzum and its allies for the sake of `Ammar; the clan of Ghifar and its allies, for the sake of Abu Dharr; the clan of Taym ibn Murra who were with Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, and others too numerous to mention here.

1603. When `Ali saw that they were intent upon killing `Uthman, he sent his two sons al-Hasan and al-Husain along with his clients, all of them armed, to `Uthman's door to give him support, and ordered them to prevent the rebels from gaining access to him. Al-Zubair sent his son `Abdullah and Talha his son Muhammad, while most Companions followed their example and also sent their sons. They pushed the rebels back from the house. Arrows were then shot at the persons mentioned above, people became progressively more hostile, al-Hasan was wounded, Qanbar received a wound to the head and Muhammad ibn Talha was also wounded. The people, fearing that the Hashim and Umayya clans would descend to clan fanaticism, abandoned the fighting at the door.

1604. Some rebels then went to the house of a man from the Ansar and from there jumped onto the roof of `Uthman's house. Among those who came upon `Uthman were Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr and two other men. `Uthman's wife was with him while his family and clients were engaged in the fighting. Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr grabbed his beard and `Uthman said to him: "I swear, O Muhammad, if your father could see you now he would be shocked to find you here!" Muhammad's grip grew weak and he left the room and went into the house. The two men with him then went in, stabbed `Uthman and killed him. He had been reading the Qur'an. His wife rose up and screamed: "The Commander of the Believers has been killed!" Al-Hasan and al-Husain, together with the Umayyads who were with them and others, went in and found that he had breathed his last, and wept.

1605. The news of `Uthman's murder reached `Ali, Talha, al-Zubair, Sa'd and other Emigrants and Ansar, so they all pronounced the pious formula of *istirja`* [We belong to God and to God we shall return]. `Ali entered `Uthman's house like a man in excessive grief and said to his two

sons: "How could the Commander of the Believers be killed while you were standing at his door?" He slapped al-Hasan's face, hit al-Husain on his chest, and cursed Muhammad ibn Talha and `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair. Talha said to him: "Don't hit, O Abu'l Hasan, and don't curse! If he'd surrendered Marwan to them he would not have been killed." Marwan and other Umayyads escaped and were pursued to be killed but could not be found. `Ali said to `Uthman's wife Na'ila bint al-Farafisa: "Who killed him since you were with him?" She replied: "Two men entered upon him" then related the story of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr and how he came in and what `Uthman had said to him. `Ali summoned Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr who did not deny what she said, adding: "I swear I entered upon him intending to kill him but when he addressed these words to me I left, unaware of the two men behind me. By God, I had no reason to kill him, and he was killed without my knowing about it."

1606. The siege of `Uthman's house lasted forty-nine days, though some say more. He was murdered one night before the end of the month of Dhu'l Hijja. It is said that one of the two murderers was Kinana ibn Bishr al-Tujaibi, who hit him with a pole on his head while the other, Sudan ibn Humran al-Muradi, struck him with his sword on his shoulder vein and severed it. It is also said that `Amr ibn al-Hamiq al-Khuza'i stabbed him nine times with arrows. Among other murderers was `Umair ibn Dabi' al-Tamimi al-Burjumi, who twisted his sword inside his stomach.

1607. `Uthman was buried, as mentioned, in the place called Hushsh Kawkab, a place which holds the graves of the Umayyads and is also known as Hilla. Jubair ibn Mut'im, Hakim ibn Hizam and Abu Jahm ibn Hudhaifa prayed over his body. When `Uthman was being besieged, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari was leading the prayers but then refused to do so, so prayers were led by Sahl ibn Hunaif. On the Day of Immolation [10 Dhu'l Hijja] `Ali led the prayers. It is said that `Uthman was killed while

eighteen Umayyads were present with him in his house, including Marwan ibn al-Hakam.

1608. Regarding his death, his wife, Na'ila bint al-Farafisa, recited:

The best of all mankind after the first three,*

Is he who was killed by the Tujaibi, who came from Egypt.

How can I and my relatives not cry,

Now that they have deprived me from the goodness of Abu `Amr?

Hassan ibn Thabit* recited the following verses that had to do with those who let him down or were slow to aid him from among the Ansar and others, as well as those who aided and abetted his murderers---and God knows best what he meant by these verses:

The Ansar let him down when death came to him,

Though the Ansar were in charge of affairs.

Who can blame me if I reproach al-Zubair and Talha,

At such a momentous turn of events?

Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr was in charge of the affair,

And behind him was `Ammar.

These verses are from a long ode where he mentions other names and accuses them of conspiring to kill `Uthman and how they were happy with what was done to him.

1609. Hassan was a loyal member of the `Uthman party, to the exclusion of everyone else. `Uthman had been generous to him and it was Hassan who threatened the Ansar in the following verses:

You will soon hear in the land of the Ansar the cry:

“God is Great! Revenge for `Uthman!”

`Uthman would often recite at great length verses by Hassan which are not ascribed to anyone else, including:

The pleasures of what is forbidden, when tasted to the full, vanish,

And what is left is sin and disgrace.

*Evil results remain from the consequences of sin,
And no good can come from a pleasure followed by hellfire.*

1610. Al-Walid ibn `Uqba ibn Abi Mu`ayt was the half brother of
`Uthman on the mother's side. On the second night following the murder,
he was heard mourning him and reciting:

*O clan of Hashim, what was between us
Was like a crack in a rock, which no light could ever pass through.
O clan of Hashim, how can there be peace between us,
When the sword of the son of Arwa [`Uthman] and his property are with
you?*

*O clan of Hashim, return the weapons of your nephew[`Uthman],
And do not plunder him; plundering him is illicit.
You killed him by stealth in order to take his place,
As once the commanders of Kisra killed him by stealth.*

These are a few verses from a longer ode.

1611. Al-Fadl ibn `Abbas ibn `Utba ibn Abi Lahab answered al-Walid's
accusations against the Hashim clan and what he alleged they had done,
in the following verses:

*Do not ask us to return your sword. Your sword was lost,
And he who was holding it panicked and threw it away.
Ask the Egyptians about our nephew's weapons:
It was they who plundered his sword and his belongings.
The ruler after Muhammad should have been `Ali,
The Prophet's companion wherever he went.
This was so until God caused his religion to triumph,
But you were with the two most wretched among those who fought him.
You are a migrant from the people of Safwa',
And none of us likes you, so none can you reproach.
The All-Merciful has revealed that you are a sinner*,*

And you have no share in Islam which you can claim to own.

Al-Mas`udi said: Many historical reports are related about `Uthman and his virtuous conduct which we mentioned at length in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, including the major events of his days, the conquests and the wars against the Byzantines and others.

Chapter 78

An account of the caliphate of `Ali ibn Abi Talib

1612. The people paid homage to `Ali ibn Abi Talib on the same day in which `Uthman ibn `Affan was murdered. His caliphate until his martyrdom lasted four years, nine months and eight days or, in another version, four years and nine months minus one day. During his caliphate, as already mentioned, there occurred the split between him and Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan. `Ali was born in the Ka`ba. It is said that his caliphate lasted five years, three months and seven nights. He was martyred aged sixty-three, and lived after he was stabbed for two days, Friday and Saturday, and died on Sunday night. Other versions exist of his age at death. His place of burial is also disputed. Some say he was buried in the mosque of Kufa; others say his body was carried to Medinah where he was buried near Fatima's grave; still others allege that he was carried in a coffin mounted on a camel and that the camel lost its way and ended up in the territory of the tribe of Tai'. Yet other versions exist which we mentioned in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*.

An account of his genealogy and a summary of his history and conduct

1613. His full name is `Ali ibn Abi Talib ibn `Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim ibn `Abd Manaf. His patronymic was "Abu'l Hasan". His mother was Fatima bint Asad ibn Hashim ibn `Abd Manaf. Ever since the days of the Prophet and right until today, i.e. during the caliphate of al-Muttaqi, there has been no caliph named `Ali except him and the caliph al-Muktafi

Billah, who was `Ali ibn al-Mu`dadid. He was the first caliph begotten by two Hashimites. It is said that he received public homage four days after the murder of `Uthman, though we spoke above about the first homage. The personal name of his father, Abu Talib, is in dispute. Abu Talib begat four males and two females: Talib, `Aqil, Ja`far and `Ali and the two girls Fakhitah and Jumana, all from the same father and mother, their mother being Fatima bint Asad ibn Hashim. There were ten years between each of the sons, so there were ten years between the eldest, Talib, and `Aqil, ten between `Aqil and Ja`far, and ten between Ja`far and `Ali.

1614. The polytheists of Quraish forced Talib ibn Abi Talib to march out against his will to the Battle of Badr, to fight the Prophet. But he disappeared without a trace, and a few verses uttered by him on that day have been preserved:

*O God, now that they've set out, taking with them Talib,
In some troop of horsemen,
I pray that you bring them defeat, not victory,
And that they be the ones plundered, not the plunderers.*

1615. The husband of Fakhita bint Abi Talib was Hubaira ibn Abi Wahb ibn `Amr ibn `A`idh ibn `Imran ibn Makhzum. He died leaving her with a boy and a girl. She emigrated to Medinah while he died in Najran as a polytheist. About Fakhita, her husband Hubaira recited the following verses, among many more, in Najran:

Did Hind cause you unhappiness, or did your question to her return
unanswered?
Such is long travel, its ways and its permutations.
I was denied sleep, atop a lofty fortress in Najran,
With her shade passing by night before me, following sleep.
If you have followed the religion of Muhammad,
And all ties of kinship are cut between us...*

This is part of a longer poem. She was called Umm Hani’.

1616. When `Ali was caliph, he appointed her son Ja`da ibn Hubaira governor of Khurasan and Ja`da is the one who recited the following lines:

Should you ask, my father was from the Makhzum clan,

My mother from the Hashims, the best of all clans.

Who can boast to me of his maternal uncle,

When noble `Ali is my uncle, and `Aqil too?

1617. Abu Sufyan ibn al-Harith ibn `Abd al-Muttalib was the husband of Jumana bint Abi Talib. She was the first Hashim woman born to a Hashimite, as was mentioned by al-Zubair ibn Bakkar* in his book on the genealogies and history of Quraish. She emigrated to the Prophet in Medinah and died there in the lifetime of the Prophet.

1618. `Ali set out for Basra in the year 36 [656], which also witnessed the Battle of the Camel. This occurred on Thursday, the tenth of Jumada I, [November 4, 656] in which battle some thirteen thousand Basrans and others who followed the camel were killed, and five thousand supporters of `Ali were also killed. The number of the dead on both sides has been disputed, with some exaggerating the number and others minimizing it. The minimizers say there were seven thousand dead while the maximizers say there were ten thousand dead. These figures depend on the prejudices of people and their bias for either side. It was a single battle which took place on a single day. It is said that between the start of `Ali’s caliphate and the Battle of the Camel was a period five months and twenty days and between the battle and the Hijra thirty-five years, five months and ten days.

1619. Between the Battle of the Camel and `Ali’s entry into Kufa was a period of one month. Between that date and the Hijra was thirty-five years, six months and ten days. Between `Ali’s entry into Kufa and

meeting Mu`awiya in battle at Siffin was six months and thirteen days. Between Siffin and the Hijra was thirty-six years and thirteen days. In Siffin, the dead numbered seventy thousand: forty-five thousand from the people of al-Sham and twenty thousand Iraqis. The two armies were stationed in Siffin for a hundred and ten days. Twenty-five Companions on `Ali's side were killed, including `Ammar ibn Yasir Abu'l Yaqzan, known as Ibn Sumayya, who was ninety-three years old. There were ninety separate engagements between the people of al-Sham and Iraq. 1620. In the year 38 [658-9], the two arbitrators, `Amr ibn al-`As and Abu Musa al-Ash`ari, met in the region of al-Balqa' in the province of Damascus. Another version places their meeting in Dumat al-Jandal, some ten miles from Damascus. The story of what transpired between the two men is well known and we shall allude briefly to this topic later in this book although we have treated it at length in our earlier works. In that same year, the Kharijites*, known too as *al-Sharat*, i.e. those who sell their soul to God, proclaimed God as sole arbitrator. Among those present with `Ali at Siffin were eighty-seven people who were at the Battle of Badr, seventeen Emigrants and seventy Ansar. Of those who witnessed the "Homage under the Tree", known as the Homage of Assent, there were with him at Siffin nine hundred Emigrants and Ansar. The total number of Companions with `Ali was two thousand eight hundred.

1621. In the year 38 [658-9], there took place `Ali's war against the Kharijites at Nahrawan. Refusing to pay him homage were a group of the `Uthman party who insisted on rebelling against him. They included Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas, `Abdullah ibn `Umar----he later paid homage to Yazid and to al-Hajjaj on behalf of `Abd al-Malik---Qudama ibn Maz`un, Ughan ibn Saifi, `Abdullah ibn Salam, and al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba. Among the Ansar who remained uninvolved in the struggle were Ka`b

ibn Malik and Hassan ibn Thabit, both poets, Abu Sa`id al-Khudri, Muhammad ibn Maslama, ally of the Ashhal clan, Zaid ibn Thabit, Rafi` ibn Khudaij, al-Nu`man ibn Bashir, Fudala ibn `Ubaid, Ka`b ibn `Ujra, and Maslama ibn Makhlad, among others we have not mentioned of the `Uthman party among the Ansar and the Umayya clan and so forth. `Ali dispossessed a number of people of fiefs granted to them by `Uthman, and divided what was in the public treasury equally among people, preferring no person over another. Umm Habiba bint Abi Sufyan sent her brother Mu`awiya `Uthman's blood-stained shirt with al-Nu`man ibn Bashir al-Ansari.

1622. The homage paid to `Ali continued at Kufa and spread to other camp cities, but the quickest to pay him homage was Kufa. Receiving it on `Ali's behalf was Abu Musa al-Ash`ari when `Ali's supporters had grown greatly in number, though Abu Musa had been `Uthman's governor of Kufa. There also came to him some Umayyads who had refrained from paying him homage including Sa`id ibn al-`As, Marwan ibn al-Hakam and al-Walid ibn `Uqba ibn Abi Mu`ayt, and a long conversation ensued between them. Al-Walid said to `Ali: "We did not fail to pay you homage because we did not wish to, but because people were intent on harming us and we were in fear of our lives so our excuse is clear. As for me, you executed my father and administered a Qur'anic punishment to me." Sa`id ibn al-`As spoke at length and al-Walid said to `Ali: "As for Sa`id, you killed his father and insulted his grave. Regarding Marwan, you cursed his father and blamed `Uthman for attaching Marwan to himself."

1623. Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya stated that Hassan ibn Thabit, Ka`b ibn Malik and al-Nu`man ibn Bashir---that is, before he left with `Uthman's bloodied shirt*----came to see `Ali with other `Uthman party members. Ka`b said: "Commander of the Believers, he who forsakes his

sin is not a sinner, and the best expiation is one that is wiped out by an excuse.” Many words were exchanged, then Ka`b and all the others mentioned paid homage to `Ali.

1624. `Amr ibn al-`As had become displeased with `Uthman who in turn was displeased with him and had appointed another person as governor of Egypt instead of him. `Amr then settled in al-Sham. When news reached `Amr of what had happened to `Uthman and the homage paid to `Ali, he wrote to Mu`awiya to stir him to action and to demand revenge for `Uthman’s blood. His letter included the following: “What will you do if you are stripped of all that you own? Therefore, do what needs to be done.” Mu`awiya summoned him and when he arrived said to him: “Pay me homage.” `Amr replied: “No, by God. I will not sacrifice my religious faith unless I ask you for something from your worldly wealth.” “Ask,” said Mu`awiya. “Egypt as my fief,” `Amr replied. Mu`awiya agreed and wrote him a document to that effect. Concerning this matter, `Amr recited:

O Mu`awiya, I'll not surrender my religion

If I do not gain worldly wealth in return, so see what you want to do.

If you give me Egypt, you secure a winning deal,

By which you gain a wise man who does both harm and good.

1625. Al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba came to `Ali and said: “I owe you obedience and good advice. A sound strategy today will achieve what you desire tomorrow, while what is lost today will make you lose what is to come tomorrow. Keep Mu`awiya in his post as governor and Ibn `Amir in his, and keep all other governors in their posts. Once you obtain their obedience and that of the armies you can replace them or keep them where they are, at will.” `Ali replied: “Let me think about it.” Al-Mughira left, then returned the next day and said: “Yesterday I gave you a piece of advice which I have now followed up with another. The right advice is

for you to quickly dismiss them so you would know who obeys you and who doesn't and then deal with the situation accordingly." He then left `Ali and was met by Ibn `Abbas who was coming in as he was leaving. When Ibn `Abbas met `Ali he asked him: "I just saw al-Mughira leaving. What brought him to see you?" `Ali answered: "Yesterday his advice was one thing, today it's another." Ibn `Abbas said: "Yesterday he gave you sound advice. Today he deceived you." "So what do you suggest?" Ibn `Abbas replied: "The right course of action would have been for you to have left Medinah for Mecca when the man [`Uthman] was killed or just before. There, you would have gone into your house and closed the door. As the Arabs plunged into turmoil after your departure, they would have found no one else but you. Today, however, the Umayyads will pursue their revenge with cunning and will hold you partially responsible for his murder and make people suspect you." Al-Mughira said: "I gave him good advice but he rejected it so I deceived him." It is also reported that he said: "By God I never advised him before and will never advise him hereafter."

1626. Al-Mas`udi said: In another version of this episode I found the following version as narrated by Ibn `Abbas: "I arrived from Mecca five days after the murder of `Uthman and came to see `Ali but was told that al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba was with him. So I waited by the door for an hour, then al-Mughira came out, greeted me and asked: 'When did you arrive?' 'Just now,' I replied. I then entered to see `Ali, greeted him and he asked me: 'Where did you find al-Zubair and Talha?' 'In al-Nawasif,' I replied. 'Who was with them?' he asked. 'Abu Sa`id ibn al-Harith ibn Hisham with a group from Quraish,' I replied. `Ali said: 'They will soon come out clamouring for revenge for `Uthman's blood and God knows it was they who killed him.' I said: 'Tell me about al-Mughira and why he was closeted with you.' `Ali said: 'He came to see me two days after the

murder of `Uthman and asked me to grant him a private audience so I did. He said: ‘Advice is cheap and you are the last of the original generation. I mean to give you good advice, and I advise you not to dismiss `Uthman’s governors this year. Write and confirm them in their posts and once they pay you homage and you are well established you can dismiss whomever you want and confirm whomever you want. I [`Ali] said to him that I do not compromise my religious convictions and I do not practice hypocrisy in my dealings.’ Al-Mughira said: ‘If you refuse, then dismiss whomever you want but leave Mu`awiya where he is. He is a bold man and well obeyed by the people of al-Sham. You have a good excuse to keep him, for `Umar had appointed him to govern the whole of al-Sham.’ I said to him I will not keep Mu`awiya for even a couple of days! So he left me having given me one advice then came back and said: ‘I advised you but you rejected my advice. I then thought some more and found that you are right and that you should not conduct your affairs by cheating and treachery.’”

1627. Ibn `Abbas added: “I said to him that al-Mughira’s first advice was the right one but he cheated you with his second advice. I too advise you to confirm Mu`awiya in his post and if he pays you homage, I guarantee that I will personally eject him from his own house.” `Ali answered: “By God, there is nothing between him and me except the sword.” He then quoted a line of verse:

*It is not a death if I die not tainted with disgrace,
When calamity destroys the soul.*

I said: “O Commander of the Believers, you are a courageous man but have you not heard the Prophet say that ‘War is trickery?’” ‘Yes,’ he replied. I said; ‘If you’ll allow me, I will take away what they have gained and will leave them looking at the consequences of events without knowing how they began, but without any loss to you or any aspersions

cast in your direction.’ He replied: ‘O Ibn `Abbas, I am not some nameless character to you or to Mu`awiya as regards anything you might advise me to do. If I reject your advice, you must still obey me.’ I replied: ‘I shall do so. Obeying you is the easiest thing for me to do.’”

Chapter 79

An account of the Battle of the Camel, how it began and the fighting therein, and matters relevant thereto

1628. Talha and al-Zubair entered Mecca, after having obtained `Ali’s permission to perform the lesser pilgrimage. He had said to them: “Could it be that you intend to head towards al-Sham or Basra?” They swore they were heading only to Mecca. `A’isha was also in Mecca. Meanwhile, `Abdullah ibn `Amir, `Uthman’s governor of Basra, had fled the city when Jariya ibn Qudama al-Sa`di took the oath of homage in Basra on behalf of `Ali and when `Uthman ibn Hunaif al-Ansari was heading to Basra as `Ali’s official in charge of taxation. `Uthman’s governor of the Yemen, Ya`la ibn Munabbih, had also left Yemen and had come to Mecca where he met `A’isha, Talha, al-Zubair, and Marwan ibn al-Hakam, along with other Umayyad clan members. He was among those who urged revenge for the blood of `Uthman, and he gave `A’isha, Talha and al-Zubair four hundred thousand dirhams, horses and weapons, and sent `A’isha the camel known as `Askar, which he had bought in Yemen for two hundred dinars. The group intended to head to al-Sham but `Abdullah ibn `Amir dissuaded them saying: “Mu`awiya will not be led by you, nor will he deal fairly with you. But head instead to Basra where I have a large number of followers.” He provided them with one million dirhams, a hundred camels and other supplies, so the group marched to Basra, being six hundred in number. At night they reached a spring belonging to the Kilab tribe known as Haw’ab, where a group of the Kilab were camped. The tribe’s dogs barked at the caravan and `A’isha

asked: “What is the name of this place?” When her camel driver told her it was called Haw’ab, she pronounced the pious formula of *istirja`* [We belong to God and to God we shall return], remembered what she’d been told about that place*, and said: “Take me back to the sanctum of the Prophet of God. I have no desire to proceed.” Al-Zubair said to her: “For God’s sake, what is this Haw’ab? He was mistaken in what he told you!” Talha was in the rear of the caravan so he caught up with her and swore by God that that place was not Haw’ab. Fifty others in the caravan swore the same oath, and that was the first perjury committed in Islam. 1629. So they arrived in Basra. `Uthman ibn Hunaif came out to meet them, barred their way and fighting ensued, but then agreed to a truce to last until `Ali arrived. One night, they came upon `Uthman by stealth, took him prisoner, beat him and plucked his beard. But they then changed their mind, fearing for their relatives left behind in Medinah from his brother Sahl ibn Hunaif and the other Ansar. So they released him and intended to take over the public treasury but were prevented from doing so by the treasurer and the Sindi guards. Seventy of them were killed, apart from the wounded, and fifty out of the seventy were executed in cold blood after having been taken prisoner. These were the first persons to be executed unjustly and in cold blood in Islam. They also killed Hukaim ibn Jabala al-`Abdi, a chieftain of the tribe of `Abd al-Qais and an ascetic of the Rabi`a tribe. Talha and al-Zubair vied with one another to lead the people in prayers, then agreed that `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair would lead them one day and Muhammad ibn Talha the next. There was a lengthy discussion between the two men before they agreed on what was described above.

1630. `Ali set out from Medinah four months later---though some mention a different time---with seven hundred horsemen including four hundred Emigrants and Ansar, of whom seventy had been at the Battle of

Badr and the rest were Companions of the Prophet. He had left Sahl ibn Hunaif al-Ansari in charge of Medinah. Arriving in al-Rabadha between Mecca and Kufa on the main highway, he missed encountering Talha and his companions whom he had intended to pursue. Having missed them, `Ali headed to Iraq after them. Following `Ali were a group of the Ansar of Medinah including Khuzaima ibn Thabit, the man whose “testimony equaled that of two men”. From Tayy’ came six hundred mounted men to join him. From al-Rabadha, `Ali wrote to Abu Musa al-Ash`ari asking him to mobilize people but Abu Musa discouraged them from doing so, claiming this was a civil war. When `Ali heard this, he appointed Qaraza ibn Ka`b al-Ansari as governor of Kufa and wrote as follows to Abu Musa: “You are hereby dismissed from your post, you son of a weaver, disgraced and banished! This is not the first time we have dealt with you, and you have committed many a misdeed against us.” `Ali then marched with his troops and camped at Dhi Qar, sending his son al-Hasan and `Ammar ibn Yasir to Kufa to urge people to join the fight. The two of them left Kufa with some seven thousand---some say six thousand--- and five hundred and sixty Kufans, including al-Ashtar, while `Ali arrived in Basra and sent messages to his opponents appealing for peace, but they insisted on fighting him.

1631. It was related from Abu Khalifa ibn al-Hubab al-Jumahi>Ibn `A`isha>Ma`n ibn `Isa>al-Mundhir ibn al-Jarud that al-Mundhir said: “When `Ali entered Basra, he came in from the direction of al-Taff and arrived at the Zawiya. I went out to see him and saw him arriving in a procession of about a thousand horsemen led by a knight mounted on a gray mare, with a cap on his head and dressed in white, and carrying a sword and a pennant. Most of their contingent had white and yellow headdresses and were heavily clad in armor and weapons. I asked who the leading knight was and was told he was Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, the

Prophet's Companion, and that the rest were the Ansar and others.

Another knight followed wearing a yellow turban and white clothes, a sword hanging by his side and shouldering a bow, carrying a pennant and riding on a sorrel mare, leading about a thousand men. I asked who he was and was told he was Khuzaima ibn Thabit al-Ansari whose "testimony equaled that of two men." Another knight passed on a bay mare wearing a yellow turban beneath which was a white cap and dressed in a white tunic with a sword hanging by his side and shouldering a bow, leading about a thousand horsemen and carrying a pennant. I asked who he was and was told he was Abu Qatada ibn Rab`i. Then another knight passed by on a gray mare wearing white clothes and a black turban which he let down between his hands and behind him. He was very dark in color and had great dignity and poise. He was declaiming the Qur'an in a loud voice and with a sword hanging by his side and shouldering a bow, carrying a white pennant and leading about a thousand people wearing diverse headdresses, and surrounded by old and young men as though standing before the Day of Judgment, with the marks of prostration on their foreheads. I asked who he was and was told he was `Ammar ibn Yasir with a number of Emigrants and Ansar and their children. Then another knight passed by on a gray mare wearing white clothes, a white cap and a yellow turban with a sword hanging by his side and shouldering a bow, his legs touching the ground and leading about a thousand people, most of whose headdresses were yellow and white, and carrying a yellow pennant. I asked who he was and was told he was Qais ibn Sa`d ibn `Ubada al-Ansari with a group of the Ansar and their children and others from the Qahtan tribe. Then another knight passed by on a mare with a blaze on its forehead and more splendid than any we had seen before. He wore white clothes and a black turban which he let down between his hands and behind him and tied with a strip of cloth. I asked who he was

and was told he was `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas with his attendants and companions and some of the Prophet's Companions. He was followed by another procession led by a knight who looked more like the ancient heroes. I asked who he was and was told he was Qutham ibn al-`Abbas or Ma`bad ibn al-`Abbas. Thereafter, processions with pennants passed by, the one overtaking the other, and with spears held aloft, all intermingled. This was followed by a procession which included a large number of people with their weapons and armor and carrying diverse pennants, led by a knight carrying a large pennant and looking as if he was "broken then put together" (Ibn `A`isha says that this is a description of a man with very strong arms who looks more down than up, and the Arabs use that expression about such a person). The procession passed in great silence, as if birds were perched on their heads. To right and left of that knight were two young and handsome youths and in front was a third youth like them. I asked who these were and was told that the man was `Ali ibn Abi Talib, the two youths to either side were al-Hasan and al-Husain, and the person in front carrying the great pennant was Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, while those marching behind were `Abdullah ibn Ja`far ibn Abi Talib, the sons of `Aqil and other youths from the Hashim clan while the other venerable characters were the veterans of the Battle of Badr from among the Emigrants and the Ansar." 1632. `Ali marched until he camped at a place called al-Zawiya where he prayed four *rak`as*, rubbed his cheeks with dust, mixing this with his tears, then raised his hands in prayer, calling out: "O God, Lord of the heavens and what they overshadow, of the earth and what it carries, Lord of the great throne! This is Basra. I ask You that it be good to me and seek refuge with You from its evil. O Lord, let our residence in it be the best of residences, for You are the best of those who provide residence. O God, these people have rebelled against me, revoked their obedience to

me and disowned the homage they paid to me. O Lord, spare the blood of Muslims!” He then sent them messengers appealing to them not to shed blood and asked them: “Why are you fighting me?” They insisted on war. He then sent them a man from among his companions called Muslim with a copy of the Qur’an, calling them to God but they shot him with an arrow and killed him, and his dead body was carried back to `Ali. The mother of Muslim recited:

O Lord, Muslim went to them, reciting the Book of God, and not fearing them,

But they daubed their beards with his blood,

While his mother stood and watched.

1633. `Ali then ordered his troops to line up against them and not to be the first to commence the fighting, not to shoot a single arrow at them, nor strike them with the sword or stab them with a spear. This lasted until `Abdullah ibn Budail ibn Warqa’ al-Khuza`i came forth from the right wing carrying a dead brother and some came from the left wing carrying a man killed by an arrow. `Ali said: “O God, I call on You to witness! Forgive these people.” `Ammar ibn Yasir then came forth and stood between the battle lines and said: “O people, you did not act in good faith towards your Prophet when you kept your own wives in their women’s quarters and brought out the Prophet’s wife [i.e. `A’isha], exposing her to the clash of swords.” `A’isha was then riding on a camel in a *hawdah* made of wooden planks and covered with coarse fabrics and cow skins, beneath which was felt, the whole covered with shields. `Ammar came up close to her and called out: “What are you calling for?” “Revenge for the blood of `Uthman,” she answered. He replied: “May God this day destroy the rebel and the one who pursues an unjust cause!” He added: “O people, you know full well who amongst us is being a hypocrite about `Uthman’s murder.” As they shot arrows at him he recited:

*From you comes weeping, from you sounds of mourning,
From you the winds, from you the rain.*

*It was you who ordered the caliph's death,
And his murderer, in our view, is he who gave the order.*

1634. Showers of arrows kept falling on him so he stirred his horse, moved his position, came to `Ali and said: "What are you waiting for, O Commander of the Believers, when these people have nothing to offer but war?" `Ali then stood up, and in a loud voice addressed his troops as follows: "O people, if you defeat them, do not finish off a wounded man, do not kill a prisoner, do not pursue someone fleeing or someone turning his back in retreat, do not expose any private parts, do not mutilate a dead person, do not uncover or disgrace what is hidden, do not confiscate any of their property except what you find in their camp such as armor, horses, or male and female slaves. All else is an inheritance to be inherited by their heirs in accordance with the Book of God." `Ali himself then went out unarmed, mounted on the Prophet's she-mule, and called out: "O Zubair, come out to me." Al-Zubair came out fully armed. This was told to `A'isha who remarked: "What sadness awaits you, O Asma'!" [wife of al-Zubair]. When told that `Ali was unarmed, she calmed down. `Ali and al-Zubair then hugged and `Ali said to him: "Woe to you, Zubair! What made you rebel?" "The blood of `Uthman," he answered. `Ali said: "May God destroy whichever of us is more responsible for shedding his blood! Do you not remember the day I met the Prophet at the clan of Bayada while he was riding an ass and how he smiled at me and I at him while you were with him, and you said: 'Prophet of God, `Ali never abandons his sense of fun' and how he said to you: 'There is no fun in him'; and how he asked you: 'Do you love him, O Zubair?' and how you said: 'Yes by God I do'; and how he then said to you: 'I swear to God you will fight him and be unjust to him.'" At which point al-

Zubair said: “I seek God’s forgiveness! Had I remembered that incident I would not have come out in rebellion.” `Ali said: “Go back, Zubair.” He answered: “But how can I retreat now that matters have reached this point? That, I swear, would be a disgrace that cannot be wiped away.”

`Ali said: “Go back in disgrace, O Zubair, before you join disgrace to hell fire!” So al-Zubair turned back and recited:

*I chose disgrace instead of a flaming fire,
Which no creature made of mud can withstand.*

`Ali reminded me of something I do not deny, saying:

“Shame on you, I swear, in this world and in the next.”

*I said: “Stop blaming me, Abu’l Hasan,
Some of what you said will suffice me.”*

1635. Al-Zubair’s son, `Abdullah, said to him: “Where are you going, leaving us behind?” He answered: “My son, `Ali reminded me of an incident I had forgotten.” He answered: “No by God, but rather you were terrified of the swords of the clan of `Abd al-Muttalib for they are long and sharp and carried by stalwart youths.” He said: “No, by God. I remembered something that time had made me forget and chose disgrace over hellfire. Are you accusing me of cowardice, you bastard?” He then removed the tip from his spear and charged `Ali’s right wing. `Ali said: “Let him pass through, for they have roused his anger.” He turned, then charged the left wing, then turned and charged the center, then went back to his son and said: “Is this the act of a coward?” He then left the battlefield, riding until he reached Wadi al-Siba` where al-Ahnaf ibn Qais along with his tribe, the Tamim, was not taking sides in that war.

Someone came to al-Ahnaf and told him that al-Zubair was passing through. He said: “What am I to do with al-Zubair who brought together two great armies to fight each other, while he himself is heading home in safety?” Al-Zubair was overtaken by a group from the Tamim with `Amr

ibn Jurmuz in the lead and found al-Zubair dismounted and at his prayers. `Amr killed him as he was praying. Al-Zubair was killed aged seventy-five years, and it is said that al-Ahnaf was the one who killed him by sending to him that group of his fellow tribesmen.

1636. Poets elegized him, mentioning the manner in which `Amr ibn Jurmuz had killed him by stealth. Among those bemoaning him was his wife `Atika bint Zaid ibn `Amr ibn Nufail, sister of Sa`id ibn Zaid, in the following verses:

*Ibn Jurmuz murdered by stealth a mighty warrior in battle,
And one who did not flee from an adversary.
O `Amr, if only you had alerted him to your presence,
You would have found him neither feint of heart nor with trembling
hands.*

These are only a few verses from a longer ode.

`Amr then brought `Ali al-Zubair's sword, his ring and his head, though not his head in some versions. `Ali said: "This is a sword that for so long wiped away sorrow from the face of the Prophet. But it is the appointed time of death and the slaughter wrought by misfortune. The killer of Ibn Safiyya [Al-Zubair] is in hell." Concerning this incident Ibn Jurmuz recited:

*I brought `Ali the head of al-Zubair,
Hoping I'd gain favor with him.
Instead he brought me tidings of hell, face to face,
And they were not the kind of tidings given by a man who receives a gift.
It is the same to me whether al-Zubair is killed,
Or a camel farts in Dhi'l Juhfa.*

1637. When al-Zubair left, `Ali called out to Talha: "O father of Muhammad, why did you rise in rebellion?" "Revenge for `Uthman's blood," he answered. `Ali said: "May God destroy whichever of us is

more responsible for shedding his blood! Did you not hear the Prophet say: ‘Lord, befriend he who befriends him [ʿAli] and be an enemy to his enemies?’ You, Talha, were the first person to pay homage to me and then you reneged, though God says in the Qur’an: {Whoso breaks his word does so to his own detriment}.” Talha said: “I ask for God’s forgiveness.” He then departed. Marwan ibn al-Hakam said: “Al-Zubair has left and now Talha. I care not whether I shoot one or the other.” So he shot him in the vein of his arm and killed him.

1638. Following that battle, ʿAli passed by his dead body at a place called Qantarat Qurra, stood by it and said: “We belong to God and to Him we shall return! By God, I had hated to see the men of Quraish lying dead beneath the hooves of military processions. I swear you are like the person described in the following verses:

A youth who, when wealthy, drew near to his friends,

But when poor kept himself away.

As if the Pleiades were strung on his forehead,

With Sirius on one cheek, the full moon on the other.

It is said that as Talha was leaving, he was heard reciting:

I indeed repented but my self-restraint remained;

Alas for me and for my father and mother!

I repented like the repentance of the Kusa`i,*

When I thought of asking forgiveness from the clan of Jarm.

As Talha wiped the dust from his face he quoted the Qur’an: {The command of God is a destiny decreed}. It is also said that he recited those verses when he had been wounded in his forehead. Marwan had shot him in his arm vein and Talha fell to the ground, breathing his last.

1639. He is Talha ibn ʿUbaidullah ibn ʿUthman ibn ʿUbaidullah ibn ʿAmr ibn Ka`b ibn Sa`d ibn Taym ibn Murra. He is the paternal cousin of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq. His patronymic is Abu Muhammad. His mother is al-

Sa`ba, formerly the wife of Abu Sufyan Sakhr ibn Harb. This is all mentioned by al-Zubair ibn Bakkar in his book on the genealogies of Quraish. He was killed aged sixty-four, though other ages are also mentioned. He was buried in Basra where his grave is well known and exists until today whereas the grave of al-Zubair is in Wadi al-Siba`. With Talha that day died also his son, Muhammad ibn Talha. `Ali passed by him and said: “Here is a man killed by his filial devotion and obedience to his father.” Muhammad used to be called *al-Sajjad* [He who prostrates much in prayer]. His patronymic is a subject of dispute. Al-Waqidi states that he was called “Abu Sulayman”, while al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy says it was “Abu`l Qasim”. The man who killed him recited:

*Unkempt of hair, constantly repeating the verses of God,
Doing little harm, and when the eye regards him, a true Muslim.
I struck him with my spear in the hollow of his shirt,
And he fell dead upon hands and mouth.*

*This was not done for any reason other than that he did not follow `Ali
And he who does not follow the path of truth will repent it.*

He reminded me of Ha Mim, as my spear flew:*

I wonder if he recited Ha Mim before he advanced to battle.

1640. The contingent with the Camel then charged `Ali’s right and left wings and pressed them hard. A son of `Aqil came to `Ali and found him nodding off and drowsy on the saddlebow of his horse, so said him: “O uncle, your right and left wing are where you see them while you nod off and are drowsy?” “Be silent, nephew,” he answered, “Your uncle has an appointment with death which he cannot postpone. By God, your uncle cares not whether he falls upon death or whether death falls upon him.” He then sent word to his son Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, his standard bearer, to charge the enemy. Muhammad was slow to do so, faced as he was by a body of archers, and he was waiting for them to run out of

arrows. `Ali came to him and said: “Will you not charge?” Muhammad answered: “I do not see any means of advance except by brandishing spears and I am waiting for them to run out of arrows before I charge.” `Ali said: “Charge between their spears. You are protected from death!” Muhammad charged, driving through between the spears and the arrows, then halted. `Ali came up to him, struck him with the hilt of his sword and said: “Some vein from your mother’s side has overcome you!” He took the pennant from his hand and charged, and his troops followed him, and the enemy soon became like ashes tossed by the winds on a stormy day. Meanwhile, the clan of Dabba surrounded the Camel and recited the following in the *rajaz* meter:

*We are the clan of Dabba, the people of the Camel,
Give us back our old man [`Uthman], who suffices us.
We mourn Ibn `Affan with the tips of spears,
And death for us is sweeter than honey.*

1641. Seventy hands of the clan of Dabba that were holding the Camel’s halter, were cut off. Among them was Ka`b ibn Suwar, the judge, the Qur’an hanging from him. Whenever one hand was cut and the person fell to the ground, another would take his place and grab the halter, saying: “I am the youthful hero of Dabba!” The *hawdah* of `A’isha was pierced with so many arrows it looked like a hedgehog. The Camel itself was hamstrung but would not fall. When his thighs were cut and the sword thrusts overpowered it, the Camel finally collapsed. It is said that `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair at one time took hold of its halter, so `A’isha, who was his maternal aunt, cried out: “Let Asma` not be bereaved! Let go of the halter!” She begged him to let go and he did so. When the Camel collapsed and the *hawdah* toppled over, Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr came forward and inserted his hand in it. She said: “Who are you?” He answered: “The nearest to you in kinship but the most hateful to you: I

am your brother Muhammad. The Commander of the Believers asks whether any harm has come to you.” She responded: “I was only grazed by an arrow but it did me no harm.” `Ali then came, approached the *hawdah*, struck it with a cane and said: “O *Humaira**! Did the Prophet order you to act the way you did? Did he not order you to remain in your home? By God, those who made you go out on this expedition did not act fairly towards you, for they kept their own wives back in safety and brought you out.” He ordered her brother Muhammad to take her to the house of Safiyya bint al-Harith ibn Talha ibn Abi Talha al-`Abdi, Safiyya being the mother of Talhat al-Talahat*. When the *hawdah* toppled over and the Camel had been hamstrung, the two armies were still engaged in scattered combat and had not yet laid down their arms. Thus, al-Ashtar Malik ibn al-Harith al-Nakh`i met `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair. They exchanged blows and both fell off their horses, but continued to fight for a long time on foot. Al-Ashtar stood above him but could not find a way to kill him because he was tossing about so much. The People of the Camel surrounded them while Ibn al-Zubair called out from beneath al-Ashtar:

Kill me and Malik,

And kill Malik with me.

No one could hear him, so hard was the fighting, and so loud the clashing of iron upon iron, and no one could see them, so dark was the dust storm and so pervasive the haze of battle.

1642. Khuzaima ibn Thabit whose “testimony equaled that of two men,” came up to `Ali and said: “O Commander of the Believers, let not the head of Muhammad [ibn al-Hanafiyya] hang down in shame but give him back the standard.” `Ali called him and gave it back to him and recited:

Strike with it the way your father strikes, and you’ll be praised.

There is no good in a war if its flames are not raging

With a mashrafi sword and a well-aimed spear.*

`Ali then asked for water and was brought water mixed with honey. He sipped a little and said: “This honey is from Ta’if and is a stranger in this land.” `Abdullah ibn Ja`far said to him: “Are you so unconcerned with our present crisis that you need to inform us what kind of honey this is?” “Son,” replied `Ali, “by God, your uncle’s heart has never been concerned with anything to do with this world.” He then entered Basra. 1643. That engagement took place at a site called Khuraiba, on Thursday, the tenth of Jumada II, in the year 36 [November 4, 656], as noted earlier in this history. `Ali delivered a long sermon to the people of Basra in which he said: “O you who inhabit this fetid land! You who live in this inundated land, a land submerged with its people three times in the course of time, and it shall be up to God to submerge it for the fourth time! You soldiers of a woman and followers of a dumb beast, a beast that foamed and frothed, and you answered his call, but once hamstrung, you were defeated! Your morals are frail, your actions are contemptible, your religious faith is deviant and hypocritical, and your water is bitter to the taste and intensely salty.” `Ali was thereafter to censure Basra many times.

1644. `Ali then sent `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas to `A’isha to order her to return to Medinah. He entered without seeking her permission then drew up a cushion and sat on it. She said to him: “Son of `Abbas, you have transgressed the norms of behavior we are ordered to follow! You entered upon us without our permission and sat on our furnishings without our approval!” He said: “Had you remained in the house where the Prophet left you, we would not have entered without seeking your permission nor sat on your furnishings without your leave. The Commander of the Believers orders you to get ready for a quick departure to Medinah.” She answered: “I refuse what you say and disobey the order you have

delivered.” He went to see `Ali and informed him of her disobedience, and `Ali told him to go back to her and say the following: “If you refuse, I will tell you what you already know.” Ibn `Abbas went and relayed the message and she consented to leave. `Ali then made arrangements for her departure then came to see her the following day, accompanied by al-Hasan and al-Husain, the rest of his children, his nephews, youthful warriors from the Hashim clan and others among his followers from the Hamdan tribe. When the women with `A`isha saw `Ali, they screamed in his face: “O killer of those we love!” He replied: “Had I been the killer of the beloved, I would have killed everyone in this house.” He then pointed to a house where Marwan ibn al-Hakam, `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair, `Abdullah ibn `Amir and others were hiding. When the men with `Ali heard who was hiding in those houses, they went for their swords, fearing that these people would come out and assassinate him. Following a lengthy conversation between `Ali and `A`isha, she said to him: “I would like to stay with you and march with you when you set out against your enemy.” He answered: “Rather, you should return to the house where the Prophet left you.”

1645. `A`isha asked `Ali to grant safe-conduct to her nephew `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair and he did so. Al-Hasan and al-Husain requested the same for Marwan and this too was granted. He then granted safe-conduct to al-Walid ibn `Uqba, `Uthman’s children and other Umayyads, then to all people. On the day of the battle, `Ali had announced: “Whoso throws down his weapon will be secure from harm, and whoso goes into his house will be secure from harm.” `Ali’s sorrow grew intense for those killed from the tribe of Rabi`a before he entered Basra. They were the ones killed by Talha and al-Zubair from among the clan of `Abd al-Qais and others from Rabi`a. His grief was renewed when Zaid ibn Suhan al-

`Abdi was killed that day by `Amr ibn Yathribi. Later, `Ammar ibn Yasir killed `Amr ibn Yathribi and `Ali would frequently recite:

*Alas my soul for Rabi`a,
Rabi`a who hear and obey.*

1646. A woman from `Abd al-Qais went out to see the dead and found that two of her sons were among them. Her husband and brothers were also among those who died before `Ali entered Basra. So she recited:

*I have witnessed wars that turned my hair grey,
But never saw a battle like the Battle of the Camel,
One more harmful to a believer and more divisive,
Or more death-dealing to heroes.
If only that travelling woman [`A`isha] had stayed home!
If only that army had never marched!*

1647. Al-Mada`ini states that he once met a man in Basra with a chewed-out ear and asked him what his story was. The man said that he went out walking among the dead of the Battle of the Camel and saw a man alternately raising and lowering his head, and reciting:

*Our mother [`A`isha] led us into the thick of the fray of death,
And we departed therefrom fully sated.
It was our misfortune to obey the clan of Taim,
And Taim are mere slaves, male and female.*

The man said: "Glory be to God! Do you say this while on the point of death? Say instead: "There is no god but God." The man continued: "I then left him in amazement but he shouted after me: 'Come close to me and make me repeat the confession of faith.' I turned back and drew close to him. He asked me to draw even closer, then gobbled up my ear and bit it off. I began to damn and curse him and he said: 'When you see your mother and she asks who did this to you, tell her it was `Umair ibn al-

Ahlab al-Dabbi, who was the dupe of a woman who wanted to be the Commander of the Believers.”

1648. `A`isha left Basra and with her `Ali sent her brother `Abd al-Rahman, thirty men and twenty pious women from the `Abd al-Qais, Hamdan and other tribes. He made the women dress in turbans and made them carry swords, saying: “Do not reveal to `A`isha that you are women and cover your faces as if you are men, and be the ones who serve and carry her.” Arrived in Medinah, she was asked: “How was your trip?” She replied: “I was comfortable, and `Ali, by God, was more than generous. But he sent some men with me whom I found suspicious.” The women then revealed their identity and `A`isha knelt and said: “O `Ali ibn Abi Talib, you have only increased in nobility. I wish I had never come out even if such and such difficulties would have befallen me. But I was told that by coming out I would be able to make peace between people, and what happened has now happened.”

1649. Earlier on in this chapter we stated that the number of dead among `Ali’s supporters that day was five thousand while the dead among the people of the Camel from Basra and elsewhere came to thirteen thousand, though other figures also exist. `Ali stood above the dead body of `Abd al-Rahman ibn Asid ibn Abi`l `As ibn Umayya at the Battle of the Camel and said: “Alas for me, O Ornament of Quraish! The notables of the clan of `Abd Manaf are dead! You have made me wretched! You have caused me grievous injury!” A companion of his said: “How sorrowful you are, O Commander of the Believers, for people who intended to inflict on you the fate you inflicted on them!” `Ali replied: “The women who bore me and them are not the same that bore you.” The man who had killed `Abd al-Rahman was al-Ashtar al-Nakh`i. The palm of his hand was found in Mina, or in al-Yamama in another version, carried there by a vulture. On

it was a ring with his name, `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Attab, engraved upon it. The palm was discovered three days after the Battle of the Camel.

1650. `Ali, along with a group of Emigrants and Ansar, entered the public treasury in Basra, looked at the gold and silver it contained and said: “O yellow metal, go and deceive someone other than me; O white metal, go and deceive someone other than me!” He stared long in thought at all that wealth then said: “Divide it among my friends and followers in portions of five hundred each.” They did so and not a single dirham was found missing. There were twelve thousand men. He confiscated all that was found in the enemy camp of weapons, beasts of burden, baggage, equipment and so forth, sold it and divided the proceeds among his followers, taking for himself exactly the same amount given to his followers, family and children, that is, five hundred dirhams. One of his followers came up to him and said: “O Commander of the Believers, I did not receive my share,” and offered an excuse for his absence, so `Ali gave him his own share of five hundred dirhams.

1651. Abu Labid al-Jahdami, from the Azd tribe, was asked: “Do you love `Ali?” He responded: “How can I love someone who in less than a day killed two thousand five hundred of my fellow tribesmen, and killed so many others to the point that no condolences were offered by anyone to anyone else, for each family was preoccupied with its own dead?”

1652. `Ali appointed `Abdullah ibn `Abbas as governor of Basra, then marched to Kufa which he entered on the twelfth of Rajab. He sent a message to al-Ash`ath ibn Qais, dismissing him from his governorship of Adharbaijan and Armenia. He had been appointed to that post by `Uthman. He also dismissed from Hamadhan Jarir ibn `Abdullah al-Bajali, another `Uthman appointee. Al-Ash`ath had held a grudge against `Ali because of that dismissal and because of the words `Ali had addressed to him when he came to see him with respect to the wealth he

had appropriated there. He then sent Jarir ibn `Abdullah with a message to Mu`awiya. Al-Ashtar warned `Ali about this and tried to caution him regarding Jarir. Jarir had said to `Ali: "Send me to Mu`awiya for he has always taken my advice and been cordial towards me. I will go to him and ask him to acquiesce in your caliphate and call upon the people of al-Sham to pay allegiance to you." Al-Ashtar had said to `Ali: "Do not send him and do not trust him for, by God, I think he has the same opinions and intentions as them!" `Ali responded: "Let him go and let us see what message he brings back to us."

1653. `Ali then sent him to Mu`awiya with a message informing him of the allegiance paid to him by a consensus of the Emigrants and Ansar, adding that Talha and al-Zubair had reneged and what God had sent them by way of punishment, and ordering Mu`awiya to obey him. He further informed him that he was one of those "set free" by the Prophet when Mecca was conquered, and thus could not lay claim to the caliphate. When Jarir came to Mu`awiya, the latter put him off and asked him to wait, then wrote to `Amr ibn al-`As, as previously mentioned. When `Amr arrived, Mu`awiya offered him Egypt as his fiefdom, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and `Amr advised him to summon the chieftains of al-Sham, to hold `Ali responsible for `Uthman's murder, and to fight `Ali with the people of al-Sham.

1654. Jarir returned to `Ali and informed him of what was happening, how the people of al-Sham had united behind Mu`awiya to fight him, how they were weeping for `Uthman and saying that `Ali had killed him and given shelter to his murderers and protected them, and that there was no alternative but to fight him until one side wipes out the other. Al-Ashtar said: "O Commander of the Believers, I had warned you of the man's enmity and deceitfulness. Had you sent me instead, I would have been a better messenger than this fellow, for he is a man who untied his

belt* and went on, leaving no door unopened from which he hoped to obtain some profit, and closing every door from which something harmful might come.” Jarir said: “Had you gone there I swear they would have killed you, for they mentioned you by name as one of `Uthman’s murderers.” Al-Ashtar replied: “If I had gone, O Jarir, I swear I would not have found it hard to answer them nor would addressing them have been any trouble to me. I would have convinced Mu`awiya of a plan so quickly that he wouldn’t even have time to think about it. Had the Commander of the Believers followed my advice about you, he would have imprisoned you and the likes of you in a prison from which you would not come out until matters had returned to normal.”

1655. At that point Jarir left for the district of Qarqisiya and al-Rahba on the bank of the Euphrates from where he wrote to Mu`awiya informing him of what had happened to him and requesting that he be allowed to be of his company and to settle in his territory. Mu`awiya wrote back ordering him to come to him. He then wrote to al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba after `Ali had departed from the Battle of the Camel but before the Battle of Siffin as follows: “It is now obvious what Ibn Abi Talib’s views are regarding what he promised you concerning Talha and al-Zubair, so what can we expect regarding his view of us?”

1656. The reason Mu`awiya sent that message to al-Mughira is the following. When `Uthman was murdered and people paid homage to `Ali, al-Mughira went in to see `Ali and said: “O Commander of the Believers, I have an advice to offer you.” `Ali said: “What is it?” He answered: “If you wish your rule to remain stable, appoint Talha as governor of Kufa and al-Zubair as governor of Basra, and confirm Mu`awiya as governor of al-Sham so as to force him to obey you. Once things settle down, you can then determine what you wish to do with him.” `Ali said: “As for Talha and al-Zubair, I will think about this. But may God never witness

that I employed Mu`awiya so long as he persists in his present policy. Rather, I will summon him to that which you know. He either agrees or I will make God our arbiter.” Al-Mughira left in anger and recited:

I gave `Ali a piece of advice regarding the son of Hind [Mu`awiya],

But this was rejected, and he will never hear another from me.

I told him: confirm Mu`awiya as governor of al-Sham, until he is firmly in control,

And the people of al-Sham know that you have given him power,

*And his refuge shall thereafter be the pit of hell.**

But `Ali rejected the advice I gave him,

Though that advice would have benefited him.

1657. Al-Mas`udi said: In an earlier passage in this book, we mentioned the encounter between `Ali and al-Mughira and the latter's advice. The above was another version of that incident. These are in brief the salient points that one needs to know about the Battle of the Camel, without going into lengthy details and repeating the chains of transmission. God knows best.

Chapter 80

A summary account of what happened between the peoples of Iraq and al-Sham at Siffin

1658. Al-Mas`udi said: We have mentioned in summary fashion the history of `Ali in Basra and the events surrounding the Battle of the Camel. We now turn to a brief account of `Ali's march to Siffin and the battles that took place there. We follow this up with the incident of arbitration, the two arbiters, the Battle of Nahrawan and `Ali's murder.

1659. `Ali marched out from Kufa to Siffin on the fifth day of Shawwal in the year 36 [March 27, 657], leaving Abu Mas`ud `Uqba ibn `Amr al-Ansari in charge of Kufa. On his march he passed by al-Mada'in then came to al-Anbar and finally camped in al-Raqqa. There, a bridge was

built for him and he crossed over into al-Sham. The number of his troops is a subject of dispute between those who inflate the number and those who decrease it. The general consensus however is ninety thousand.

Thus, when the army camped in territory near al-Sham, a follower of `Ali recited some verses which he sent to Mu`awiya:

Stay where you are, Mu`awiya, a vast army is upon you,

Ninety thousand of them, all warriors.

Soon your falseness will be exposed.

1660. Mu`awiya marched out from al-Sham, and here too the number of his troops is in dispute between those who inflate that number and those who decrease it. The general consensus however is eighty-five thousand. He was quicker than `Ali to arrive in Siffin where he struck camp in a place called Sahl Afyah, a site he chose before `Ali had arrived. This was a watering place which was the easiest place on the Euphrates for anyone seeking to reach water. All other places were steep slopes and rugged paths to the water. Mu`awiya appointed Abu al-A`war al-Sulami, who was in the vanguard, to guard that watering place with a force of forty thousand men. When `Ali and his army arrived they suffered from thirst and were prevented from reaching the watering place. `Amr ibn al-`As said to Mu`awiya: “`Ali and his ninety thousand Iraqis will not die of thirst as long as they carry their swords, so let them drink and let us drink.” Mu`awiya replied: “No, by God! They shall die of thirst like `Uthman!”

1661. `Ali went out by night to inspect his troops and heard someone reciting:

Will these people prevent us from drinking the waters of the Euphrates,

While `Ali and right are on our side?

It is we who pray and we who fast,

We who entreat God in the gloom of night.

He passed by another man at the standards of the tribe of Rabi`a reciting:
*Will these people prevent us from drinking the waters of the Euphrates,
 While we possess our spears and our shields?
 When amongst us is `Ali, mighty in battle,
 Who, when they frighten him with death, is fearless?
 On that day when we met al-Zubair and Talha in battle,
 We plunged into the fray of death.
 So why were we yesterday like lions of the den?
 And why are we today like emaciated sheep?*

1662. A piece of paper was thrown into the tent of al-Ash`ath ibn Qais al-Kindi on which were written the following verses:

*If al-Ash`ath does not relieve today the agony of death,
 From which souls can escape,
 And we drink the waters of the Euphrates, by the strength of his sword,
 You might consider us people on the point of death.*

When he read that piece of paper, al-Ash`ath was enraged, and went to see `Ali who said to him: “Ride out with four thousand horsemen which you then use to attack the center of Mu`awiya’s camp, so that you can drink and give your followers to drink or else die to the last man. I shall order al-Ashtar to march behind you with horsemen and infantry.” Al-Ash`ath rode out with four thousand horsemen, reciting the following verse in the *rajaz* meter:

*I shall lead my horses to the Euphrates,
 With dusty forelocks, or else let it be said: they died.*

1663. `Ali then summoned al-Ashtar and ordered him to march out with four thousand horsemen and infantry and Al-Ashtar marched behind al-Ash`ath. His standard bearer, a man from the Nakh` clan, recited the following verses in the *rajaz* meter:

O Ashtar full of goodness, best of the Nakh` clan,

*Bringer of victory when all are overcome by terror,
If you give us to drink today, this would be nothing strange,
Or else the people will suffer thirst, and be an abandoned army.*

1664. `Ali then marched behind al-Ashtar with the rest of the army. Meanwhile, al-Ash`ath rode on, unstoppable, attacked the camp of Mu`awiya, removed Abu'l A`war from the watering place, caused many men and horses to drown and led his horses to the Euphrates. That day, al-Ash`ath was gripped by anger and indignation. He would point his spear forward then urge his men saying: "Push them back to the extent of this spear and you will dislodge them from that site." When `Ali was told what al-Ash`ath had said and done he said: "This is a battle where we won victory through our indignant anger." Concerning this incident, a man from Iraq recited:

*Al-Ash`ath relieved us from the calamity of death, before our very eyes,
After an ill-omened affair had touched the very back of our mouths.
To him belongs our gratitude; because of him our millstone turned once
more.**

1665. Mu`awiya then abandoned the position he had occupied. Al-Ashtar came up after al-Ash`ath had driven away the people from the water and from their previous positions, and `Ali followed and camped at the spot which Mu`awiya had occupied. Mu`awiya asked `Amr ibn al-`As: "O Abu `Abdullah, what do you think? Will the man prevent our access to water as we had prevented his access before?" Mu`awiya had led the people of al-Sham to a spot in the wilderness at some distance from the water. `Amr responded: "No, because the man has come here for a purpose other than this. He will only be satisfied when you submit to his authority, or else he will cut the sinew of your neck." So Mu`awiya sent a message to `Ali requesting permission to have access to the watering place and to draw water therefrom along that path, and to allow his

messengers to pass through his camp. `Ali granted him all that he requested.

1666. On the first of the month of Dhu'l Hijja, two days after `Ali had camped at that spot, he sent word to Mu`awiya asking him to abide by the unity of the community and rejoin the general ranks of the Muslims. The exchange of messages took a long time and they agreed to a truce to last till the last day of Muharram, in the year 37 [July 18, 657]. The Muslims suspended their foreign expeditions, being preoccupied with their own civil war. Mu`awiya had concluded a truce with the King of the Byzantines in exchange for tribute to be paid to him while he was busy fighting `Ali. Between Mu`awiya and `Ali however there was no truce except for the agreement to keep the peace during the month of Muharram. But the Mu`awiya party was intent on war once Muharram had passed. Regarding this, Habis ibn Sa`d al-Ta'i, Mu`awiya's standard bearer, recited:

Only seven or eight days of Muharram

Separate us from fateful death.

1667. On the last day of Muharram, and before sunset, `Ali sent a message to the people of al-Sham which read: "I quoted to you as an argument what is found in the Book of God, and asked you to follow what it says. I have renounced my compact with you on terms equal to all since {God guides not the scheming of the treacherous}." They did not respond except by saying: "The sword shall decide the issue between us until the weaker party is killed." On the morning of Wednesday, the first of the month of Safar, `Ali mobilized his army and brought out al-Ashtar at its head, so Mu`awiya, with the Shamis and Iraqis lined up opposite each other, brought out Habib ibn Maslama al-Fihri to face him. A hard fight ensued for the rest of that day and both sides suffered casualties before they retired.

1668. On the following day, a Thursday, `Ali brought out Hashim ibn `Utba ibn Abi Waqqas al-Zuhri, al-Mirqal, who was the nephew of Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas, called "Mirqal" because he used to toss and turn (*yurqilu*) in battle. He had lost one eye in the Battle of Yarmuk*. He was a follower of `Ali. In our book *al-Awsat*, in the section on the conquest of al-Sham, we gave an account of the day when he lost his eye and how valiantly he had fought in that battle. Mu`awiya brought out against him Abu'l A`war al-Sulami, whose full name was Sufyan ibn `Awf. He was a Mu`awiya follower and antagonistic to `Ali. The fighting went back and forth, and when the day ended and they retired, the dead were many.

1669. On the third day, a Friday, `Ali brought out Abu'l Yaqzan `Ammar ibn Yasir along with a number of those who had fought at Badr and other Emigrants and Ansar together with others who rushed to join them. Mu`awiya brought out `Amr ibn al-`As with the Tanukh and Bahra' tribes and others from al-Sham. The fighting went back and forth until noon. Then `Ammar with the parties mentioned above charged and drove `Amr back from his position and into Mu`awiya's camp. There were many dead from al-Sham but less from Iraq.

1670. On the fourth day, a Saturday, `Ali brought out his son Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya with the Hamdan tribe and others who were quick to join him. Against him Mu`awiya brought out `Ubaidullah ibn `Umar ibn al-Khattab with the tribes of Himyar, Lakhm and Judham. `Ubaidullah had joined Mu`awiya fearing that `Ali would exact retaliation for what he had done to al-Hurmuzan. This was because Abu Lu'lu'a, the murderer of `Umar, was a slave of al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba, and had once been a slave of al-Hurmuzan in Persia. When `Umar was murdered, `Ubaidullah attacked al-Hurmuzan and killed him, saying: "I will not leave any Persian in Medinah or elsewhere alive but will kill them in revenge for my father!" Al-Hurmuzan had been sick at the time of `Umar's murder.

When the caliphate passed to `Ali, he wanted to kill `Ubaidullah in retaliation for his killing of al-Hurmuzan unjustly and without due cause, so `Ubaidullah sought refuge with Mu`awiya. The two sides fought that day and the people of al-Sham were defeated. At day's end, `Ubaidullah fled for his life.

1671. On the fifth day, a Sunday, `Ali brought out `Abdullah ibn `Abbas. To meet him Mu`awiya brought out al-Walid ibn `Uqba ibn Abi Mu`ayt and the two sides fought. Al-Walid kept cursing the `Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim family and Ibn `Abbas fought him very hard, calling out: "Come out and fight me, O Safwan!" Safwan being the nickname of al-Walid. Ibn `Abbas overcame him but it was a hard day's fight.

1672. On the sixth day, a Monday, `Ali brought out Sa`id ibn Qais al-Hamdani, at that time Hamdan's chieftain, and to face him Mu`awiya brought out Dhu'l-Kala`. The fighting went back and forth all day, there were dead on both sides, and both sides then retired. On the seventh day, a Tuesday, `Ali brought out al-Ashtar with the Nakh` tribe and others, and to face him Mu`awiya brought out Habib ibn Maslama al-Fihri. The fighting went back and forth and both sides stood their ground, fighting to a standstill with equal ferocity. The two sides then retired, with dead on both sides, though the casualties among the people of al-Sham were more numerous.

1673. On the eighth day, a Wednesday, `Ali came out himself along with the veterans of the Battle of Badr and other Emigrants and Ansar, and with the tribes of Rabi`a and Hamdan. Ibn `Abbas said: "I saw `Ali that day with a white turban on his head, his eyes like two lanterns lit by olive oil, stopping at one body of troops after another and urging them on until he came to where I was, amidst a large crowd. He said: 'O Muslims, call out in unison, stand fast together, set your hearts on the fear of God, rattle your swords in their sheaths before drawing them out, look to right and

left, strike them in the flesh and with the edge of the sword, follow up your sword thrusts with spears, your arrows with javelins, be pleased if you give up your souls for you are in God's sight and in the company of the cousin of His Prophet. Charge and charge again, and despise flight, for its disgrace will descend to your progeny and will lead you into hellfire on the Day of Reckoning. Before you stands this great mass of people and these extensive tents, so strike them in the middle of the body. Satan has mounted upon elevated ground and has spread his arms wide, one arm forward ready to leap onward, and one leg backwards ready to turn tail. Be steadfast, be steadfast, until the facade of truth is revealed {when you have the upper hand. God is on your side and will not diminish the reward of your deeds}." Mounted on the Prophet's gray she-mule, `Ali advanced to the fray while Mu`awiya rode out with a group from al-Sham. At night, both sides retired and neither side was victorious. 1674. On the ninth day, a Thursday, `Ali came out, as did Mu`awiya, and they fought until the day was well advanced. `Ubaidullah ibn `Umar ibn al-Khattab came out before the people with four thousand clad in black armor, wearing turbans with strips of green silk and marching forward to meet death, calling for revenge for the blood of `Uthman ibn `Affan.

Leading them was `Ubaidullah who recited:

I am `Ubaidullah, and `Umar it was who called me so,

Best of all Quraish he was, of those who passed away, and those who remain,

All except for the Prophet of God and the noble shaykh [`Uthman].

Mudar was slow in coming to `Uthman's aid,

And as for the Rabi`a, may they never be rained upon.

1675. `Ali called out to him: "Woe to you, son of `Umar, why are you fighting me? I swear to God, if your father were alive, he would not have fought me." He answered: "I am calling for revenge for `Uthman's

blood.” `Ali said: “You are calling for the blood of `Uthman and God is calling for the blood of al-Hurmuzan.” He ordered al-Ashtar to ride out and challenge him so al-Ashtar went out, reciting:

I am al-Ashtar and my career is well known,

I am the male Iraqi serpent.

I am neither from Rabi`a nor from Mudar,

But from Madhhij, honorable and noble.

`Ubaidullah retreated and did not face him in combat.

1676. That day, there were many dead. `Ammar ibn Yasir said: “I see the faces of a people who continue to fight us to the point where even the impious have their doubts.* By God, if they were to defeat us and push us back all the way to the palm trees of Hajar we would still be in the right and they would be in the wrong!” `Ammar then advanced and fought, then returned to his station and asked for water. A woman from the Shaiban clan in their line brought him a bowl of milk and handed it to him. `Ammar said: “God is great! God is great! Today I shall meet those I love beneath the spears! The Truthful One has spoken the truth and the Prophet who announced the truth told me this is the promised day.”

1677. He said: “O people, is there anyone who wishes to go to God beneath the tall spears? I swear by God, who holds my soul in his hand, we will fight them over the Qur’an’s interpretation as we fought them when it first descended!” He then advanced, reciting:

We fought you when the Qur’an descended,

Today we fight you over its interpretation,

Striking you so as to remove the head from the shoulders,

And making the friend forget his friend,

Until right is re-established.

1677. `Ammar advanced into the middle of the fray and the spears fell thick and fast upon him. It was Abu’l `Adiya al-`Amili and Ibn Juwayn

al-Saksaki who killed him, then quarreled about despoiling his body, so they went to see `Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn al-`As to ask him to arbitrate. He said: “Get out of my sight! I once heard the Prophet say: ‘Quraish grew fond of `Ammar, but what have they to do with `Ammar? He calls them to paradise and they call him to hell.’” He was killed in the evening, aged ninety-three, and his grave is in Siffin. `Ali prayed over his body but did not wash him. He used to dye his grey hair. His genealogy is in dispute: some say he is descended from the Makhzum clan, others say he was an ally of that clan, and still others have a different view. We dealt with his story in our book entitled *Mazahir al-Akhbar wa Tara'if al-Athar* where we mentioned the fifty warriors who pledged loyalty to `Ali unto death. Regarding `Ammar’s death, al-Hajjaj ibn Ghaziyya al-Ansari recited a poem of which the following are some verses:

The Prophet once said to him: “You will be killed by a gang of reprobates,

Whose success was attained through perfidy.”

Today, let the people of al-Sham know that they are that gang,

Disgraced, and destined for hellfire.

1678. When `Ammar was killed, there came forward Sa`id ibn Qais al-Hamdani with the Hamdan tribe, Qais ibn Sa`d ibn `Ubada al-Ansari with the Ansar and the Rabi`a, and `Adiyy ibn Hatim with the Tai’, with Sa`id ibn Qais in the lead. The two massed troops then joined battle. As it grew intense, Hamdan routed the people of al-Sham, driving them back to Mu`awiya. This latter with some followers had stood his ground when Sa`id and the Hamdan attacked so `Ali ordered al-Ashtar to carry the standard forward and attack the people of Homs and others from the Qinnasrin region. Al-Ashtar with the Qur’an readers slew many from Homs and Qinnasrin.

1679. That day, al-Mirqal and those with him fought so hard that none could withstand them. Al-Mirqal began to toss and turn like a restrained stallion. `Ali stood behind him and said: “You, one-eyed! Don’t be a coward but advance!” Al-Mirqal recited:

He [`Ali] has spoken much, not little:

*I am a one-eyed man who seeks a place of honor for his family,
One who has experienced life so long that he has grown weary,
And must either assail or be assailed.*

I shall immobilize them with my knotted spear.

Hashim ibn `Utba al-Mirqal then faced off against Dhu’l Kala`, who was leading Himyar. The standard bearer of Dhu’l Kala`, a man from the tribe of `Udhra, charged him, reciting:

Stand fast! I am not from the two branches of Mudar,

We are the Yemenites, who never tire.

How do you find the attack of the youth from `Udhra?

I am one who mourns Ibn `Affan and calls the lie to those who betrayed him.

It is the same to me whether some person ordered his killing or abetted it.

1680. They exchanged two blows then Hashim al-Mirqal killed him and went on to kill nineteen more men. Hashim and Dhu’l Kala` both charged; with al-Mirqal was a group from the tribe of Aslam who had vowed not to return home except in triumph or else dead. The two sides fought very hard and both al-Mirqal and Dhu’l Kala` were killed. Al-Mirqal’s son took hold of the standard when his father was killed in the thick of the fighting, and charged once more into the fray, reciting:

O Hashim ibn `Utba ibn Malik,

Be proud of a dead Quraish grandee,

Trampled under horses’ hooves!

Glad tidings await you of houris reclining on couches,*

Where refreshing breezes and sweet smelling herbs are found.

`Ali stood over the spot where al-Mirqal and the Aslamis had fallen, prayed for their souls and asked for God's mercy towards them, then recited:

May God richly reward this group of Aslam,

Fair of face, and slain around Hashim.

1681. That day, Safwan and Sa`d, the two sons of Hudhaifa ibn al-Yaman, died as martyrs. Hudhaifa was lying ill in Kufa in the year 36 when news reached him of `Uthman's murder and the homage paid to `Ali. He said: "Carry me out and let the congregation gather for prayers." He was placed on the pulpit. He thanked and praised God, called down blessings on the Prophet, then said: "O people, the community has paid homage to `Ali ibn Abi Talib. Fear God, and give aid and support to `Ali, for I swear that he has followed the path of righteousness from first to last. He is the best of those who remain after your Prophet and the best of men until the Day of Resurrection." He then placed his right hand upon his left and added: "Let God be my witness that I have paid homage to `Ali." To his two sons, Safwan and Sa`d, he said: "Carry me away and stand by him. By God, he will fight many wars in which many will die. Strive to meet martyrdom with him for, by God, he is in the right and his opponents are in the wrong." Hudhaifa died seven days after this incident though some say forty days afterwards.

1682. On that day also were martyred `Abdullah and `Abd al-Rahman, the sons of Budail ibn Warqa' al-Khuza'i in a group of Khuza'a.

`Abdullah was on the left wing of `Ali's army and recited in the *rajaz* meter:

Nothing remains but patience and trust in God,

And your picking up a shield and a sharp sword

And striding forth in the vanguard.

He was killed and so was his brother `Abd al-Rahman, from among those we mentioned of the Khuza`a tribe.

1683. When Mu`awiya saw how the people of al-Sham were being slaughtered and how the people of Iraq were assailing them, he regarded with displeasure al-Nu`man ibn Jabala al-Tanukhi, the standard bearer of his tribe the Tanukh and of Bahra', and said to him: "I am minded to appoint as leader of your tribe one who is better than you in combat and wiser in counsel." Al-Nu`man replied: "Had we called our tribe to fight a motley collection of soldiers, routing them would have required little time. How will it be, however, when we call them to fight slashing swords and pointed spears and men with perspicacious minds? By God, I showed you good will against my own better judgment, preferred your kingship to my own religious convictions, for love of you abandoned right guidance even though I knew it well, and veered from the truth even though I could see it before me. I cannot be on the right path when I fight the cousin of the Prophet, the first believer and Emigrant, for the sake of your pursuit of power. Had we offered him [`Ali] what we offered you, he would have been more compassionate to his subjects and more generous in his gifts. And yet, we have committed ourselves to your support and are obliged to see the matter through whether it be right or wrong---and God forbid it should be right! Accordingly, we shall fight to defend the figs and olives of the Ghuta* if we are to be denied the fruits and rivers of paradise." Al-Nu`man then went out to rejoin his tribe and fought bravely.

1684. Whenever `Ubaidullah ibn `Umar went out to fight, his women folk would dress him tightly in his armor, all except al-Shaybaniyya bint Hani' ibn Qabisa. As he went out to fight that day, he approached al-Shaybaniyya and said: "Today, I am fully prepared to do battle against your people and, by God, I hope to tie a chieftain among them to each

rope of my tent.” She said: “How hateful to me is the fact that you will fight them!” “Why?” he asked her. “Because no hero in the Jahili or Islamic period has ever gone up against them, full of arrogance, without them utterly destroying him. I fear they will kill you and I can see myself going to them, after they kill you, and asking them for your corpse.” He shot her with an arrow which wounded her and said: “You will soon know which chieftains of your people I will be bringing back.” He then left. Huraith ibn Jabir al-Ju`fi charged, struck and killed him. It is also reported that it was al-Ashtar al-Nakh`i who killed him and others say it was `Ali who aimed a blow at him which cut through his armor so that `Ali’s sword penetrated into his innards. It is also reported that when `Ubaidullah had escaped and `Ali was looking for him to make him suffer condign punishment for his murder of al-Hurmuzan, that `Ali had said: “He may have escaped me this day but will not escape me some other day.”

1685. `Ubaidullah’s women folk asked Mu`awiya to intervene and recover his body, so he ordered them to go to the tribe of Rabi`a and offer them ten thousand dirhams and they did so. The Rabi`a sought `Ali’s advice who said: “His corpse is like that of a dog and cannot be sold. However, you could if you wish hand over his corpse to his wife the daughter of Hani’ ibn Qabisa al-Shaybani.” The Rabi`a said to his women folk: “If you like, we could tie him to the tail of a mule then strike the mule till it enters Mu`awiya’s camp.” They screamed and said: “This would be too hard for us to bear!” They then informed Mu`awiya who said: “Go to the Shaybaniyya and tell her to go ask them for his corpse.” They did so and she went to the people and said: “I am the daughter of Hani’ ibn Qabisa and this is my detestable and unjust husband. I had warned him of the fate he would meet so give me back his corpse.” They did so. She handed them a silk wrap and they wrapped his body in it and

she took it and departed. To his leg was tied a rope from one of their tents.

1686. When `Ammar and the others mentioned above were killed that day, `Ali spurred the people on and said to Rabi`a: “You are my shield and my spear.” There came forward some ten thousand or more from Rabi`a and other tribes who had committed their souls to God, with `Ali in the lead on his gray she-mule and reciting:

*In which of my two days can I escape death,
A day not predestined or a day predestined?*

He then charged and they with him as though in a single charge, and every line of the people of al-Sham collapsed. They destroyed everything in their path until they reached Mu`awiya’s domed tent while `Ali cut to pieces ever knight he encountered, reciting:

*I strike them but I do not see Mu`awiya,
The man of the sidelong glance and huge stomach,
As he plunges into hellfire, his refuge.*

It is said that these verses were recited that day by Budail ibn Warqa’.

1687. `Ali then called out: “O Mu`awiya, why are you killing people in this contest between you and me? Come let us make God our arbiter.

Whoever kills his antagonist will be in charge of the affairs of state.”

`Amr said to Mu`awiya: “The man offers you a fair deal.” Mu`awiya replied: “No, he has not. You know well that he has never fought another man in single combat without killing or capturing him.” `Amr said: “It is not fitting for you not to fight him.” Mu`awiya replied: “You are obviously scheming to succeed me,” and held it as a grudge against him. Certain accounts hold that when `Amr advised Mu`awiya to fight him, Mu`awiya adjured him to go out and fight `Ali so `Amr felt constrained to do so. `Amr then went out and when the two met `Ali recognized him and raised his sword to strike him but `Amr exposed his private parts and

said: “Your fellow is constrained and not a hero.”* `Ali turned his face away from him and said: “Shame on you!” and `Amr returned to his battle station.

1688. Hisham ibn Muhammad al-Kalbi>al-Sharqi ibn al-Qutami relates that Mu`awiya said to `Amr when the war was over: “Have you deceived me since you became my counsellor?” “No,” said `Amr. “Oh yes, by God,” said Mu`awiya, “when that day you advised me to fight `Ali, knowing well what kind of warrior he was.” `Amr replied: “He called you to single combat and either result would have been in your favor: you would either have killed him and thus killed the killer of heroes, adding to your nobility, or he would have killed you, and thus you would have prematurely joined the company of martyrs and saints, and what glorious company they are!” Mu`awiya replied: “O `Amr, the second alternative is harder to bear than the first!”

1689. The fighting that day was harder than ever. In certain versions of the histories of Siffin I found that Hashim al-Mirqal, as he fell to the ground and was on the point of death, found `Ubaidullah ibn `Umar lying wounded beside him. Hashim crawled until he drew near, then proceeded to bite his breasts so hard that his teeth stuck in his flesh, since he had neither weapon nor strength. He was found lying dead on top of him, along with another man from the Bakr ibn Wa'il tribe. They had both crawled to `Ubaidullah and bit him to death.

1690. The two armies returned to their battle stations and a company from each side went out to carry back as many of their dead as they could. Mu`awiya with some intimates passed by the spot where his right wing was deployed and saw `Abdullah ibn Budail ibn Warqa' al-Khuza'i lying dead, all bloodied and dust-covered. He had been fighting on the left wing of `Ali and had charged Mu`awiya's right wing but was killed, as related earlier. Mu`awiya wanted to mutilate his body but `Abdullah

ibn `Amir, a friend of Ibn Budail, said to him: “By God I shall not leave you alone with him!” Mu`awiya allowed him to take the body, which he then wrapped with his turban, carried away and buried. Mu`awiya said to him: “By God, you have buried a mighty warrior and a chieftain from the Khuza`a! I swear if the women of Khuza`a ever gain mastery over us, they would eat us alive. Even though we killed him we are not his equal as warriors!” He then quoted the following verses:

A companion to war he is: when war bites him, he bites it back,

And if war rolls up its sleeve, he rolls up his sleeve to face it.

Like a mighty lion, he protected his hallowed possessions,

Until the Fates with their arrows shot him to pieces.*

1691. `Ali looked and found the Ghassan tribe still firmly lined up in their battle stations, so urged his followers against them, saying: “These people will not leave their posts unless they are repeatedly struck the kind of blow which makes the soul depart, splits open the skull, crunches the bones, and severs wrists and palms, to the point where their foreheads are cracked with iron javelins and what remains is scattered over their chests and chins. Where are the steadfast? Where are those who seek a heavenly reward?” A group of Muslims from diverse tribes came up to him and he summoned his son Muhammad, handed him the standard and said:

“March slowly with this standard so that once you are pointing your spears at them, hold your place until my orders reach you.” Muhammad obeyed, so `Ali arrived with al-Hasan, al-Husain and the venerable veterans of Badr and other Companions and arranged the horsemen in squares. They then charged the Ghassan and others nearby, and killed many of them.

1692. At the end of the day, the fighting returned to what it had been at its beginning. Mu`awiya’s right wing, with its ten thousand Madhhij warriors and twenty thousand clad in iron armor, charged `Ali’s left wing,

cutting off and surrounding a thousand horsemen. `Ali ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn al-Harith al-Ju`fi, a follower of `Ali, volunteered to go forward and say to `Ali: “Command me!” `Ali replied: “May God strengthen your heart! Go until you reach our besieged brothers and tell them: ‘`Ali says to you: Call out “God is Great” then charge, and we too will charge until we meet together.’” Al-Ju`fi cut his way through until he reached them and delivered `Ali’s message. They called out “God is Great!” then charged until they met up with `Ali, having crushed some nine-hundred people of al-Sham. A hero of the Yemen, called Hawshab Dhu Zalim, was killed on the Sham side. Carrying the standard of the Dhuhl ibn Shaiban tribe and other clans of Rabi`a was al-Hudain ibn al-Mundhir ibn al-Harith ibn Wa`la al-Dhuhli, concerning whom `Ali recited that day:

We have a red pennant waving in the breeze;

If Hudain is told to move it forward he does so.

1693. `Ali ordered Hudain to advance, the fighting was at close quarters, archery was abandoned and only swords were used. Night closed in on them, each side called out with their own rallying cries, their spears were broken and they piled up on top of one another. A knight would draw so close to another that both would fall to the ground. That was Friday night, called the Night of Gnashing. The total number of people killed by `Ali with his own hand that day and night was five hundred and twenty-three men, most during daytime. Whenever he killed a man he would call out “God is great!” then strike, and his blows never failed to kill. This is related of him by those who fought close to him and never left his side, like his children and others. Morning found both sides still fighting, the sun was eclipsed, darkness spread, standards and pennants were cut and the times of prayers were ignored. Al-Ashtar recited the following in the *rajaz* meter:

We killed Hawshab when in the morning he came into view,

And Dhu'l Kala` before him, and Ma`bad when he advanced.

If you killed from our ranks Abu'l Yaqzan, a venerable old Muslim,

We killed seventy sinners from your ranks,

Who in Siffin met a painful chastisement.

1694. That day, a Friday, al-Ashtar was stationed on `Ali's right wing and about to win the battle. The chieftains of al-Sham then called out: "O Arabs, remember God as you triumph over things held sacred, over women and young girls!" Mu`awiya said: "Come on, `Amr ibn al-`As! Let's see what tricks you are holding in reserve, for we are defeated. And remember the governorship of Egypt!" `Amr said: "Order whoever has a copy of the Qur'an to raise it up on his spear." Many in the army raised copies of the Qur'an, there was a loud hubbub, and they cried out: "Let the book of God be the judge between us. Who will protect the frontiers of al-Sham if its people perish? Who will protect the frontiers of Iraq if its people perish? Who will carry out the *jihad* against the Byzantines, the Turks and the unbelievers?" Around five hundred Qur'an copies were raised aloft in Mu`awiya's army. Concerning this incident, the Najashi of the Harith clan recited:

When morning came, the people of al-Sham raised their spears,

To which was attached the Book of God, the best of recitations.

They called out to `Ali: "O cousin of Muhammad,

Are you not afraid humans and jinn will both perish?"

1695. When many Iraqis saw that sight, they said: "We shall answer the call of God's Book and allow it to settle our dispute." `Ali's army veered towards peace and many of his companions said to him: "Mu`awiya has offered you a genuine settlement and called you to the Book of God, so accept his offer." The most persistent in this regard was al-Ash`ath ibn Qais. `Ali said: "O people, I have so far been fully satisfied with you until, that is, war has finally lacerated you. It has, by God, killed of your

number and left others behind. Yesterday I was your commander but today I am being commanded, and you have chosen life over death!” Al-Ashtar said to him: “Mu`awiya has no one to succeed him from among his men but you, thank God, have successors. Had he had the sort of men you have, he would not have achieved your victory or been possessed of your endurance. Let iron strike upon iron and place your trust in God.” The heads of `Ali’s party spoke and echoed the words of al-Ashtar. Al-Ash`ath ibn Qais said: “We stand towards you today as we did yesterday, and know not what tomorrow will bring but, by God, the edges of our weapons are dulled and our fighting skill have diminished.” Others also spoke up and at great length. `Ali said: “Woe to you! They only raised these copies of the Qur’an because they know what they are but have no knowledge of their content. They raised them merely as a cunning trick and a trap.” They answered: “We cannot be asked to judge by the Book of God and refuse to do so.” `Ali replied: “Woe to you! I fought them precisely in order that they abide by the judgment of the Qur’an. They have disobeyed God’s commands and ignored His Book. So proceed on your path of truth and righteousness and be diligent in fighting your enemy. Mu`awiya, `Amr ibn al-`As, Ibn Abi Mu`ayt, Habib ibn Maslama, Ibn al-Nabigha and many others of their number know nothing of religion and the Qur’an. I know them better than you do. I knew them well as children and as grown men and they were the worst of children and the worst of men.” A long argument ensued, some of which we have already reproduced, until they finally threatened to do to him what was done to `Uthman.

1696. Al-Ash`ath said: “If you wish, I can go to Mu`awiya and ask him what he intends.” `Ali answered: “That’s up to you. Go to him if you wish.” So al-Ash`ath went to see Mu`awiya and asked him about his intentions and Mu`awiya replied: “You and us shall abide by God’s

commands in His Book. Send from your side one whom you trust and choose, and we in turn will send someone from our side. We hold them bound by oath to act in accordance with the Book and not go beyond it, and we then abide by what the two men have agreed upon to be the judgment of the Book.” Al-Ash`ath found his words to be reasonable and went back to see `Ali and told him what had transpired. Most people said: “We agree and accept and hear and obey.” The people of al-Sham chose `Amr ibn al-`As while al-Ash`ath and others, who afterwards fell away and adopted the views of the Kharijites, said: “We are content for Abu Musa al-Ash`ari to represent us.” `Ali said: “You disobeyed me when all this began so do not disobey me now. I do not consent to delegate Abu Musa as our representative.” Al-Ash`ath and those with him said: “We will accept no one but Abu Musa.” `Ali said: “Woe to you! He is not trustworthy. He abandoned me and discouraged people from joining me and did such and such---mentioning things Abu Musa had done. He then fled for several months until I gave him safe-conduct. But here is `Abdullah ibn `Abbas whom I’d rather appoint.” Al-Ash`ath and those with him said: “No, by God. We will not be judged by two men from Mudar.” `Ali said: “Then let it be al-Ashtar.” They replied: “Did anyone ignite the present crisis except al-Ashtar?” `Ali said: “Do what you please.” They sent a message to Abu Musa explaining the situation and Abu Musa was told that the two sides had agreed to a truce so he said: “Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds!” He was told that he had been appointed an arbiter so he said: “We belong to God, and to Him we shall return.”

Chapter 81

An account of the two arbitrators and of the start of arbitration

1697. Before the Battle of Siffin, Abu Musa al-Ash`ari used to relate how civil wars would rock the Israelites, lifting them up then dashing them

down, until they delegated two arbiters who gave a judgment that displeased both their followers; and that this community will also experience civil wars that will lift and dash them until they delegate two arbiters who will give a judgment displeasing to both their followers. Suwaid ibn Ghafala said to him: “Take care, if you ever live till that day, not to be one of the two arbiters!” Abu Musa asked: “Me?” “Yes, you,” he replied. Abu Musa would then remove his shirt and say: “May God never lead me up to paradise nor provide me with a resting place in this world!” Afterwards, Suwaid met him and said: “O Abu Musa, do you still remember your words?” Abu Musa replied: “Ask your Lord to grant health and safety.”

1698. The document (*sahifa*) agreed upon stated among other things that the two arbiters would uphold what the Qur’an upheld and discard what the Qur’an discards; that they should not follow their caprice nor use any trickery; and that if they did so their verdict would be invalid and the Muslims would not be bound by their judgment. When forced to accept arbitration, and al-Ashtar was rejected after having been on the point of victory, and someone had told `Ali what they said about him, namely, that if he refused arbitration, he would be handed over to Mu`awiya to do to him what he’d done to Ibn `Affan, thereby causing al-Ashtar to withdraw, fearing for `Ali’s life, `Ali said to the two arbiters: “If you judge solely by what is in the Book of God, the Book of God is entirely on my side, but if you do not judge by what is in it, then your verdict is invalid.”

1699. They postponed the date for the meeting of the two arbiters until the month of Ramadan and named the place for the meeting as a locality between Kufa and al-Sham. The document was dated a few days before the end of the month of Safar in the year 37 [ca. August 12, 657], though other accounts date it later. Al-Ash`ath took that document and passed

from place to place reading it to people with much joy until he came to an assembly of the Tamim tribe which included a few of their chieftains such as `Urwa ibn Udayya al-Tamimi brother of Abu Bilal, the Kharijite. When he read out the document to them, a lengthy debate ensued. Al-Ash`ath was accused of having started this whole affair and of being the person who prevented them from fighting their enemy until they abided by the command of God. `Urwa ibn Udayya said to him: “Do you appoint mere men to judge what God commands and forbids? There is no judgment but God’s.” He was thus the first to announce that opinion and to hold it as his decree, though this is a subject of dispute. He raised his sword to strike al-Ash`ath but his horse stumbled, the blow fell on the horse’s hind quarters and al-Ash`ath escaped.

1700. Party fanaticism was about to break out between the Yemenis and the Nizaris were it not for their divergent views about religion and arbitration. Regarding what `Urwa ibn Udayya did to al-Ash`ath, a man from Tamim recited the following:

`Urwa, O `Urwa, every ancient cause of discord will begin by being a trifle,

Then it grows and becomes momentous; so beware of the consequences of your action, little `Urwa.

Was it against al-Ash`ath, his head wrapped in a crown, that you raised your weapon, O son of Udayya?

See what `Ali says today, and follow him, for he is the best of mankind.

1701. The number of dead Shamis and Iraqis at Siffin is disputed. Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Dawraqi >Yahya ibn Ma`in who stated that the total killed from both sides during one hundred and ten days of fighting is a hundred and ten thousand, being ninety thousand Shamis and twenty thousand Iraqis. I believe, however, that the number of Shamis who fought at Siffin is greater than what has been mentioned in that regard, and that they

amounted to one hundred and fifty thousand, not including servants and retainers. Thus the total number of all who fought or did not fight was three hundred thousand or even more, since the meanest of them had one person to serve him, while some had five, ten or even more servants and retainers. The Iraqis numbered one hundred and twenty thousand fighters, not including servants and retainers. Al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy and other historians like al-Sharqi ibn al-Qutami and Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya cited the numbers we mentioned above, namely, that the total dead on both sides was seventy thousand: forty-five thousand from al-Sham and twenty-five thousand from Iraq, the latter including twenty-five veterans of the Battle of Badr. They further state that the numbers were arrived at through investigating and counting the dead after each engagement. But this can diverge greatly, since on both sides there were dead who could be identified and others who could not. Some drowned, and some were killed in the wilderness and eaten by wild animals so could not be counted, all of which plus other circumstances would render these numbers dubious.

1702. At Siffin, a woman from Iraq with three dead sons was heard reciting:

Cry my eyes, copiously,

For young men, the best of all Arabs!

Except for party spirit, what harm would have come to them,

Whether any grandee from Quraish had won the day?

1703. When arbitration took place, deep divisions sprang among all the community and some began to renounce others: brothers against brothers and sons against fathers. Recognizing the deep divisions and diverse views, the breakdown in discipline and consequent hostilities, `Ali ordered the army to depart. Among the Iraqi army, much was heard about God as sole arbiter, people hit each other with clubs and sword handles,

they exchanged insults and each group held the other to blame for their view. `Ali headed to Kufa while Mu`awiya left for al-Sham and resided in Damascus. He disbanded his army and each contingent returned to its home town or region.

1704. When `Ali entered Kufa, twelve thousand Qur'an readers and others abandoned him and went to Harura, a village near Kufa, appointing Shabath ibn Rib`i al-Tamimi as their commander, and `Abdullah ibn al-Kawwa' al-Yashkuri, from the Bakr ibn Wa'il tribe, as prayer leader. `Ali went out to see them and held debates with them following which they returned to Kufa. They were called the Haruriyya because they had met in that village and had taken up residence in it.

Yahya ibn Ma`in>Wahb ibn Jarir ibn Hazim>al-Salt ibn Bahram related: When `Ali entered Kufa, the Haruriyya would call out to him from below the pulpit: "You were afraid of death, you agreed to arbitration and you accepted humiliation. No judgment but God's!" He answered: "I await God's judgment regarding you." They replied quoting the Qur'an: {It was revealed to you and to those before you that if you ascribe partners to God, he will frustrate your endeavors, and you will end up a loser}. `Ali responded, also quoting the Qur'an: {So bear with patience. God's promise is true, and be not disheartened by those who have no conviction}.

1705. In the year 38 [658/9], the two arbiters met at Dumat al-Jandal, but other accounts mention other places for that meeting, as already mentioned when we described the dispute concerning that matter, above. `Ali sent `Abdullah ibn `Abbas and Shuraih ibn Hani' al-Hamdani with four hundred other men who included Abu Musa al-Ash`ari. Mu`awiya sent `Amr ibn al-`As and Shurahbil ibn [reading *ibn*] al-Simt with four hundred other men. As the delegation drew near the meeting place,

`Abdullah ibn `Abbas said to Abu Musa: “`Ali did not consent to having you as an arbiter. Others are superior to you, and there are many of them, but the people would accept none but you. I believe that this was intentional and in order to bring evil upon them. The most cunning Arab [i.e. `Amr] has been appointed as your opposite number. Whatever you may forget, don’t ever forget that `Ali was paid homage by the same people who paid homage to Abu Bakr, `Umar and `Uthman. Not a single trait of character disqualifies him from assuming the caliphate while not a single trait of character qualifies Mu`awiya to be a caliph.” As `Amr was about to depart for the meeting with Abu Musa, Mu`awiya gave the following advice to him: “O Abu `Abdullah, the people of Iraq forced `Ali to send Abu Musa while I and the people of al-Sham are content with you. You will be meeting with a man long in the tongue but short on wisdom. Therefore ‘delay the incision and cover the joint’* and do not reveal to him all that you are thinking.” Joining the Mu`awiya delegation were Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas, `Abdullah ibn `Amr and al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba al-Thaqafi. All three, as well as others, had refrained from paying homage to `Ali.

1706. `Amr and Abu Musa met in Ramadan in the year 38 [February, 659]. `Amr said to Abu Musa: “Speak and say what is virtuous.” Abu Musa replied: “No, `Amr, you speak first.” `Amr answered: “I would not want to put myself before you, for you have a lot of respect that is owed to you because of your age, your companionship of the Prophet, and, besides, you are a guest.” Abu Musa then spoke, praised God, mentioned the momentous event that had taken place in Islam and the resulting discord among Muslims and said: “O `Amr, I invite you to a solution [reading *ila amrin*] whereby God can restore concord, heal the rift and repair the schism.” `Amr praised his words and said: “All speech has a beginning and an end, and if we indulge in long speeches we will not

reach their end without forgetting its beginning. So let there be a written record of what we say to each other which acts as confirmation of what we agree upon.” Abu Musa said: “Then let us write.”

1707. `Amr then called for paper and a scribe, who was a servant of `Amr, and secretly instructed him to start with him first, not Abu Musa, intending to trick him. He then said to him in front of the whole assembly: “Write, for you are our witness, and do not write anything down which only one of us commands you to write until you obtain the consent of the other person. Once you obtain the consent of the other, then write, but if the other forbids you to write, wait until our two views coincide. So now write: ‘In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate. This is what so-and-so and so-and-so have adjudicated’” The scribe wrote this and began with `Amr’s name. `Amr said to the scribe: “Damn your mother! Do you put my name before his, as if you do not know his worth?” So the scribe began by writing the name of Abu Musa first then wrote: “They have adjudicated that they confess that there is no god but God, who has no partner, and that Muhammad is His servant and Prophet whom He sent {with guidance and the religion of truth that he may exalt it up above all religions, even if the idolaters find this abhorrent}.” Then `Amr dictated: “And we confess that Abu Bakr, the successor of the Prophet, acted in accordance with the Book of God and the example of the Prophet until God took him to himself after having fulfilled all his obligations.” Abu Musa said: “Yes, write it down.” `Amr dictated the same text regarding `Umar and Abu Musa said: “Yes, write it down.” `Amr continued: “Then `Uthman succeeded `Umar, with the consensus of Muslims and after consultation among the Prophet’s companions and with their consent, and he was a believer.” Abu Musa said: “This is not what we are meeting about.” `Amr said: “Surely, he must have been either a believer or an unbeliever?” Abu Musa replied:

“He was a believer.” `Amr said: “Order the scribe to write it down.” Abu Musa said: “Write it down.” `Amr then asked: “Was `Uthman killed justly or unjustly?” Abu Musa said: “Unjustly.” `Amr said: “Is it not the case that God granted authority to the kinsmen of those unjustly killed to claim revenge for their blood?” Abu Musa said: “Yes.” `Amr asked: “Do you know any kinsman of `Uthman’s more powerful than Mu`awiya?” Abu Musa said: “No.” `Amr asked: “Is not Mu`awiya entitled to pursue his murderer wherever he may be in order to kill him if he possibly can?” Abu Musa said: “Yes.” `Amr then ordered the scribe to write all this down and Abu Musa agreed. `Amr then said: “We possess proof that `Ali killed `Uthman.” Abu Musa said: “This is something that took place in the Muslim community and we are meeting here for another purpose. So I invite you to a solution whereby God can heal the the rift in Muhammad’s community.” `Amr asked: “What is it?” Abu Musa replied: “You know that the people of Iraq will never accept Mu`awiya and the people of al-Sham will never accept `Ali. So let us depose them both and proclaim `Abdullah ibn `Umar as caliph.”---`Abdullah ibn `Umar was married to Abu Musa’s daughter---. `Amr asked: “Would `Abdullah accept?” “Yes,” said Abu Musa, “provided the people force him to.” `Amr pretended to agree with everything that Abu Musa said then asked: “What about Sa`d?” Abu Musa said: “No.” `Amr then reeled off a number of names but Abu Musa would only agree to `Abdullah ibn `Umar. So `Amr took the document, folded it, placed it under his feet when both men had signed and stamped it, then said: “What if the Iraqis agree to `Abdullah ibn `Umar but the Shamis refuse, would you then fight the Shamis?” Abu Musa said: “No.” `Amr asked: “Suppose the Shamis agree but the Iraqis refuse, would you fight the Iraqis?” Abu Musa answered: “No.” `Amr said: “If you believe this to be the right course of action and for the good of the Muslims, stand up and address the people,

depose our two friends and speak in favor of this man whom you wish to declare caliph.” Abu Musa said: “No, you get up and address them for you have more right to do so.” `Amr said: “I would not wish to precede you since your view and mine are as one. So stand up and address the people, and may God guide you.”

1708. Abu Musa then stood up, praised God, called down blessings on the Prophet and said: “O people, we have examined the matter at hand and have agreed that the best course of action which brings us peace and security, heals our rifts, saves us from bloodshed, and restores amity and harmony is to depose both `Ali and Mu`awiya. I hereby depose `Ali just as I remove my turban---he then grasped his turban and threw it down--- and we have agreed to declare as caliph a man who was himself a Companion of the Prophet and whose father was a Companion, so has no equal in precedence. I mean `Abdullah ibn `Umar.” He then praised him highly and urged the people to accept him and sat down. In turn, `Amr stood up, praised God, called down blessings on the Prophet and said: “O people, Abu Musa `Abdullah ibn Qais has deposed `Ali and removed him from this office that he seeks, and he of course knows him best. I too hereby depose `Ali but affirm Mu`awiya as my ruler and yours. Abu Musa has written in this document that `Uthman was killed unjustly and was a martyr, and that his kinsmen are authorized to seek revenge for his blood from whatever quarter. Mu`awiya accompanied the Prophet as did his father so he is our caliph to whom we owe obedience and homage and pursuit of the revenge for `Uthman.” Abu Musa said: “`Amr is a liar. We did not declare Mu`awiya as a caliph but rather deposed both him and `Ali.” `Amr answered: “Abu Musa is a liar. He deposed `Ali and I did not depose Mu`awiya.”

1709. Al-Mas`udi said: I found in another historical account that they agreed to depose both `Ali and Mu`awiya then turn the matter over to a

consultation whereby people would choose a man whom they considered suitable for them. `Amr made Abu Musa go first who then said: "I hereby depose both `Ali and Mu`awiya so see what you want to do." He then turned away. In turn `Amr stood up and said: "This man has deposed his friend and I too depose his friend as he did, and affirm my friend Mu`awiya." Abu Musa said: "What's the matter with you, God damn you? You practiced trickery and are insolent. You resemble that verse in the Qur'an: {like a donkey carrying heavy tomes}." `Amr answered: "It is rather you that God damns for your lies and deceit, and you resemble the Qur'anic verse: {like a dog; if you shoo it off, it pants, and if you leave it alone, it pants}." He then kicked Abu Musa and he fell to the side. When Shuraih ibn Hani' al-Hamdani saw this, he whipped `Amr. Abu Musa slunk away, rode on his camel and headed to Mecca, and did not return to Kufa where he had his house and family. He swore he would never look `Ali's in the face as long as he lived, while Sa`d and Ibn `Umar went to Jerusalem where they practiced a state of sanctity.

1710. Regarding the action of the two arbiters Ayman ibn Khuraim ibn Fatik al-Asadi recited:

*If people had had an opinion that safeguards in times of crisis,
They would have flung at them Ibn `Abbas.*

*Instead they flung at them a stupid and ignoble Yemenite,
Who knows nothing about how to handle trickery.*

Regarding the quarrel between the two arbiters and those who declared God as sole arbiter, someone who was present at that event recited:

*We consented to God's arbitration and no one else's,
And accepted God as our Lord, the Prophet and the Qur'an.
We accepted also the bald-headed guide `Ali as our leader,
Content with him in hard times and in ease.*

We are content with him alive or dead for he is

The ruler of right guidance to command us or forbid.

To Abu Musa, Ibn A`yan says:

O Abu Musa, you were stricken by calamity in your old age,

Near to God's pardon but with your tongue stowed away.

Nor was `Amr honest with you.

Oh God! What an old Yemenite you were!

That night, you proffered your excuses,

Weakened in strength and disheartened,

And biting your fingers in regret.

But what will the biting of your fingers avail you?

1711. It is also reported that nothing happened between the two men other than what was written in the document and Abu Musa's admission that `Uthman was killed unjustly and the other matters mentioned already, and also that they did not deliver any speeches. This is because, according to that version, `Amr had said to Abu Musa: "Name anyone you want for the caliphate so I can discuss the matter with you." Abu Musa named Ibn `Umar then said to `Amr: "I have named someone. Now it's your turn." `Amr replied: "I will name the community's most powerful, wisest and most politically knowledgeable personality: Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan." Abu Musa said: "No, by God! He is not fit for the post." `Amr said: "What if I name someone who is not inferior to him?" "Who's that?" asked Abu Musa. `Amr said: "Abu `Abdullah `Amr ibn al-`As." When he said this Abu Musa realized that `Amr was being flippant so said: "You've done it, God damn you!" and the two traded insults.

1712. Abu Musa then headed to Mecca and, following his departure, `Amr headed home but did not go to Mu`awiya. This latter then sent word asking him to see him, and `Amr said: "I used to come to see you because I needed you, but if you need me then it is more fitting for you to

come to me.” Mu`awiya grasped `Amr’s meaning so reflected at length and devised a trick. He ordered that a big feast be prepared then summoned his intimates, clients and family and said to them: “I will go and see `Amr. When I order food to be brought in, invite his clients and family and let them be seated before you. Whenever one of them has eaten his fill, and has risen to leave, let one of you sit in his place. When all of them have left and none of them remains in the house, you are to close the door and not to allow any of them in unless I order you to do so.” Mu`awiya then went to see `Amr and found him lying on his couch. He did not rise from it when Mu`awiya entered nor invite him to sit next to him. So Mu`awiya came in, sat on the floor and reclined his elbow on the couch. `Amr believed that he was the master of the situation, and that it was up to him to offer homage to whomever he wishes and to name to the caliphate anyone he chose.

1713. A lengthy conversation ensued between the two men. Among what `Amr said to him was the following: “This document concluded between me and him [Abu Musa] has his stamp and mine. He has admitted that `Uthman was unjustly killed, he renounced his allegiance to `Ali and he named a number of people for the caliphate whom I did not consider worthy of it. This matter is up to me to settle and to name whomever I wish to the caliphate since the people of al-Sham have given me their solemn word and their assurances.” Mu`awiya talked to him for a while, changed the subject then exchanged jokes and pleasantries with him. Then he asked: “O `Abu `Abdullah, have you any food?” `Amr replied: “If you mean something that would satisfy the hunger of those you see, then, by God, no!” Mu`awiya addressed a servant, asking him to bring the food. The food already prepared was brought in and Mu`awiya said: “O Abu `Abdullah, invite your clients and family to eat.” `Amr invited them then said: “You too invite your companions.” “Yes,” said Mu`awiya,

“But let your companions eat first, then mine will sit and eat afterwards.”

So whenever one of `Amr's retainers rose from the table, one of Mu`awiya's retainers would take his place until all `Amr's retainers had left and only Mu`awiya's retainers were left behind. The man charged with the task rose and locked the door, so `Amr said to Mu`awiya: “You have gone and done it!” Mu`awiya replied: “Yes, indeed. By God, there are two alternatives outstanding between us, so choose either option: you either pay me homage or I kill you. By God, there is no other option!”

`Amr said: “Permit my servant Wardan to enter so that I can consult him and see what he advises.” Mu`awiya said: “No, by God! You shall not see him, nor he you, except either dead or as already explained to you.” `Amr said: “Then fulfill your promise to grant me Egypt as my fiefdom.” “It is yours as long as you live,” said Mu`awiya. Each then covenanted with the other and Mu`awiya summoned the chieftains of al-Sham, forbidding any of `Amr's companions to enter with them. `Amr addressed them as follows: “I have seen fit to pay allegiance to Mu`awiya, having determined that no one is more capable of holding this post than he.” The people of al-Sham paid allegiance to Mu`awiya who then returned to his tent [reading *manzilihi*] as caliph.

1714. When `Ali heard what had taken place between Abu Musa and `Amr he said: “I had formerly warned you against that arbitration and forbade you to hold it, but you insisted on disobeying me. And now that you have disobeyed me, what do you think of the consequences? By God, I know who made you disagree with me and challenge my authority. Had I wished to capture him I could have done so, but it was God's will to make him prevail---he meant al-Ash`ath ibn Qais, but God knows best. My orders and your disobedience recall that line of verse by the poet from the tribe of Jusham:

I called on them to do my bidding at the bend of the sandy hillock

But they only recognized how right I was the following morning.

So kill whomever has called for this arbitration, and may God kill him too, even if it is the person beneath this turban of mine. These two sinners whom you chose as arbiters abandoned God's verdict and judged according to personal caprice, without any proof or any common law. Thus, they killed what the Qur'an had revived and revived what the Qur'an had killed; their words contradicted their judgments and the Almighty did not guide them aright or grant them success. Accordingly, God, his Prophet and the virtuous believers are quit of them. So prepare yourselves for *jihad* and get ready to march out and be in your camp by the morning, God willing."

1715. Al-Mas`udi said: The various Muslim sects of our religion have differed over the two arbiters, expressing many and diverse views on the subject. In our book entitled *Al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat* we recounted all these views as also the opinions of each sect and the arguments adduced by the Kharijites, the Mu`tazilites, the Shi`ites and others. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we reported `Ali's words in his pronouncements and speeches and what he said on that subject; how he was forced to accept arbitration and how he reprimanded them after the arbitration; and how he had warned them prior to arbitration when they insisted on delegating Abu Musa and `Amr as arbiters, as in the following pronouncement: "Your opponents have chosen a man nearest to their hearts whereas you have chosen a man nearest to what you hate! It was only yesterday that you heard `Abdullah ibn Qais [al-Ash`ath] say: 'This is a civil war so cut your bowstrings and break your bows.' If he was telling the truth, he missed the right path, though unconstrained to do so, and if he is a liar then he stands convicted of his lie." There are also the words uttered by Abu Musa, discouraging people from action, urging them to remain neutral and dissuading them from joining `Ali, the

Commander of the Believers, in his wars and as he marched to the Battle of the Camel, and at other encounters. In some of his discourses, `Ali reproached Quraish after he had heard a lot of gossip from some Quraishites who abstained from offering him allegiance and were insincere in their attitude to his caliphate. He said: “Quraish alleges that Ibn Abi Talib is courageous but has no knowledge of war. May their endeavors fail! Is there anyone more experienced in war than I? I took part in war when I was hardly twenty years old and now I am more than sixty years old. But no one listens to one who is not obeyed.”

1716. Al-Mas`udi said: We mentioned in brief, above, a summary history of the Battles of the Camel and Siffin, and the two arbiters. We now turn to an account of the Battle of Nahrawan, and follow this up with a mention of `Ali's murder, though we have dealt in detail with all the above mentioned topics in this and in our earlier works.

Chapter 82

An account of his [`Ali's] war against the people of Nahrawan and matters related thereto such as the death of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, al-Ashtar al-Nakh`i and so forth

1717. Al-Mas`udi said: The Kharijites gathered together and were four thousand in number. They paid allegiance to `Abdullah ibn Wahb al-Rasibi, headed to al-Mada'in, and killed `Abdullah ibn Khabbab, `Ali's governor of the town, whose throat they slit. They then slit open his pregnant wife's belly and killed other women. `Ali had left Kufa with thirty-five thousand of its inhabitants and was joined by three thousand from Basra, dispatched by Ibn `Abbas, `Ali's governor of that city.

Among the latter force was al-Ahnaf ibn Qais and Jaria ibn Qudama al-Sa`di. This was now the year 38 [658-9]. `Ali camped at al-Anbar and his armies assembled there. He made the following speech to the people in which he incited them to the *jihad*, saying: “March steadily forward

against the killers of the Emigrants and the Ansar, for they have sought for a long time to extinguish the light of Almighty God, and have urged people to fight the Prophet of God and those with him. However, the Prophet commanded me to fight the tyrannical---these are the ones we are advancing against---the perfidious---these are the ones we have just finished fighting---and the apostates---these we have yet to meet. So march on to fight the tyrannical for they are more of a challenge for us than the Kharijites. March forth against those who fight you in order to become tyrants and be regarded by people as gods, and who turn God's worshippers into powerless slaves."

1718. The army, however, refused, insisting on starting with the Kharijites. So `Ali led his troops until he arrived at Nahrawan. He sent al-Harith ibn Murra al-`Abdi as emissary who called on them to return to the fold but they killed him and sent the following message to `Ali: "If you go back on the arbitration agreement and confess that you are an unbeliever, we will pay you homage. If you refuse, then leave us alone so that we can choose our own leader for we will then repudiate you." `Ali sent back an answer, saying: "Hand over the killers of my companions to be killed by me. I shall then leave you alone until I finish fighting the people of the west [i.e. al-Sham], and it may be that by then God will have changed your mind." They answered: "We are all of us the killers of your friends. All of us find it licit to have shed their blood and all are partners in killing them." `Ali's emissary, a Jew from the Sawad, reported that the Kharijites had crossed the river of Tararistan, upon which is a bridge known until the present day as the bridge of Tararistan. It lies between Hulwan and Baghdad, on the road to Khurasan. `Ali said: "By God, they have not crossed it nor will they until we kill them at Rumaila, below that bridge." Reports then poured in that they had crossed that bridge, with `Ali all the while refusing to believe the news and swearing

that they had not crossed it, and that they will meet their end before they do so. He then said; “March on to meet your enemy. I swear only ten of them will escape and not even ten of you will be killed.”

1719. `Ali marched and found them camped at the place known as al-Rumaila, just as he had informed his companions. When within sight of them he said: “God is great! God and his Prophet have spoken the truth!” The two sides lined up for battle and `Ali himself went up to them to ask them to return to the fold and repent, but they refused and shot arrows at his companions. `Ali was told: “We have been shot at.” He said to his companions: “Desist.” They repeated what they had told him three times and each time he ordered them to desist until he was brought a dead man covered in blood. `Ali then said: “God is great! It is now licit to fight them. Charge your enemy!” A Kharijite warrior attacked `Ali’s army, wounding some, and passing from side to side, recited:

I strike them, and when I see `Ali

I shall envelop him with a white mashrafi sword.

`Ali confronted him, reciting:

O you who seeks `Ali,

I see you’re a foolish and wretched fellow.

There was no need for you to meet him,

So come forward and fight me right here.

`Ali then charged and killed him.

1720. Another Kharijite came out, charged `Ali’s army, killing some, then kept charging them while reciting:

I strike them, and if I see Abu’l Hasan,

That man who put his trust in this world,

I will make him wear a cloak cut in half and folded.

`Ali confronted him, reciting:

O you who seeks Abu’l Hasan

Watch out and see which of us has been duped by the world.

`Ali then charged and transfixing him with his spear, leaving the spear in his body, then departed saying: "You have met Abu'l Hasan and met with what you hate!" Abu Ayyub al-Ansari charged Zaid ibn Hisn and killed him, and Hani' ibn Khattab al-Azdi and Ziad ibn Khasafa killed `Abdullah ibn Wahb al-Rasibi, while Hurqus ibn Zuhair al-Sa`di was killed.

1721. On `Ali's side, seven in all were killed but only ten Kharijites escaped though they numbered four thousand. Among the dead was al-Mukhdaj, who was not among the ten who escaped. `Ali ordered his men to look for al-Mukhdaj and they searched for him but could not find him. `Ali rose, sad of face for having missed al-Mukhdaj, and went to where there was a heap of the dead and said: "Push the bodies apart." They pushed them to left and right and at last pulled his body out. `Ali said: "God is great! By God, Muhammad never lied to me. He is missing a hand with no bones, its edge like the nipple of a woman's breast. Upon it are five or seven hairs with curly ends." `Ali then instructed them to bring him the body. He looked at his upper arm and found a lump of flesh formed at his shoulder resembling a woman's breast on which were a few black hairs. When stretched, that lump of flesh would come near the elbow of his other arm and when released it would revert to his shoulder. `Ali halted his mount, stepped down and prostrated himself to God, then remounted, and passed by the dead saying: "He who deceived you has killed you." He was asked who deceived them and replied: "Satan and some evil souls." His companions said: "God has rooted them out until the end of time." `Ali responded: "No, I swear by Him who holds my soul in His hands, they shall remain in the loins of men and the wombs of women. No rebel group will come out without another one following it, until a rebel group shall come out between the Euphrates and the Tigris,

led by a man called al-Ashmat. A man from the family of the Prophet will go out to meet him, and will kill him. Thereafter no rebel group will come out until the Day of Resurrection.”

1722. `Ali gathered together what was in the Kharijite camp, and divided the weapons and beasts of burden among the Muslims, returning property and male and female slaves to their owners. He then addressed the people as follows: “God has been gracious to you and has granted you victory so march at once against your enemy.” They answered: “O Commander of the Believers, our swords are blunted, our arrows are depleted, and our spear points are dulled. Give us time to prepare ourselves as best we can.” The person who said this to him was al-Ash`ath ibn Qais. `Ali camped at al-Nukhaila where his troops began to slink away and return to their homes until only a few remained with him. Al-Khirrit ibn Rashid al-Naji left with about three hundred men and apostasized, reverting back to Christianity. They are the descendants of Sama ibn Lu`ayy ibn Ghalib from the children of Isma`il, as they allege, though many people dispute this genealogy, asserting that Sama ibn Lu`ayy left no issue. What `Ali said about them has been recounted in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*. You will hardly find a Samaite who is not hostile towards `Ali, as shown for instance by the poet `Ali ibn al-Jahm, a Samaite, and a fraudulent and deviant character. We quoted some of his poetry and history in our book *al-Awsat*. His deviance and hostility towards `Ali was such that he used to curse his own father. When asked why he did so and what his father had done to deserve cursing, he replied: “Because he called me `Ali.”

1723. `Ali then sent a detachment led by Ma`qil ibn Qais al-Riahi, who killed al-Khirrit and his companions at the seashore, and enslaved their families and children. This occurred on the seashore of Bahrain. Ma`qil then camped in some villages of al-Ahwaz along with those enslaved. Acting as `Ali’s governor in that region was Masqala ibn Hubaira al-

Shaibani. The captive women shouted at him: “Be gracious to us!” So Masqala bought them for three hundred thousand dirhams and freed them. He paid two hundred thousand of that amount then escaped to Mu`awiya. When `Ali heard this he said: “May God call Masqala to account! He acted like a nobleman then fled like a slave. Had he stayed on, we would have taken from him what we could and if he experienced any difficulty in paying the rest, we would have allowed him to delay payment. If he was unable to do so, we would have forgiven him.” `Ali then ratified the freedom of the captives.

1724. Regarding that incident, Masqala recited:

*I left behind the women of the Bakr ibn Wa'il tribe
And I freed captives from the tribe of Lu'ayy ibn Ghalib.
I abandoned the best of all men after Muhammad,
For a little sum of money, which must surely disappear.*

Another man recited:

*And Masqala who concluded a profitable sale
The day of Najia ibn Sama.*

Masqala's deeds, his wiles and the verses he wrote about that incident are mentioned in our book *al-Awsat*.

1725. It was `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ja`far who recited the following verses to do with those who claimed descent from Sama ibn Lu'ayy:

*Sama is one of us, but as for his progeny
Their claim is in our view very dubious.
These are people who described their genealogy to us,
But this was the mere fantasy of a sleeper.
We said to them what the Trustee [`Ali] had said to them,
And everything he says is true.
If you are asked a question and you don't know the answer,
Just say: God knows best.*

1726. In the year 38 [658-9], Mu`awiya dispatched `Amr ibn al-`As to Egypt with four thousand troops, and accompanied by Mu`awiya ibn Hudaij and Abu'l A`war al-Sulami, having appointed `Amr as Egypt's governor for life, thus fulfilling his earlier promise to him. `Amr's army met the troops of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, `Ali's governor of Egypt, at a locality known as al-Musannat. Fighting took place after which Muhammad was defeated and fled, his followers having given him up and abandoned him. He headed to a place in Egypt where he hid but he was surrounded. He came out with the followers who had remained with him and fought them until he was killed. Mu`awiya ibn Khudaij, `Amr ibn al-`As and others put his body inside the skin of an ass and burnt it. This happened at a place in Egypt called Kum Sharik. It is said that this was done to him when not quite dead yet. When Mu`awiya heard the news of the death of Muhammad and his followers, his joy and pleasure was obvious to all. When `Ali heard the news of the death of Muhammad and the joy expressed by Mu`awiya he said: "Our sorrow for him equals their joy. Since I engaged in these wars I have never sorrowed for anyone as much as I sorrow for him. He was my stepson and I considered him a true son of mine. He was a dutiful son to me and was the son of my brother. For such a person let people sorrow. We leave it up to God to reward him." `Ali then appointed al-Ashtar as governor of Egypt and dispatched him with an army. When Mu`awiya heard this, he sent word to a Persian squire who lived in al-`Arish and tempted him as follows: "I will forgive the land tax you pay me for twenty years if you contrive to put poison in al-Ashtar's food." When al-Ashtar reached al-`Arish, the squire asked what his favorite food was, and was told it was honey. So he made him a gift of honey and described it in glowing terms, praising it at length. Al-Ashtar was fasting at that time, and no sooner did he drink from it than the poison settled in his stomach and he died. Al-Ashtar's

companions went to the squire and killed him and his followers. It is also said that this incident took place in al-Qulzum but the first locality is better attested. When `Ali heard the news, he said: “Upon hands and mouth”.* When Mu`awiya heard the news, he said: “God has troops among which is honey.”

1727. `Ali and his companions received that year three tributes in accordance with what was delivered to him from regions loyal to him. He then received money from Isbahan, so he addressed people as follows: “Come and get a fourth subsidy for by God I am not your treasurer.” The subsidy he received was exactly like everyone else’s, and he would take his share like any other person.

1728. Between `Ali and Mu`awiya, no war took place except the Battle of Siffin, described above. For the remainder of `Ali’s days, Mu`awiya would send raiding expeditions and `Ali would send troops to repel them and prevent them from doing harm to people. In our previous works, we gave an account of these expeditions and raids.

1729. Al-Mas`udi said: Many and diverse kinds of people, ancient and modern, and belonging to sects such the Kharijites and others, have spoken at length about `Ali’s actions during the two battles of the Camel and Siffin, and how his judgments differed in the two instances. They point out how he killed his enemies in Siffin, whether advancing or retreating, and how he killed their wounded, and they compare this to his actions during the Battle of the Camel, where he did not pursue enemies who fled, and did not kill the wounded. He had also decreed at that Battle that anyone who threw down his weapons or stayed home was safe. But there are also the rebuttals advanced by the partisans of `Ali as regards `Ali’s different actions during these two battles, arguing that the circumstances dictating these two actions were themselves different, these being the following. When the enemies at the Battle of the Camel

were routed, they had no authority to fall back upon. They simply returned home as non-combatants, were not rebels against any ruler and were no longer opposed to `Ali's rule. So the `Ali party consented to leave their defeated enemies alone. The verdict was not to kill them by the sword as long as they did not seek to ally themselves to others in order to fight him. By contrast, the enemies at Siffin were a well organized side with an established ruler [i.e. Mu`awiya] who collected weapons to equip them, was generous in his subsidies, organized regular camps for them, treated their wounded, and mounted the infantry on horses and sent them back into battle. So they would return to the fighting, submissive to his rule, abiding by his point of view, opposing other rulers, and abandoning and denying the just claims of other rulers whose demands they did not accept [reading *qabilun*]. Hence, and for reasons described above, `Ali's judgments came to differ during the two battles. Each sect or group has much to say by way of questions and answers regarding this issue, and it would take us too long to relate and explain these matters. In our earlier works, however, we recounted at length the arguments of each side, which makes it unnecessary to repeat them here. God grants success.

Chapter 83

An account of the murder of the Commander of the Believers `Ali ibn Abi Talib

1730. In the year 40 [660/61], a group of Kharijites met in Mecca, and discussed the general situation of the community and the wars and civil discord in which it was plunged. Then three of them vowed and undertook to murder `Ali, Mu`awiya and `Amr ibn al-`As, and each solemnly swore that he would not turn aside from his designated target until he either kills him or is killed in the attempt. The first was `Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljam, who was from the clan of Tujaib but these were

counted part of the Murad tribe so he was counted as a Muradi. The second was Hajjaj ibn `Abdullah al-Sarimi, nicknamed al-Burak. The third was Zadawayh, client of the `Anbar clan. Ibn Muljam vowed he would kill `Ali, Burak would kill Mu`awiya and Zadawayh would kill `Amr ibn al-`As. They promised one another that the date of execution of their deeds would be the seventeenth day of Ramadan [January 24, 661], though in some versions the twenty-first is mentioned.

1731. `Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljam al-Muradi headed towards `Ali. Arriving in Kufa, he went to see his cousin Qatam, whose father and brother `Ali had killed in the Battle of Nahrawan. She was one of the prettiest women of her age. When he sought her hand in marriage she replied: "I will not marry you unless you satisfy my desire for revenge [reading *tashfi*]." He replied: "There is nothing you can ask which I will not fulfill." She said: "Three thousand dirhams, a male and female slave, and killing `Ali." He replied: "What you ask is yours except killing `Ali because I doubt whether you will live to see it." She said: "Yes. Strike when he is unaware, and if you hit him you will have appeased my own and your desire for revenge, and married life with me will do you good. If you die, what God has in store for you is better for you than this life." He replied: "I swear to God, what brought me to this city, from which I once escaped, is nothing but that object. I grant you what you ask." He then left her and recited:

*Three thousand plus a male and female slave,
And killing `Ali with a sword that cuts to the bone:
There can be no dowry, however precious, more precious than `Ali,
And no killing as momentous as that of Ibn Muljam.*

1732. A man from the tribe of Ashja` and a Kharijite, called Shabib ibn Bajara, met Ibn Muljam, who said to him: "Do you wish to win honor in this world and the next?" "And what might that be?" asked Shabib. "Help

me to kill `Ali,” Ibn Muljam replied. Shabib said: “May your mother be bereaved of you! You have proposed {a monstrous deed}. You know how nobly he performed in the service of Islam and his record of precedence in Islam with the Prophet.” Ibn Muljam said: “Woe to you! Do you not know that he allowed mere men to judge what the Book of God contains and how he killed our Muslim brethren? Let us kill him in revenge for some of our brethren.” Shabib then joined him and they went to see Qatam, who was in the great mosque, hiding behind a thin screen and retiring for worship the night of Friday, the thirteenth of Ramadan. She informed them that Mujashi` ibn Wardan had been assigned to kill `Ali with them, then called for silk bands and tied these around them. They then picked up their swords and squatted near the door from which `Ali entered the mosque. It was `Ali’s custom each morning, and at the call to prayers, to come into the mosque to wake people up for prayer. Ibn Muljam had passed by al-Ash`ath who was in the mosque and who said to him: “May God expose your design in the morning!” Hujr ibn `Adiyy heard this remark and said: “You are about to kill him, you one-eyed man! May God kill you!” `Ali then came into the mosque and started calling: “Prayer time, O people, prayer time!” Ibn Muljam and his comrades then attacked him, calling out: “To God belongs judgment, not to you!” Ibn Muljam struck him on his forehead, Shabib’s blow struck the doorpost and Mushaji` ran away. `Ali cried out: “Don’t let that man escape!” The people attacked Ibn Muljam, stoned him, and took turns to beat him as they raised their voices. A man from Hamdan kicked him in the leg while al-Mughira ibn Nawfal ibn al-Harith ibn `Abd al-Muttalib hit him in the face and felled him, then brought him to al-Hasan. Ibn Wardan managed to melt away in the crowd and escaped. Shabib ran away until he came to where he had left his camel and baggage for his journey. A man called `Abdullah ibn Bajara, his step-brother, came to see

him and saw him removing the silk band from his chest. When he asked him about this, Shabib told him the story. `Abdullah went to his baggage, came back with a sword, and struck Shabib repeatedly until he killed him. 1733. It is said that `Ali did not sleep that night but kept pacing between the door and his chamber saying: “By God, I never lied or was lied to! This is indeed the night foretold to me.” When he went out, ducks kept by some children began to quack so a person who was in the house shouted at them to stop but `Ali said: “Woe to you! Leave them alone for they are mourners.”

1734. Certain groups of people have claimed that `Ali delegated authority to his two sons al-Hasan and al-Husain since they are his partners in the Qur’anic verse about purification [Q. 33:33]. This is the view of many who hold to the theory of specific delegation [*nass*]. Some people came to ask him about succession and one of them said: “O Commander of the Believers, what is your wish? If we lose you, and may we not, should the people pay homage to al-Hasan?” `Ali replied: “I neither command you to do so nor forbid you. You are more discerning about this matter.” He then called for al-Hasan and al-Husain and said: “I charge you to fear nothing but God. Do not desire the world even if it tempts you. Do not regret having missed anything worldly. Speak the truth, show mercy to the orphan and aid the weak. Oppose the unjust and support those unjustly treated, and where God’s commands are concerned, pay no heed to {the reproach of one who reproaches}.” He then looked at Ibn al-Hanafiyya and said: “Did you hear what I charged your brothers with?” “Yes,” he replied. `Ali said: “I charge you likewise, and further charge you to respect your brothers, to extol their deeds and not to decide any weighty matter without consulting them.” He then said to al-Hasan and al-Husain: “I charge you to take care of him for he is younger than you and your father’s son. Honor him and respect his rights.” A man said to

him: “O Commander of the Believers, will you not name your successor?” `Ali answered: “No, but I leave people as the Prophet left them.” The man said: “What then will you say to your Lord when you meet Him?” `Ali answered: “I will say: O God, You kept me alive among them as long as You desired to keep me, then You took my soul and I have left You among them. If You so wish, You can corrupt them, and if You so wish You can reform them.” He then added: “By God, this is the same night in which Joshua son of Nun was stabbed, that is, the night of the seventeenth of the month, and he died on the twenty-first.” `Ali remained alive on Friday and Saturday and God took his soul on Sunday night. He was buried in the courtyard of the mosque of Kufa. Earlier in this work we mentioned when recounting his biography the dispute among people as to the site of his grave and the arguments advanced. God took his soul at the age of seventy-two, though sixty-two is also cited. The dispute regarding his age at death has also been mentioned earlier.

1735. Al-Hasan said: “By God, a man has tonight been taken to God whom only prophets excelled in former days and whom none to come will excel. The Prophet would send him on a mission and Gabriel would protect him on his right and Michael on his left, and he would return, God having granted him victory.” The person who prayed over his dead body was his son al-Hasan who pronounced, “God is great” seven times, but other versions also exist. He left behind neither silver nor gold except for seven hundred dirhams left over from his pay, which he had intended to use to purchase a servant for his family. Others say he left behind two hundred and fifty dirhams, his copy of the Qur’an and his sword.

1736. When they were about to kill Ibn Muljam, `Abdullah ibn Ja`far said: “Let me satisfy my desire for revenge.” He proceeded to cut his hands and legs, then took a nail, heated it in the fire until it became red

hot, and blinded him. Ibn Muljam said: "Praise be to God who created mankind! You are applying kohl to your uncle's eyes with a burning kohl stick." People then took him and wrapped him in a mat, which they smeared with naphtha and set on fire, and he was burnt. Regarding him, `Imran ibn Hittan al-Raqashi* recited the following verses from a long poem in which he praised him for killing `Ali:

What a blow, from the hand of a man of piety!

He sought thereby only to obtain grace from the Master of the Throne.

Whenever I recall him, I deem him to be,

Of all mankind, the heaviest in the scales with God.

1737. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we recounted many tales about `Imran and his father Hittan, in the chapter devoted to the history of the Kharijites and their various sects like the Azariqa, Ibadiyya, Humriyya, Sufriyya, Najdiyya and others, bringing the account up to the year 318 [930]. The last of them to come out in rebellion was Rabi`a, known as Ghairun. He was led as a captive into the presence of the caliph al-Muqtadir Billah, sent to him by Ibn Hamdan from Kafar Tutha. Another rebel in that caliph's days was the man known as Abu Shu`aib.

1738. `Ali was mourned by many who mentioned his murder both at that time and until the present. Among those who mourned him at the time was Abu'l Aswad al-Du'ali, as in the following verses:

Tell Mu`awiya ibn Harb: may the eyes of those who rejoice never find rest!

Do you bring us terrible grief in the month of fasting,

By the death of the best of mankind?

You have killed the best of those who ever rode on mounts,

Taming them, and the best who ever travelled in ships,

The best who ever wore sandals and wore them out,

The best who recited the mathani and the manifest Qur'an.*

*If you looked into the face of Abu Husain,
You would see the light shining from above his eyes.
Quraish well knows, wherever they may be,
That you [`Ali] are the best of them in pedigree and in faith.*

1739. Al-Burak al-Sarimi headed to Mu`awiya and stabbed him with a dagger in his backside while praying. They arrested him and when he stood in his presence Mu`awiya said to him: “Woe to you! Who are you and what is your story?” He replied: “Do not kill me and I will tell all. That night we vowed to kill you, `Ali and `Amr ibn al-`As. If you wish, you can imprison me here. If the two of them are killed, then kill me. If not, release me and I will go after `Ali, and I swear to you by God, if I succeed in killing him, that I will return and place my hand in yours.” Some say that Mu`awiya killed him that day, others that he put him in jail and when news came of `Ali’s murder, released him.

1740. Zadawaih, though some say it was `Amr ibn Bakr al-Tamimi, headed to `Amr ibn al-`As. He found Kharija, the judge of Egypt, seated on the throne and feeding people in the assembly of `Amr, though some say Kharija was leading the morning prayers. That day `Amr had missed prayers for some sudden reason. Zadawaih struck Kharija with the sword. `Amr entered to find Kharija breathing his last and Kharija said to him: “By God, he meant to murder none but you.” `Amr responded: “Yes, but God wished it to be Kharija!” The murderer was made to stand before `Amr who asked him what the story was, and he revealed to him the tale, telling him that both `Ali and Mu`awiya had been killed that night. `Amr said: “Dead or not, you have to be killed.” The man wept. He was asked: “Are you afraid of death after having shown such boldness?” He responded: “No, by God, but out of grief that my two companions would win the honor of killing `Ali and Mu`awiya while I fail to win the honor of killing `Amr ibn al-`As.” His neck was struck off and he was crucified.

1741. `Ali would often quote the following verses:

Here is Quraish, who hope to kill me.

But I swear to God, they are neither virtuous nor successful.

If I die, I guarantee and solemnly assert,

That a war will erupt, leaving not a trace behind.

He would also frequently recite these two verses:

Be resolute and stout of heart in the face of death,

For death will surely come upon you.

Be not afraid of death,

If it lands in your valley.

He was heard to recite these two lines at the time of his murder for he had left to go to the mosque but found it difficult to open the door of his house, which was made of palm fronds. So he pulled it up and set it to one side. His belt had come loose so he tightened it and recited the two lines above.

1742. Mu`awiya had sent some of his people in secret to Kufa to spread the rumor that he, Mu`awiya, had died. The rumor multiplied and reached `Ali who said in one of his assemblies: "You have spoken much about Mu`awiya's death. By God, he is not dead, and will not die until he comes to rule the ground beneath my feet. That "son of the woman who eats livers*" wants to hear this from my lips, so he sent people to spread the rumor among you in order for him to find out and be certain what I myself know of this matter, and what the future has in store for him." `Ali then recounted at length the history of Mu`awiya and his successors like Yazid and Marwan and his sons, and made mention of al-Hajjaj and the torments he will subject them to. This was received with loud cries, weeping and groaning. A person then stood up and said: "O Commander of the Believers, you have described terrible calamities. We seek refuge in God if all this is true." `Ali replied: "By God, this will come about. I

neither lied nor was lied to.” Another man said: “O Commander of the Believers, when will all this happen?” He replied: “When this is dyed from that”* and placed one hand on his head and the other on his beard. People wept even more copiously. He said: “Do not cry now, for you shall cry for a long time after I am gone.” Most Kufans then sent secret messages to Mu`awiya describing their situation, in an attempt to win his favor. By God, only a few days later, all that he foretold came to pass.

1743. In later sections of this work, we shall recount his ascetic conduct and some of his words and history when we come to the days of Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufian. In God is success.

Chapter 84

A brief account of `Ali's words, his ascetic conduct and his history

1744. Throughout his life, `Ali never wore new clothes, and never owned an estate or a piece of land except for a small plot at Yanbu` which he gave away as alms, and made it into a religious endowment. People have preserved from all stages of his life some four hundred and eighty speeches which he delivered ex tempore, and they have transmitted them as examples of his eloquence and moral conduct.

1745. He was asked: “Who are the best of worshippers?” and replied: “They are those who, when they do good deeds, regard their actions as auspicious; when they commit bad deeds, they seek God’s forgiveness; when they are granted a favor, they render thanks; when a calamity befalls them, they are patient; when angered, they forgive.” He used to say: “This world is the home of truth for those who truly live in it; the home of salvation for those who understand it, and the home of riches for those who provision themselves from it. It is the place of prayer for the prophets of God and His angels, the place where His revelations have descended and the market of His saints. In it they earn mercy and in it they win paradise. Who, then, can censure this world, now that it has

given notice of its disappearance, heralded its farewell and announced its own end, and that of its people? Through its own tribulations, it has exemplified to them the meaning of tribulation; through its joys, it made them long for joy; it passes away, leaving a calamity behind, then returns, bringing salvation, and all this in order to warn or tempt or terrify. Some men have censured it following their expression of regret while others praised it after they had been rewarded. It made them reflect so they reflected on its vicissitudes, and it was true to them so they served it with sincerity. O you who censures this world, you who are duped by its temptations, when has the world ever granted you safe-conduct? Indeed, when has it ever deceived you as to its true nature? Is it by contemplating your fathers lying in their decayed graves or your mothers buried in the earth? How many have you treated and nursed with your own hands, seeking to cure them, and calling on physicians to prescribe them medicines, but they neither benefited by your cures nor did you help them by your efforts? The world has used them as an example of your own self, their death as an illustration of your death, when your tears are of no use to you and your loved ones can do nothing for you.” There has never been a more eloquent praise of this world than this.

1746. Among the words he uttered at some of his assemblies, which are preserved and in which he describes the world are the following: “This life has turned its back and departed and the after-life has drawn near and is at hand. Each has its own children. Therefore, be children of the after-life and do not be children of this life. Indeed, be among those who are ascetics in this world and those who strive for the other world. The ascetics in this world are those who take the earth for their carpet and dust for their beds, and who use water as their perfume. They have utterly demolished this world. He who longs for paradise thinks no more of base desires and he who fears the fires of hell refrains from illicit deeds. He

who has an ascetic attitude in this world finds it easy to bear misfortune, and he who has his eyes fixed on the after-life is quick to do good deeds. I avow that God has servants who act as if they can see the people of paradise in paradise, in bliss and living for ever, and can see the denizens of hell being tormented, their hearts sorrowful and their evil averted. Their souls are chaste and their needs are negligible. They were patient for a few days and their destiny is to enjoy a lengthy rest. At night, they line up their feet, tears pour down their cheeks, they call out to their Lord with loud voices and pray for their neck chains to be untied. In daytime, they are wise, pious and virtuous scholars. They are like arrow shafts, worn thin by fear of God and worship. When someone looks at them, he imagines them to be sick but there is no sickness in them. If one mingles with them he finds them preoccupied with mentioning hell-fire and those who are in it.”

1747. To his son al-Hasan, he said: “My son, be not in need of anyone at all and you will be his equal; ask a favor of anyone at all and you will be his prisoner; give anyone at all and you will be his master.” One of his companions came to him and asked: “How are you feeling this morning, O Commander of the Believers?” He replied: “This morning I feel weak and guilty. I consume my sustenance and I await my end.” He asked him: “What do you say about this world?” He replied: “What can I say about an abode which begins in grief and ends in death? Whoso becomes rich is seduced by it, and whoso is poor is sorrowful. Whatever is licit in this world is called to account; whatever is illicit is subject to punishment.” He was asked: “Who are the happiest in this world?” He replied: “The dead bodies beneath the ground, who are safe and secure from punishment and are awaiting their final reward.”

1748. Dirar ibn Damra, one of `Ali's intimates, entered into Mu`awiya's presence as part of a delegation. Mu`awiya said to him: “Describe `Ali to

me.” “Will the Commander of the Believers spare me from doing so?” said Dirar. Mu`awiya replied: “You have to do it.” Dirar said: “If I have to, then I say he was a man of great insight and strong personality. His speech was decisive and his judgments were always just. Religious knowledge came out of him in heaps and masses, and wisdom marked all that he ever said. Of food, he liked what was rough, and of dress what was short. He accepted our invitations, and gave us when we asked him. Though drawing us near to him and us being his intimates, by God we were never the first to address him, being in such awe of him, and never began a conversation with him, so great was he held by us to be. When he smiled, he revealed something like a string of pearls. He respected men of religion, and showed mercy to the poor. In times of famine, he would feed orphans who are close of kin, and the poor who are destitute. He clothed the naked, and relieved those in distress. The world and its ornaments he considered bleak, and felt comfortable in the darkness of night. I can see him now in his prayer niche, as the shadows of night fell, and its stars had disappeared. He would be holding his beard, restless like a man in health but weeping like a man in sorrow and saying: ‘O world, tempt someone else other than me. Is it me that you are challenging? Or is it me that you arouse in longing for you? Far, far, be it so! May your time never come! I have divorced you three times and cannot take you back. Your lifespan is short, your rich man is despicable, your significance is negligible. Alas! The provisions are insufficient, the journey is long, and the road is desolate.’”

1749. Mu`awiya said to him: “Tell me more of his words.” Dirar replied: “He used to say: ‘The most astonishing thing in man is his mind, which has elements of wisdom and elements of its opposite. If hope beckons, greed humiliates him. If greed overpowers him, miserliness destroys him. If gripped by despair, he is killed by regret. If anger overwhelms him, his

irritation intensifies. If happy and content, he forgets mindfulness. If filled with fear, he is disgraced by anguish. If he makes money, his riches make him tyrannical. If smitten by need, he is disgraced by poverty. If hunger exhausts him, his weakness turns him immobile. If he is stuffed with food, he is bothered by stomach ache. Every insufficiency does him harm and every excess corrupts him.” Mu`awiya said: “Let me hear more of his speech.” Dirar replied: “How I wish I could recite all I heard from him!” Then he added: “One day I heard him charge Kumail ibn Ziad as follows: ‘O Kumail, protect the man of faith for his back is God’s sacred territory and his soul is precious to God. He who treats him unjustly is the enemy of God. Look out for a person who has no supporter but God.’” Dirar continued: “One day I heard him say: ‘When this world smiles upon a people, it lends them the grace and beauty of others, and if it turns its back on them it robs them of their own grace and beauty.’” He added: “I once heard him say: ‘Riches deprive one of patience.’ I also heard him say: ‘The man of faith must be such that his glance is a lesson in morality, his silence is thoughtfulness and his speech is wisdom.’”

1750. After the death of Ja`far ibn Abi Talib, al-Tayyar, in Mu`ta, in al-Sham, the Prophet would not send `Ali on any mission without reciting the Qur’anic verse: {Lord, do not leave me alone for you are the best of inheritors}. During the Battle of Uhud [625], `Ali charged a square of unbelievers and routed them, so the angel Gabriel said: “This, Muhammad, is the true solace.” The Prophet said: “O Gabriel, `Ali is part of me.” Gabriel replied: “And I am part of you both.” This is mentioned by Isra’il ibn Yunus >his father>Abu Ishaq al-Sabi`i as well as others.

1751. `Ali once stopped by a beggar and said to al-Hasan: “Tell your mother to give him a dirham.” She replied: “We only have six dirhams with which to buy flour.” `Ali replied: “A person of faith will only possess true faith when he is confident that what God holds in His hand is

more than what he holds in his.” He then ordered all six dirhams to be given to the beggar. Soon thereafter a man passed by leading a camel, so `Ali bought it from him for one hundred and forty dirhams and asked for a delay of eight days to pay him. He had hardly untied the camel before another man passed by, the camel still tied up. The man asked: “How much is this camel?” `Ali replied: “Two hundred dirhams.” The man said: “I’ll take it,” and weighed out the amount. `Ali then paid a hundred and forty dirhams to the man he had bought it from, and went in to Fatima with the sixty remaining dirhams. When she asked where he had obtained the money from, he answered: “This confirms the revelation your father brought us: {Whoso does a good deed will be rewarded ten times its worth}.”

1752. Ibn `Abbas was once passing by a group of people who were denigrating `Ali and cursing him. He asked his guide --Ibn `Abbas was by then blind-- to bring him near and asked: “Which one of you was cursing God?” “God forbid we should curse God,” they answered. “Then which one of you was cursing the Prophet of God?” he asked. “God forbid we should curse the Prophet of God,” they replied. “Which one of you was cursing `Ali ibn Abi Talib?” he asked. “As for him, yes, we did,” they replied. Ibn `Abbas said: “I testify that I heard the Prophet of God say: ‘He who curses me, curses God, and he who curses `Ali curses me.’” They fell silent. When Ibn `Abbas departed, he said to his guide: “How did you find them?” He answered by reciting the verse:

They looked at you with blood-shot eyes,

Like goats staring at the butcher’s knife.

Ibn `Abbas said to him: “Recite some more, I beg you, and may my father and mother be your ransom!” The guide recited:

Eyes half shut, glances lowered,

Like a humble man beholding a mighty victor.

Ibn `Abbas said again: “Recite some more, I beg you, and may my father and mother be your ransom!” The guide said: “I don’t recollect any more.” Ibn `Abbas said: “But I do,” and recited:

Those living weep for their dead,

And their dead are a scandal to those who died before.

1753. It was related from a group of transmitters >Abu `Abdullah Ja`far ibn Muhammad >his father Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali> that `Ali said, the morning before the night during which he was struck by Ibn Muljam, after thanking God and calling down blessings on his Prophet: “Every human being shall meet it [i.e. death] and cannot escape from it. The appointed time is the progress of the soul towards it, and if one attempts to escape it, one arrives at it. How many days have I spent searching for the mystery of this matter but the Almighty refused to reveal it. Alas! It is a secret knowledge. As for my testament to you, it is as follows. Do not associate anything with God; do not abandon the example of Muhammad. Abide by these two principles. Let each one of you carry his own burden, and may God show leniency to the ignorant: a merciful Lord, an upright religion and a knowledgeable Imam. We were under the shelter of branches and subject to the blowing of winds, under the shadow of a cloud whose mass began to dwindle and whose shadow on earth dissipated. All that will be left of me is a body in some wilderness, lifeless when once it was lively, and silent when once it could speak. Let my tranquility, my head bowed in silence and my motionless limbs be like a lesson to you, for this is more eloquent than an eloquent speech. My farewell [reading *wada`i*] to you is the farewell of one who awaits you in order to greet you. Tomorrow, you will see my lifetime spread before you and my secret thoughts will be revealed to you. Peace be upon you until the Longed-for Day. Yesterday I was your companion. Today I am a lesson to you. Tomorrow I leave you. If I survive [reading

abqa] I alone am responsible for my revenge. If I die, the Day of Resurrection is my appointed day. To forgive is nearer to piety: {Do you not want God to forgive you? God is forgiving and merciful}.”

1754. As an example of his speeches before that date, where he urges people to adopt an ascetic attitude to the world is the following: “This world is about to depart and to announce its farewell. The other world is upon us and draws close enough to be seen. The race-track is made ready today, and the race begins tomorrow. You now live days of hope but beyond them lies an end. Whoso is sincere of faith during his days of hope and before his end arrives, has won the reward of his labors and has not harmed his end. Whoso is negligent during his days of hope and before his end arrives has lost his labors and his end will harm him. I urge you to serve God out of desire as you serve Him out of fear. Indeed, I have never witnessed anything like paradise, where those who seek it are asleep, nor anything like hell fire, where those who seek to escape it are also asleep. I tell you, he who benefits not from the truth is harmed by falsehood, and he who is not set straight by right guidance is driven to perdition by falsehood. You have been ordered to go on a journey and your provisions have been pointed out to you. What I fear most for you is to follow your caprice and to prolong your hopes.”

1755. `Ali’s virtues, merits, assemblies, ascetic conduct and religious devotions are far too extensive to be included in this or any other book, or be encompassed in any account, however lengthy, or any praise, however elevated. We included a selection of his history, conduct, words and speeches in our book entitled *Hada`iq al-Adhhan fi Akhbar Muhammad `Alayhi al-Salat wa`l Salam* and also in our book entitled *Mazahir al-Akhbar wa Tara`if al-Athar li`l Safwa al-Nuriyya wa`l Dhuriyya al-Zakiyya Abwab al-Rahma wa Yanabi` al-Hikma*.

1756. Al-Mas`udi said: The qualities through which the Companions of the Prophet of God acquired their honor and virtue are their precedence in embracing the faith, their emigration [i.e. to Medinah], their support of the Prophet, their kinship to him, their sacrifices on his behalf, their knowledge of the Book of God and revelation, their *jihad* in the cause of God, and their piety, asceticism, and knowledge of religious judgments, jurisprudence and wisdom. Of all these qualities, `Ali had the greatest and the most extensive share. But he is also singled out by the words spoken by the Prophet when he paired his followers in pairs of brothers and said to `Ali: "You are my brother", it being understood that the Prophet had neither a counterpart nor an equal. Then there are the words of the Prophet: "You are to me what Aaron was to Moses, but no prophet will come after me." There is also the Prophet's statement: "Whoever holds me as his lord, `Ali is also his lord. O God, befriend whomever he befriends, and oppose whomever opposes him." Then there is his prayer when Anas presented him with a gift of game bird: "O God, let the dearest of your creatures enter to share with me the eating of this bird" and it was `Ali who entered, and so forth to the end of that tradition.

1757. These and other virtues and qualities were found united in his person but scattered among others. Each companion, early or late, had virtues and when the Prophet died, he was well pleased with them, and would speak of their inward qualities and how these agreed with their outward behavior through their faith. This is mentioned in the Qur'an, and each was a brother to each. When the Prophet died and revelations ceased, certain incidents took place and people have since disputed the truth of what had taken place. But there can be no certainty about these things and no sure way of knowing what really happened. What is certain concerning these matters is what has been cited above. What has been related of the history of the Companions following the death of their

Prophet cannot be known with certainty but is merely what possibly took place. The preceding account is what we believe took place, but God knows best what truly happened. God brings success.

Chapter 85

An account of the caliphate of Al-Hasan ibn `Ali

1758. Homage was paid to al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, in Kufa, two days after the death of his father. This took place in the month of Ramadan of the year 40 [ca. January 661]. Al-Hasan then dispatched his governors to the Sawad and Jabal. Al-Hasan executed `Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljam, as mentioned earlier. Following the peace concluded with al-Hasan, Mu`awiya entered Kufa five days before the end of the month of Rabi` I, in the year 41 [July 29, 661]. Al-Hasan died, poisoned, aged 55, and was buried in the cemetery of al-Baqi` with his mother Fatima, daughter of the Prophet.

A summary of his history and conduct

1759. Ja`far ibn Muhammad related the following from his father his grandfather `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib who said: "My ancestor al-Husain entered upon my great uncle al-Hasan after he had been given poison to drink. Al-Hasan rose to answer the call of nature then returned and said: 'I have been given poison to drink many times but never drank the like of this poison. I spat out a chunk of my liver and found myself poking it with a stick in my hand.' Al-Husain asked him: 'Brother, who gave you this poison to drink?' Al-Hasan answered: 'What does it matter? If it is the one I think it is, let God call him to account. If it is someone else, I would hate to implicate an innocent person.' He lasted only three days then died.

1760. It is said that his wife, Ja`da bint al-Ash`ath ibn Qais al-Kindi, was the one who gave him the poisoned drink. Mu`awiya had sent her a

message: “If you contrive to kill al-Hasan, I will send you a hundred thousand dirhams and will marry you to Yazid [Mu`awiya’s son].” This was what led her to poison him. When al-Hasan died, Mu`awiya fulfilled his promise and sent her the money but sent her another message: “Yazid’s life is dear to us. Otherwise we would have carried out our promise to marry you to him.”

1761. It is stated that when al-Hasan was on the point of death, the poison having overcome him and he had reached the end [reading *maniyyatih*], he said: “By God he [Mu`awiya] never fulfilled his promise to her nor was he truthful in what he said.” Regarding Ja`da’s act, the poet al-Najashi, a partisan of `Ali, recited the following verses from a longer poem:

*O Ja`da, weep for him and do not tire, hereafter,
From weeping, like one left helpless and bereaved.
No shroud ever covered any human being like him on this earth,
Whether barefooted or sandalled.*

Another partisan of `Ali recited:

*Be patient in grief. There is much to console you,
And relieve the burden of your sorrow,
In remembering the death of the Prophet, the killing of the Trustee [`Ali],
The death of Husain and the poisoning of al-Hasan.*

1762. I found in the book of history written by Abu’l Hasan `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Sulaiman al-Nawfali>Salih ibn `Ali ibn `Atiyya al-Afqam who said: “I was told by `Abd al-Rahman ibn al-`Abbas al-Hashimi>Abi `Awn the state secretary>Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas>his father>his grandfather al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib, who said: ‘I was with the Prophet of God when `Ali ibn Abi Talib entered. The Prophet’s face glowed when he saw him so I [al-`Abbas] said: ‘Prophet of God, your face glows at the sight of this boy?’

The Prophet replied: ‘O uncle, by God, God Himself is fonder of him than I am. Never was there a prophet who left no progeny from his loins, and my progeny, when I am gone, is from the loins of this fellow. On the Day of Resurrection, all mankind will be called out by their names and the names of their mothers, since God wishes to safeguard their parentage, all excepting this fellow and his partisans. They will be called out by their names and the names of their fathers because their births were fully legitimate.’”

1763. When al-Hasan was being buried, his brother, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, stood by his grave and said: “Though your life was glorious, yet your death has crushed us. How excellent is the soul wrapped in your shroud, and how excellent the shroud that enfolds your body! How can it be otherwise when you are the very node of right guidance, the ally of all men of piety, and the fifth person of those enfolded in the robe.* You were nursed on piety by the hands of truth, fed by the breast of faith and nurtured in the cradle of Islam. Fragrant are you in life and in death, even though we have not cried enough at our parting from you. O Abu Muhammad, may God have mercy upon you!”

1764. In another version of the histories of the family of the Prophet, I found that Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya stood by his grave and said: “O Abu Muhammad, though your life was noble, your death is a calamity. How can it not be so when you are the fifth member of those wrapped in the robe, the son of Muhammad, chosen by God, and of `Ali, with whom God was well pleased, of Fatima the Radiant, and of the Tree of Tuba*.” He then recited:

*Can I ever oil my head, or can my assemblies ever be pleasant,
When your cheek is sprinkled with dust and you are taken from us?
I shall weep for you, as long as a pigeon weeps on a bush,
And as long as a branch grows green in the gardens of Hijaz.*

*A stranger he is, though the borders of Hijaz enclose him,
And yet all who are buried beneath the earth are strangers.*

1765. In some history books, under the heading of the history of al-Hasan and Mu`awiya, it is stated that with the caliphate of al-Hasan, the truth of the saying transmitted from the Prophet was confirmed, namely: “After me, the caliphate will last thirty years.” This is because the caliphate of Abu Bakr lasted two years, three months and four days; of `Umar, ten years, six months and four nights; of `Uthman, eleven years, eleven months and thirteen days; of `Ali, four years and a day short of seven months; of al-Hasan, eight months and ten days. This comes to a total of thirty years.

1766. Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari>Muhammad ibn Hamid al-Razi>`Ali ibn Mujahid>Muhammad ibn Ishaq> al-Fadl ibn al-`Abbas ibn Rabi`a who said: “Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas came in a delegation to see Mu`awiya. He said: ‘I was in the mosque and, by God, I heard Mu`awiya cry out “God is great!” in his palace of al-Khadra’. The people in al-Khadra’ followed suit, then the people in the mosque also followed suit when they heard the cry of the people in al-Khadra’. Fakhita bint Qaraza ibn `Abd `Amr ibn Nawfal ibn `Abd Manaf leaned out of her window and said: ‘May God give you pleasure, O Commander of the Believers! What news have reached you to make you so happy?’ He answered: ‘The death of al-Hasan ibn `Ali.’ She said: ‘We belong to God and to him we shall return!’ She wept, then said: ‘The lord of the Muslims and the son of the daughter of the Prophet of God has died.’ Mu`awiya said: ‘By God, now that you have wept for him, he was worthy of your tears.’”

1767. When the news reached Ibn `Abbas, he left and then, as he entered into Mu`awiya’s presence, the latter said: “Have you heard, O Ibn `Abbas, that al-Hasan has died?” Ibn `Abbas replied: “Is this why you cried out ‘God is great!’?” Mu`awiya said: “Yes.” Ibn `Abbas said: “By

God, his death will not delay your own nor will the pit in which he is buried block your pit. Though we sorrow greatly at his death, we previously sorrowed grievously at the death of the Lord of prophets, the Imam of the faithful and the Messenger of Almighty God, then at the death of the Lord of Trustees [ʿAli]. May God comfort us for this calamity and may he do away with this setback!” Mu`awiya said: “Woe to you, Ibn `Abbas! I never spoke to you without finding you full of rancor!”

1768. In another account, it is said that when al-Hasan made peace with Mu`awiya and the people of al-Khadra' cried out “God is great!”, Fakhita bint Qaraza leaned out of her window and said: “May God give you pleasure, O Commander of the Believers! What news have reached you?” Mu`awiya responded: “A messenger just brought me the glad news of the peace made with al-Hasan and his submission, so I recalled the words of the Prophet: ‘This, my grandson, is lord of the people of paradise. Through him, God will reconcile two great parties of the believers.’ I thank God who made my party to be one of these two.”

1769. When al-Hasan made peace with Mu`awiya as a result of what he had suffered from the people of Kufa and the harm they had done him, `Amr ibn al-`As suggested to Mu`awiya, then in Kufa, that he order al-Hasan to get up and address the population. Mu`awiya disliked the idea and told `Amr that he did not want al-Hasan to speak in public to the people. `Amr said: “I just want him to reveal his feeble mind to the people for he speaks about subjects of which he knows nothing.” `Amr insisted, so Mu`awiya finally consented. Mu`awiya came out and addressed the people, then ordered a man to call for al-Hasan ibn `Ali. The man came to him and said: “Rise, Hasan, and address the people.” Al-Hasan rose, first pronounced the confession of the Muslim creed then said: “Let me proceed. O people, God guided you with the first of our

line [Muhammad] and spared your blood with the last of our line [himself]. Political matters have their own stated term, and earthly life is constantly changing. Almighty God revealed the following to his Prophet: {Say: I know not if what you are promised is near at hand, or distant. He knows what you speak aloud and what you keep hidden. I know not, for it may be a temptation for you and a temporary delight}.” He added: “O people of Kufa, if my soul had not been dismayed by you except for three incidents, it would have been dismayed in any case: your killing of my father, your robbing me of my property, and stabbing me in my stomach. I have paid homage to Mu`awiya, so hear him and obey.” The Kufans had plundered the pavilion of al-Hasan and his luggage then stabbed him in his stomach. When he recognized the significance of what had been done to him he was forced to make peace.

1770. `Ali had once fallen sick so ordered his son al-Hasan to lead the people for Friday prayers. He mounted the pulpit, thanked and praised God, then said: “God never sent a prophet without choosing for him a leader, a following and a family. I swear by him who sent Muhammad as a true prophet that no one can deny our rights as the Prophet’s family without God denying his deeds to the same extent, nor will we ever suffer a setback without our winning out in the end: {And, in a while, you will surely know its true import}.”

1771. Among the speeches of al-Hasan as caliph was one where he spoke as follows before an assembly: “We are the successful party of God, the Prophet’s nearest kin, and his pure and virtuous family, and one of the two momentous legacies left behind by the Prophet, the other being the Book of God where all matters are explained in clear detail and which {no falsehood can blemish, adding or subtracting from it}. It is the point of reference for all matters. We do not make a mistake in interpreting it but are certain in our understanding of its inner truths. So obey us, for

obedience to us is ordained since it is linked to obedience to God, to His Prophet and to those set in authority over you. If you differ in any matter, refer it to God and His Prophet for {were they to refer it to the Prophet and those set in authority over them, its true import would be ascertained from them by those best fitted to understand it}. I warn you not to give heed to the whisperings of Satan to you {for he is indeed your manifest enemy} so you would become like his followers to whom he said:

{Today, none shall overcome you for I shall be by your side.} But when the two armies came within sight of one another, he turned tail and said: {‘I have nothing to do with you for I can see what you cannot’} and thus you will meet their spears with your shirts, their swords with your flesh, their javelins with hand blows and be as targets to their arrows, at which point {faith is of no profit to a soul unless that soul had believed beforehand or laid a stock of good works through its faith}.

Chapter 86

An account of the days* of Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan

1772. Mu`awiya was paid homage in Shawwal of the year 41 [February, 662], in Jerusalem. His days lasted nineteen years and eight months. He died in Rajab of the year 61 [April, 681], aged eighty, and was buried in Damascus in the quarter of Bab al-Saghir. His tomb is still visited to the present day, i.e. the year 332. On it is a structure, which is open to visitors on Mondays and Thursdays.

A summary account of his history, conduct, anecdotes and actions

1773. In the year 53 [673], Mu`awiya killed Hujr ibn `Adiyy al-Kindi, the first Muslim ever to be killed as a captive. Ziyad [governor of Mu`awiya] sent him off with nine of his companions from Kufa and four from elsewhere. Once he was at some miles distant from Kufa and being led to Damascus, a daughter of his, from whom he had no other issue except through her, recited:

*Rise high, resplendent moon; perhaps you might see Hujr walking away,
Walking towards Mu`awiya ibn Harb, who will kill him, or so says the
governor,*

*And will crucify him at the two gates of Damascus, with vultures
devouring his comeliness.*

*Tyrants have grown tyrannical after Hujr, and life in al-Khawarnaq and
al-Sadir* has grown sweet for them.*

O Hujr, Hujr son of `Adiyy, may you be met with safety and joy.

I fear for you that which killed `Adiyy,

And an old man in Damascus, who roars.

Alas, if only Hujr should die a natural death,

And not have his throat slit, like a camel.

Should he die, yet every chieftain of a people

Will meet death on this earth.

1774. Arriving at Marj `Adhra', some twelve miles from Damascus, the post arrived with news of them to Mu`awiya, who dispatched a one-eyed man to meet them. As he came within sight of Hujr and his companions, one of them said: "If omens are accurate, he will kill half our number and spare the rest." He was asked: "How so?" He replied: "Do you not see that the man approaching us has lost one of his eyes?" When the man came up, he said to Hujr: "The Commander of the Believers has ordered me to kill you, you font of iniquity and mine of unbelief and rebelliousness, and agent of Abu Turab*, and to kill your companions, unless you go back on your unbelief, curse your master, and declare that you repudiate him." Hujr and some of those with him said: "To bear with patience the edge of the sword is easier for us than what you are calling on us to do. And to arrive in the presence of God and his Prophet and His Trustee is more pleasing to us than to enter hellfire." However, half of the group with Hujr agreed to declare themselves quit of `Ali. When Hujr

was brought forward to be executed, he said: "Let me pray two prostrations." When he took his time in praying, someone said: "Are you afraid of death?" He replied: "No, but I never performed my ablutions without praying afterwards, and never prayed an easier prayer than this. Why should I not be afraid when I see a grave that is dug, a sword raised high and a shroud spread out?" He stepped forward and his throat was slit along with those who stood by him among his companions. It is said that they were killed in the year 50 [670].

1775. It was stated that `Adiyy ibn Hatim al-Ta'i once entered upon Mu`awiya who said to him: "What news of your "novelties?"---meaning his children. He answered: "They were killed with `Ali." He said: "`Ali was not fair to you since he killed your children and his own survived." `Adiyy replied: "You are unfair to `Ali, for he was killed and you survived." Mu`awiya said: "There remains, I vow, a drop of `Uthman's blood which can only be avenged with the blood of a nobleman from the Yemen." `Adiyy responded: "By God, the hearts with which we hated you are still in our chests and the swords with which we fought you are still on our shoulders. If you approach us in treachery for as little as one short finger span we will approach you in evil as much as a hand span. The cutting of throats and the gurgling sounds of a gorge being slit are easier for us to bear than to hear evil words spoken of `Ali. If you greet someone with the sword, O Mu`awiya, you incite the use of the sword." Mu`awiya said: "These are words of wisdom. Write them down." He then turned and conversed with him as if `Adiyy had said nothing to him.

1776. It is mentioned that `Amr ibn `Uthman ibn `Affan and Usama ibn Zaid, client of the Prophet, sought out Mu`awiya to act as arbiter in a dispute between them regarding a piece of land. `Amr said to Usama: "You seem not to know who I am." Usama replied: "Your pedigree does not impress me when compared to my clienthood." Marwan ibn al-

Hakam then rose and sat next to `Amr ibn `Uthman; al-Hasan rose and sat next to Usama; Sa`id ibn al-`As rose and sat next to Marwan; al-Husain rose and sat next to al-Hasan; `Abdullah ibn `Amir rose and sat next to Sa`id; `Abdullah ibn Ja`far rose and sat next to al-Husain; `Abd al-Rahman rose and sat next to Ibn `Amir; `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas rose and sat next to Ibn Ja`far. When Mu`awiya saw this scene he said: “Do not be in a hurry. I was a witness when the Prophet of God gave the land as a fief to Usama.” The Hashemites stood up victorious but the Umayyads came up to Mu`awiya and said: “Could you not have reached a verdict of compromise between us?” He answered: “Leave me alone. By God, every time I remember their eyes behind their helmets at Siffin, my mind is gripped with terror. War begins by being like an intimate conversation, then turns into complaint but ends with a catastrophe.” He then quoted the verses of Imru`l Qais, cited earlier in this work under the history of the caliph `Umar:

*War at first is like a young girl,
Appearing all decked in finery to every reckless man.*

He added: “What is found in the hearts will kindle wars, and a calamity can be provoked by an insignificant incident.” Then he recited:

*A trifling thing can lead to something momentous,
And from a young camel comes forth a large male camel,
And towering palm trees issue from a palm shoot.*

1777. Al-Mas`udi said: When, in the year 44 [664-5], Mu`awiya was about to declare Ziad as the legitimate son of his own father, Abu Sufian, Ziad ibn Asma` al-Hirmazi, Malik ibn Rabi`a al-Saluli and al-Mundhir ibn al-Zubair ibn al-`Awwam all bore witness in Mu`awiya’s presence that Abu Sufian had stated that Ziad was his son. They further testified that Abu Sufian had recited to `Ali, when Ziad was mentioned to `Umar ibn al-Khattab:

*By God, O `Ali, were it not for fear of a person,
Who would regard me as an enemy,
Sakhr ibn Harb [Abu Sufian] would reveal the truth about Ziad,
And would not speak ambiguously about him.
But I fear the vicissitudes of poverty, bringing misfortune,
And exile from my land [for fornication*].
I have long been deceiving the tribe of Thaqif,
Having left with them the fruit of my heart.*

1778. What made Mu`awiya even more certain was the testimony of Abu Mariam al-Saluli. This latter had informed people how the whole affair had begun. He had brought together Abu Sufian and Sumayya, mother of Ziad, in the days of the Jahiliyya, for purposes of fornication. Sumayya had been one of those who put up flags* in al-Ta'if and would pay the tax to al-Harith ibn Kalada. She took up residence at the place frequented by prostitutes in al-Ta'if, outside the fortress, and known as the quarter of the prostitutes.

1779. The reason that made Mu`awiya claim Ziad as his brother, according to Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna, was that `Ali had appointed Ziad as governor of the province of Faris from which he had dismissed Sahl ibn Hunaif. Ziad got the people of Faris to fight each other until he gained power over the province, and moved from one region to another until he pacified the entire province. `Ali then appointed him governor of Istakhr, with Mu`awiya all the while sending him threats. Then Busr ibn Artat captured `Ubaidullah and Salim, the sons of Ziad, and wrote to Ziad swearing he would kill them if Ziad did not change his mind and render obedience to Mu`awiya. Meanwhile, Mu`awiya wrote to Busr not to harm Ziad's sons, and to Ziad asking him to render obedience in return for which he would reappoint him to his governorship. So Ziad came to see Mu`awiya who placated him with

money and jewels and asked him to agree to be declared his brother. Ziad refused. Al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba had said to Ziad prior to his visit to Mu`awiya: "Go for the maximum demand, and leave off minor details. This is an objective none can attain except al-Hasan ibn `Ali, and he has paid homage to Mu`awiya. So get as much as you can before you settle down in his service." Ziad said: "Advise me." Al-Mughira replied: "My advice is for you to transfer your pedigree to his, and tie your rope to his, and turn a deaf ear to what people might say." Ziad said: "Son of Shu`ba, am I to plant a sapling in other than its proper ground where there is no clod of earth to give it life and no vein to water it?"

1780. Ziad later decided to accept Mu`awiya's offer and to adopt the advice of Ibn Shu`ba. Juwairiyya, daughter of Abu Sufian, and as commanded by her brother Mu`awiya, sent word to Ziad to go and see her. When he came, she admitted him into her presence, uncovered her hair in front of him and said: "You are my brother. This was told to me by my father."

1781. Mu`awiya then brought him out into the mosque, and summoned the people. Abu Mariam al-Saluli stood up and said: "I testify that Abu Sufian came to us in al-Ta'if. In the days of the Jahiliyya, I was a wine seller. He said to me: 'Bring me a prostitute.' I went out then came back to him and said: 'I could only find the slave woman of al-Harith ibn Kalada, called Sumayya.' He said: 'Bring her to me, with all her stench and filth.'" At this point Ziad said: "Take it easy, Abu Mariam. You were asked to testify, not to slander." Abu Mariam answered: "I would have liked it better had you spared me from giving this testimony, but I simply testify to what I experienced and saw. I swear he grabbed the corner of her garment, I closed the tent flap upon them and I sat outside, averting eyes and ears. Soon thereafter, Abu Sufian came out wiping his brow. I said: 'What now, Abu Sufian?' He answered: 'I never copulated with

anyone like her, Abu Mariam, were it not for her drooping breasts and her stench.”

1782. Ziad then got up and said: “O people, this witness has mentioned what you have heard and I can’t tell false from true in his account.

‘Ubaid* was a virtuous foster brother and a praiseworthy client, and the witnesses know best what they have declared.” Yunus ibn ‘Ubaid, brother of Safiyya bint ‘Ubaid ibn Asid ibn ‘Illaj al-Thaqafi---Safiyya having been the mistress of Sumayya---then said: “O Mu`awiya, the Prophet of God decreed that the child belongs to the bed and the adulterer should be stoned, but you have decreed that the child belongs to the adulterer and the stone belongs to the bed. You have transgressed the Book of God and revoked the legal verdict of the Prophet by accepting the testimony of Abu Mariam regarding the adultery of Abu Sufian.” Mu`awiya responded: “You will either keep your mouth shut, Yunus, or I will cause you to fly and not to fall any time soon!” Yunus answered: “Will I not fly to God and then fall?” Mu`awiya said: “Yes, and I ask God’s forgiveness.”

1783. ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Hakam recited, though it is also attributed to Yazid ibn Mufarrigh al-Himyari:

Go and deliver this message to Mu`awiya ibn Harb

A message that passes from one land to the next,

And coming from the man of Yemen:

Are you angry when it is said your father was chaste,

And happy when it is said he was an adulterer?

I testify that your kinship to Ziad,

Is like the kinship between the elephant and the donkey.

Regarding Ziad and his brothers, Khalid al-Najjar recited:

Ziad and Nafi` and Abu Bakra: I consider them to be a wonder of all wonders!

Here are three men, born from the womb of one female, but diverse in pedigree.

One is from Quraish, or so he says, the other is a client, and the third claims he's an Arab.

1784. When `Ali was killed, Mu`awiya harbored malice towards Hashim ibn `Utba ibn Abi Waqqas, al-Mirqal, and his son `Abdullah ibn Hashim, dating back to the Battle of Siffin. So when Mu`awiya appointed Ziad as governor of Iraq he wrote to him: "Greetings. To proceed. Search for `Abdullah ibn Hashim, tie his hands behind his neck and send him to me." Ziad dispatched him from Basra, chained and with his hands tied behind his neck, to Damascus. Ziad had broken into his house in Basra. When `Abdullah was admitted into the presence of Mu`awiya, the latter had `Amr ibn al-`As with him, so Mu`awiya said to `Amr: "Do you know this fellow?" `Amr said: "No." Mu`awiya said: "This is the man whose father recited the following verses at the Battle of Siffin:

I sold my soul to God when it grew sick,

Blaming it much; indeed, not little.

A one-eyed man who seeks a position of honor for his family,

And a man who experienced life so much that he grew tired of it,

And who must either conquer or be conquered.

He will drive them away with his knotted spear,

For I do not consider noble someone who flees from battle.

1785. `Amr quoted the following verse:

Pasture might flourish on earth mixed with dung,

But rancor in the hearts remains unchanged.

He added: "Before you, O Commander of the Believers, stands a captured lizard. Make his veins flow with blood down to his chest, and do not return him to Iraq, for he cannot stop his perfidy, and the Iraqis are a treacherous and seditious people who are the party of Satan in any fight.

His caprice will lead him to his death, his views will make him overbearing, and his gang will lend him strength. And harm is requited by a similar harm.” `Abdullah replied: “O `Amr, if I am to be killed, I am a man surrendered by his people and his last day has arrived. Should you not have said all this when you turned away from the fighting as we called on you to engage in single combat? There you were, taking refuge wrapped in rags smeared with semen and patchy bands of cloth, like a black slave girl or an obedient ewe, incapable of resisting the slightest touch.”

1786. `Amr answered: “By God, you have fallen into the broad jaws of those who are your equal in courage, and which will not let go of you. I doubt whether you will escape from the claws of the Commander of the Believers.” `Abdullah replied: “O Ibn al-`As, I swear to God that you are boastful when prosperous, a coward in war, tyrannical when in power and terrified when facing an enemy. You bray like an old and sick camel, tied up between watercourses, which cannot be ridden quickly and is hopeless if ridden hard. Should you not have blustered thus when you were surrounded by a group of men who were blameless when young, and did not apostasize when old? These were men with strong arms and sharp tongues who expose falsehood and cure what is crooked, who are satisfied with little, heal the sick and honor the humble.” `Amr retorted: “By God, I saw your father that day with his entrails throbbing, his guts pulsating and his blood gushing out as though crushed by a mountain.” `Abdullah answered: “O `Amr, we put you and your speech to the test and found your tongue to be lying and treacherous. You have sought refuge among people who do not know you and among soldiers who do not challenge what you say. Had you sought to speak among people other than the people of al-Sham, your mind would have exposed your evil, your tongue would stammer and your thighs would have shivered like the

thighs of a young camel crushed beneath its burden.” Mu`awiya said:
“Stop it, you two!” then ordered `Abdullah to be released.

1787. `Amr then recited the following to Mu`awiya:

*I gave you a crucial advice but you disobeyed me;
Killing Ibn Hashim would have been a wise policy.
Was not his father, O Mu`awiya, the man who
Fought us hard that day when throats were being slit?
He would not stop until our blood flowed at Siffin
Like seas in flood.*

*And this is his son, and sons resemble their fathers,
But soon, through him, the tooth of repentance will be pulled.**

`Abdullah recited in answer:

*O Mu`awiya, that fellow `Amr holds a grudge
Whose basic malice will not slumber.
He advises you, son of Hind, to kill me.
But `Amr's advice is like that of foreign tyrants.
But even these tyrants do not kill their captives,
If these are protected by pacts of surrender.
At Siffin we won an engagement against you,
The winners being Hashim and his son.
He [Hashim] suffered what God had decreed he would suffer,
And the past is like the confused dreams of a dreamer.
If you pardon me, you pardon a kinsman,
And if you choose to kill me, you would do violence to what I hold sacred.*

Mu`awiya recited:

*In my view, pardon granted to grandees of Quraish
Is a means to win God's favor on a day grievous in its calamities.
Nor do I believe that by killing the son of Hashim tomorrow,
I would satisfy my desire for revenging Lu'ayy and `Amir.*

*Rather, I shall pardon him, now that his crime has become manifest,
And his bad luck has made him stumble.*

At Siffin, his father was like a burning flame upon us,

*But was killed by death-dealing [reading *nahabir*] spears.*

1789. One day, `Abdullah ibn Hashim attended Mu`awiya's court and Mu`awiya asked: "Who will define to me the meaning of generosity, valor and chivalry?" `Abdullah said: "O Commander of the Believers, generosity means to offer money and gifts before one is asked to do so; courage means daring when advancing into battle and patience when feet are about to turn away; chivalry means to be upright in one's faith, to spend money in a good cause and to protect one's neighbors."

1790. When `Ali dismissed Qais ibn Sa`d ibn `Ubada as governor of Egypt, he appointed Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr to replace him. When the latter arrived in Egypt he sent a letter to Mu`awiya in which he said: "From Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr to the misguided Mu`awiya ibn Sakhr. To proceed. God in His glory and might created mankind not in vain nor out of some deficiency in His power nor out of any need to create them. Rather, He created them to be worshippers, and made some to be misguided, others rightly guided, some damned and others saved. Then, in His wisdom and knowledge, He chose and selected Muhammad, blessed be he and his family. He knowingly chose him and selected him for His message, trusted him with His revelation, sent him as a messenger, a harbinger of glad tidings and warning, and a guide [reading *dalilan*]. The first to answer the call, to turn in repentance to God, to believe and have faith, and become a Muslim, was his constant companion and paternal cousin `Ali ibn Abi Talib. He believed in what Muhammad revealed from the invisible world; he preferred Muhammad to all his other intimates; he defended him with his own body against all terrors; he fought his wars and made peace with whoever made his peace

with him. He never ceased from sacrificing himself for his sake in moments of darkness [reading *layl*], of fear, of hunger and of submission until he emerged as unequalled among all who followed him and unparalleled in his actions on his behalf. I now see that you wish to be his equal when he is who he is, and you are who you are. He is the most sincere of men in conscience, the best of men in progeny, the best of men where his wife is concerned, and the noblest of men where cousins are concerned. His brother is the man who sold his soul to God in the Battle of Mu'ta; his uncle is the lord of martyrs at the Battle of Uhud; his father is the one who protected the Prophet and what he possessed. You, on the other hand, are the accursed son of the accursed. You and your father never ceased from plotting to do the Prophet harm and from doing your utmost to extinguish the light of God. To that end, you collected followers, spent much wealth and incited the tribes against him. Your father died still holding these views and you have followed in his tracks: witness those whom you befriend and who take refuge with you from among the other sects and the leading hypocrites. However, and in addition to his manifest and ancient virtues, witness those who follow `Ali. They are the ones mentioned by God and whom He praised from among the Emigrants and the Ansar. They form his contingents and cohorts; they find it right and just to follow him, and consider disobedience to him to be rebelliousness. Woe to you! How can you possibly consider yourself the equal of `Ali? A man who is the heir of the Prophet, his Trustee, the father of his progeny, the first to follow him and the nearest to him in closeness and acquaintance; a man to whom the Prophet revealed his secrets and his plans? You, by contrast, are his enemy and the son of his enemy. So enjoy your earthly life as much as you can through your depravity, and may Ibn al-`As lead you further astray in your sin. It seems that your term of life is about to end, and your

cunning has grown weak. You will then know who will win the ultimate victory! Know that you are merely practicing your cunning against your God whom you think yourself safe from His cunning, having abandoned all hope of His mercy. God, however, is lying in wait for you while you are blind and deluded with regards to Him. Peace upon those who follow right guidance.”

1791. Mu`awiya wrote back: “From Mu`awiya ibn Sakhr to Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, a man who insults his own father. To proceed. I have received your letter where you describe God in terms that befit Him in His glory, power and authority, and how God chose His Prophet and his family. But this was all mixed up with a lot of words which reveal your weakness and which disparage your own father. In that letter, you mention the virtues of Ibn Abi Talib, his precedence in Islam, his kinship to the Prophet and how he consoled him in every moment of terror and fear. Thus your argument against me, and the charges you address to me, are all based on someone else’s virtues, and not on your own. I thank God for having denied you that virtue and granting it to others! Both your father and we acknowledged the virtues of Ibn Abi Talib, and his rights are accepted by us and are superior to ours. Thus, when God chose for His Prophet his path in life, fulfilled His promise to him, made his mission victorious, and crowned his reasoning with success, He then took his soul. When this happened, your father and `Umar were the first to rob `Ali of his rights and to oppose his cause. They both agreed about the matter and coordinated their efforts. They then asked him to pay them homage but he procrastinated and wavered, so they were filled with anxiety about him and intended to do him great harm until he finally paid them homage and accepted their authority. Meanwhile, they did not involve him in their decision-making nor was he privy to their secrets until God took their souls. These two were followed by `Uthman who

continued their policy and conduct. But you and your friend [ʿAli] found fault with him to the point where rebels from all regions grew bold against him. So the two of you sought to create terrible troubles for him and openly declared your enmity towards him until you achieved your objective where he was concerned. So take care, son of Abu Bakr, and calculate your every move with great care. You fall far short of being the equal of one whose self-restraint is as vast as a mountain, whose will does not bend by force, and whose patience cannot be matched by anyone who claims to be forbearing [reading *mada*]. Your father prepared the ground well and established his supreme authority with ease. If our own cause is just, it is your father who began this whole matter; and if our cause is unjust, it is your father who laid the basis for it, and we are merely his partners. Had not your father acted in that manner towards Ibn Abi Talib, we would not have opposed him [ʿAli] and would indeed have submitted to him. But we saw how your father acted towards him in the past and we simply followed his example. Therefore, it is your father whom you ought to blame for the mess you are in, or else leave this matter alone. Peace upon those who turn to God in repentance.”

1792. Among the letters addressed by Muʿawiya to ʿAli is the following: “To proceed. Had we known that the war between us would lead us both to what it has led, we would not have waged it against each other.

Though our minds are overwhelmed, enough remains of them to make us repent the past and attempt to ameliorate the future. I once asked you to leave me as governor of al-Sham, provided I owed you no obedience, and I call on you today to accept what I offered you before. For you cannot hope to live longer than me, nor is your fear of war any different from mine. By God, our troops have been decimated, our men have fallen in battle and we two, descendants of ʿAbd Manaf, cannot claim against one

another any superiority in virtue such that a noble person would suffer humiliation or a free man would be enslaved. Peace.”

1793. `Ali wrote back: “From `Ali ibn Abi Talib to Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufian. To proceed. I received your letter in which you state that had we known that the war between us would lead us both to what it has led, we would not have waged it against one another. You further state that you and I seek through war some object which we have yet to attain. As for your request to grant you al-Sham, I am not likely to grant you today what I refused to grant you in the past. As for our being alike in our fears and hopes, you are not more resolute in your doubt than I am in my certainty, nor are the people of al-Sham more attached to this world than the people of Iraq are attached to the next. As for your saying that we both are the descendants of `Abd Manaf, this is indeed so. But Umayya is not like Hashim, Harb is not like `Abd al-Muttalib, Abu Sufian is not like Abu Talib, the person set free* is unlike the Emigrant, and he who denies the truth is unlike one who follows it. We possess the privilege of prophecy by means of which we killed tyrants and showed magnanimity to free men. Peace.”

1794. Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari>Muhammad ibn Hamid al-Razi>Ibn Mujahid>Muhammad ibn Ishaq> Ibn Abi Najih who said: “When Mu`awiya went on pilgrimage, he circumambulated the Ka`ba along with Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas. Having performed that rite, Mu`awiya went to the House of Assembly [*Dar al-Nadwa*] and made Sa`d sit with him on his couch. Mu`awiya then proceeded to abuse `Ali and to curse him. Sa`d shuddered and said: ‘You made me sit with you on your couch then proceeded to curse `Ali. I swear to God, if I possessed a single one of the virtues of `Ali, I would prefer this to possessing everything that the sun shines upon. By God, if I were a son in law of the Prophet and had children like `Ali’s, I would prefer this to possessing everything that the

sun shines upon. By God, if I were the person to whom the Prophet said during the Battle of Khaibar: ‘I shall give the standard to a man beloved by God and his Prophet and who loves God and his Prophet, who does not flee from fighting and at whose hands God grants victory’, I would prefer this to possessing everything that the sun shines upon. By God, if I were the person to whom the Prophet said during the raid on Tabuk: ‘Are you not satisfied to be to me what Aaron was to Moses, and yet there will be no prophet after me’, I would prefer this to possessing everything that the sun shines upon. I swear I shall never enter any house where you are found as long as I live.’” Sa`d then rose and left.

1795. I found another version of this incident, namely in the book of history written by `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Sulaiman al-Nawfali, transmitting from Ibn `A`isha and others, that when Sa`d spoke these words and rose to leave, Mu`awiya farted and said: “Sit down to hear the answer to what you just said. You have never in my view been more blameworthy where `Ali is concerned than you are now. Why didn’t you support him? Why didn’t you pay him homage? If I had heard from the Prophet what you did, I would have been `Ali’s servant as long as I lived.” Sa`d replied: “By God, I have a greater right to be in your place than you.” Mu`awiya said: “But then the `Udhra tribe would not allow it.”

1796. It is said that Sa`d’s father was a man from the `Udhra tribe. Al-Nawfali adds: “Regarding this matter al-Sayyid ibn Muhammad al-Himyari* recited the following verses from a longer poem:

Ask Quraish about this if you are ignorant:

Who among them was the firmest grounded in religion?

And who was the first to surrender to God, the most learned,

And the purest in family and in progeny?

Who was it who declared the oneness of God when it was thought a lie,

*When Quraish worshipped idols and partners with God?
 Who was it who advanced into battle when others fell back,
 And who gave generously when others withheld money in some crisis?
 Who was the most just in his verdicts, and most fair,
 Most self-restrained, and most truthful in his promises and undertakings?
 If Quraish were to answer truthfully, they'll name none but Abu'l Hasan,
 That is, provided you do not encounter enviers of the virtuous,
 Or encounter some braggart from the tribe of Taym,
 Or some one from the tribe of `Adiyy, who denies the rights of God,
 Or someone from the `Amir or Asad tribes,
 Akin to slaves, barbarians and scoundrels,
 Or the clan of Sa`d, and Sa`d himself, who they knew
 Had veered away from God's straight path.
 They were a people who agreed on Zunaim* then made him their lord,
 And were it not for the lethargy of the Zuhr clan, he would not have
 become their lord.*

1797. Sa`d, Usama ibn Zaid, `Abdullah ibn `Umar and Muhammad ibn Maslama had all refused to pay homage to `Ali, along with others we have mentioned who refrained from doing so. Their argument was that this would incite civil discord, while others said to `Ali: "Give us swords with which to fight with you. If we strike believers, it would not harm them, and would bounce off their bodies while if we strike the unbelievers, the swords would pierce their bodies." `Ali turned away from them and cited the Qur'anic verse: {Had God known of any good in them, he would have made them hear; and had he made them hear, they would still turn away, heedless.}

1798. Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya and other historians state that when Mu`awiya finally assumed power, he was visited by Abu'l Tufail al-Kinani. Mu`awiya asked him: "How anguished are you about your friend

Abu'l Hasan?" He answered: "Like the anguish of the mother of Moses for Moses. I complain to God that I am not anguished enough."

Mu`awiya asked: "Were you among those who witnessed the murder of `Uthman?" He answered: "No, but I was among those who were present but did not go to his aid." Mu`awiya asked: "What prevented you from doing so when it was your duty to aid him?" He answered: "I was prevented by exactly the same reason that prevented you, as you waited in al-Sham for him to meet his end." Mu`awiya asked: "But do you not consider my calling for revenge for his blood a way of supporting him?" He answered: "Yes, but you and him are like the two people mentioned in the verse of al-Hanafi:

Let me not find you mourning for me after my death,

While during my life you never offered me any sustenance."

1799. Dirar ibn al-Khattab entered upon Mu`awiya who asked him: "How sorrowful are you for Abu'l Hasan?" He answered: "Like the sorrow of a mother whose child was butchered upon her breast, whose tears never stop and whose sorrow is never stilled."

1800. Among other incidents is the exchange of correspondence between Mu`awiya and Qais ibn Sa`d ibn `Ubada, when the latter was `Ali's governor of Egypt. Mu`awiya wrote as follows to him: "To proceed. You are a Jew and the son of a Jew. If the party most to your liking wins, they dismiss you from your post and appoint a replacement; if the one least to your liking wins, they persecute you and kill you. Your father had stretched his bow and shot at his target but he merely scratched the surface and missed the joint. His own people let him down and his end came upon him, and he died an exile in the Hawran." Qais ibn Sa`d wrote back: "To proceed. You are an idol-worshipper, son of an idol-worshipper. You embraced Islam under duress and you abandoned it willingly. Your faith is not old and your hypocrisy is not new. My father

had indeed stretched his bow and shot at his target but troublemakers opposed him, men who were not his equal in stature [reading *ka`bih*] and were in no wise his peers. We are the supporters of the religion which you have left and the enemies of the religion which you have embraced.”

1801. Following the death of `Ali and the conclusion of peace, Qais ibn Sa`d, along with a delegation of the Ansar, entered upon Mu`awiya, who said to them: “What favor can you, the Ansar, possibly ask of me? By God, rarely were you on my side, and often were you against me! In the Battle of Siffin, you fought very hard against me to the point where I saw the portents of death flaring on the points of your spears. You defamed me in terms more painful than the prickings of a medicinal barb until, when God had firmly established the state, the like of which you yourselves attempted to create and achieve, you come to me and tell me to abide by the testament of the Prophet! How absurd! He who holds a grudge refuses any excuse.” Qais responded: “We demand what you possess in the name of Islam, as made sufficient for us by God, not in the name of certain sects or parties which are affiliated to you. As regards our enmity towards you, if you so wish we can withhold it from you. As regards our defaming you, these are mere words: if untrue, they wither away and if true, they abide. As for the establishment of the state, this was not to our liking. As for our fighting hard against you at Siffin, we were with a man whose obedience we regarded as obedience to God. As for the Prophet’s testament with respect to us, the Ansar, whoso believes in it will abide by it after he has gone. As for your statement that he who holds a grudge refuses any excuse, there is no power, other than God’s, to prevent you from doing us harm, O Mu`awiya.” Feigning lack of concern, Mu`awiya said: “Submit your demands.” Qais ibn Sa`d was a profoundly ascetic and pious man, and greatly attached to `Ali. His piety and obedience to him was such that one day, as he was praying, he bowed

down in prostration. In the place where he was about to lay his head was a great snake curled up, so Qais moved his head aside and prostrated himself next to the snake. The snake then curled itself around his neck but Qais did not cut short his prayer or miss any part of it until he had finished. He then picked up the snake and threw it away. This incident was mentioned by al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Mughira>Ma`mar ibn Khallad>Abu`l Hasan `Ali ibn Musa al-Rida.

1802. One day, `Amr ibn al-`As said to Mu`awiya: "I am very anxious to know: are you cowardly or courageous? I see you advancing and say to myself he intends to fight, then I see you retreating and say to myself he intends to flee." Mu`awiya replied: "By God, I do not advance until I see that it is profitable to do so, and do not retreat unless I see that it is a wise policy. This is like the verse of al-Ta`i:

*I am a courageous man if the opportunity presents itself,
But if it does not, then a coward."*

1803. Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya transmitted from Abu`l Agharr al-Tamimi, who said: "As I stood at Siffin, al-`Abbas ibn Rabi`a passed me wrapped in armor, his eyes sparkling beneath his helmet like two burning flames or the eyes of a serpent. In his hand he carried a broad Yemeni sword which he was brandishing and with the portents of death gleaming on its blades. He was mounted on a strong-willed horse. As he was holding it back and attempting to pacify him, the voice of a man called `Irar ibn Adham, from al-Sham, reached him, saying: 'O `Abbas, come to a single combat!' `Abbas replied: 'Let me dismount since single combat grants less hope for survival.' The Shami dismounted, reciting:

*If you mount on horses, this is our custom,
And if you dismount for single combat, we are a people ready for it.*

1804. "Al-`Abbas twisted round and recited:

God knows we do not love you,

And don't blame you for not loving us.

He then squeezed the ends of his coat of mail inside his girdle aiming for his belt and gave his horse to a black servant, and I swear to God I can still see his wooly hair. Then each warrior approached the other. The two armies reined back their horses, waiting to see what would become of the two combatants. They exchanged blows with their swords for a part of the day, with neither able to reach his opponent because they were so well protected by their body armor. Then al-`Abbas noticed a weak gap in the armor of the Shami, so struck him with his hand and tore it up to his breast, then went back to fighting him with the seam of the armor now exposed. Al-`Abbas then struck him a blow which pierced his ribs. The Shami fell forwards and the people uttered such a loud "God is great!" that the ground shook beneath their feet, and al-`Abbas rejoined his army.

1805. "Then from behind me I heard someone reciting the Qur'anic verse: {Fight them and God will punish them at your hands. He will humble them and grant you victory over them. He will appease the hearts of a people who believe}. I turned round and found `Ali who said to me: 'O, Ibn al-Agharr, who went out in single combat to face our enemy?' I replied: 'It is your nephew, al-`Abbas ibn Rabi`a.' 'Is it truly al-`Abbas?' he asked. 'Yes,' I replied. `Ali said: 'O `Abbas, did I not forbid you and `Abdullah ibn `Abbas to take up a combat position or begin a fight?' `Abbas replied: 'It is as you said.' `Ali asked: 'So what happened to change my order?' `Abbas replied; 'Am I to be called to single combat and refuse to respond?' `Ali said: 'Obeying your leader is more binding than obeying your enemy.' `Ali then grew very angry and saw this as an evil omen. Later, he calmed down, raised his hands to heaven and prayed: 'O God, thank al-`Abbas for what he accomplished and forgive his offense! O God, I have forgiven him so You too forgive him!"

1806. Mu`awiya lamented the death of `Irar ibn Adham and said: “When will a hero ever beget someone like him? Will his blood go unavenged, God forbid, unless some man sells his soul to God and demands revenge for the blood of `Irar?” Two men came forward, from the tribe of Lakhm, who were considered mighty warriors of al-Sham. To them Mu`awiya said: “Go forth and whichever of you kills al-`Abbas will receive one hundred ounces [*uqiyya*] of gold, the same of silver and the same of Yemeni garments.” The two then went forward and invited al-`Abbas to single combat, calling out between the battle lines: “O `Abbas! O `Abbas! Come out and meet the person challenging you!” He replied: “I have a master whom I need to consult.” `Ali came by, encouraging the troops on the right wing, and when told what had happened with `Abbas, he said: “I swear to God, Mu`awiya would wish that not a single member of the Hashim family remains alive to blow on a fire unless he is stabbed in his belly, in order to extinguish the light of God {But God insists on blazing forth his light, even if the unbelievers find it abhorrent}. By God, men after men from our family shall rule over them, who shall cause the ground to swallow them up, leaving not a trace behind.”

1807. `Ali then said: “O `Abbas, give me your armor and take mine.” They swapped armor, `Ali jumped on the horse of `Abbas and headed to the two men from Lakhm, who had no doubt that he was `Abbas. They said to him: “So your master gave you permission?” `Ali found it difficult to say yes, so recited the Qur’anic verse: {Leave is granted to those who are being attacked, for they were wronged, and God is assuredly capable of sending them victory}. `Abbas was of all people the person who most closely resembled `Ali in his body and in the way he rode a horse. One of the two came forward to fight him but he did not [reading *fa ma*] escape `Ali’s thrust. The other warrior came forward and `Ali dispatched him as he did the first, then rode back reciting the Qur’anic verse {A holy month

will substitute for a holy month, and sacrilege calls for retaliation.

Whoever commits aggression against you, retaliate against him in the same measure as he committed against you.} `Ali then said: “O `Abbas, take back your armor and give me mine, and if anyone else returns to challenge you, report back to me.”

1808. The news got back to Mu`awiya who said: “God blight *al-Lajjaj* [his horse]! He refuses to move. Every time I ride him I am left in the lurch.” `Amr ibn al-`As said: “By God, those left in the lurch are the two Lakhm men, and the deceived are those whom you deceived, but you yourself have not been left in the lurch.” Mu`awiya said: “Shut up, man. This is none of your business.” `Amr said: “But what if God has not shown mercy to the two Lakhm men, and I doubt He will?” Mu`awiya replied: “But this undermines your argument and your proposition.” `Amr said: “I know this, and were it not for Egypt and its governorship, I would have escaped this ordeal [i.e. Siffin]. For I know that `Ali ibn Abi Talib is in the right and you are opposing him.” Mu`awiya replied: “By God, Egypt has blinded you, and were it not for Egypt, I would have found you intelligent and alert!” Mu`awiya then collapsed laughing. `Amr asked: “What are you laughing about, O Commander of the Believers, and may God always bring a laugh to your lips?” Mu`awiya replied: “I am laughing at how quick witted you were that day when you went forth to fight `Ali and exposed your private parts. By God, you stood face to face with the portents of death and saw death staring you in the face. Had `Ali wished, he could have killed you, but `Ali chose to deal graciously with you.” `Amr said: “By God, I was standing on your right when `Ali invited you to single combat. You became cross-eyed with fear and were in such a state as I would hate to remind you of. So laugh, instead, at your own self, or else drop the subject.”

1809. Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya stated that Mu`awiya one day during Siffin came out in front of the army and charged `Ali's left wing. `Ali was then encouraging the troops on that wing. `Ali changed his dress and horse and came out dressed in the clothes of some of his companions. Mu`awiya stood his ground against him. When they drew near, Mu`awiya recognized him, spurred his horse, and galloped away, with `Ali behind him, until he escaped and entered the ranks of the army of al-Sham. So `Ali killed a man from their ranks who stood in the way of Mu`awiya, then turned back, reciting:

*Alas! Mu`awiya has escaped me,
Riding a fast horse, like a predatory vulture.*

1810. One day, `Amr ibn al-`As arrived from Egypt to see Mu`awiya who, when he saw `Amr, recited:

*Good people die while you go on living,
The ropes of death miss you, and you do not die.*

In reply, `Amr recited:

*I will not die so long as you're alive,
Nor will I die until you do.*

1811. It is mentioned that when Mu`awiya saw the army of Iraq drawing near, with the soldiers falling in, each in his station, he saw `Ali on a reddish horse, his head bare, arranging the ranks as though planting them in the ground like saplings, and they stood firm like a compacted structure, he said to `Amr: "O Abu `Abdullah, do you see Ibn Abi Talib and what he is up to?" `Amr replied: "He who sets his sight on much will risk much."

1812. In the year 40 [660-1), Mu`awiya sent Busr ibn Artat with three thousand men to Medinah where Abu Ayyub al-Ansari was governor. This latter resigned and Busr went on to the mosque, mounted the pulpit and threatened the people of Medinah with death, so they submitted and

paid homage to Mu`awiya. When `Ali heard the news, he dispatched Jariya ibn Qudama al-Sa`di with two thousand men and Wahb ibn Mas`ud with two thousand. Meanwhile, Busr headed to Mecca then on to the Yemen where `Ubaidullah ibn `Abbas was governor. `Ubaidullah left the Yemen and rejoined `Ali, appointing as his successor `Abdullah ibn `Abd al-Madan al-Harithi. `Ubaidullah left his two sons, `Abd al-Rahman and Qutham, with their mother, Juwayriyya bint Qariz al-Kinani. Busr killed both sons, and killed a maternal uncle of theirs from the Thaqif tribe.

1813. Busr ibn Artat al-`Amiri, from the tribe of `Amir ibn Lu`ayy ibn Ghalib, had killed between the two mosques of Medinah a large number of people from the Khuza`a and other tribes. Likewise, at al-Jurf, he had killed a large number of people from the Hamdan tribe, and killed many Persian-Arabs in San`a. He killed every single person whom he learnt was a partisan or lover of `Ali. When he heard of the coming of Jariya ibn Qudama al-Sa`di, he ran away. Jariya then captured Busr's nephew, along with forty members of his family, and killed them all. Juwayriyya, mother of the two sons of `Ubaidullah ibn al-`Abbas killed by Busr, and a noted beauty, would walk around her house, hair let down, mourning her two sons and reciting:

Who can feel what I feel, my two sons?

Like two pearls they were, from which the shells had splintered.

Who can feel what I feel, my two sons?

They filled my ears and heart, but my mind is now abducted.

Who can feel what I feel, my two sons?

They were marrow of my bones, but my marrow is now close to death.

I was told it was Busr, but refused to believe their words,

And thought this was all a lie.

He fell upon my two sons' veins with a cutting sword,

Well sharpened; thus are heinous crimes committed.

1814. Al-Waqidi stated: `Amr ibn al-`As entered one day upon Mu`awiya, having grown old and fragile, and with him was his client Wardan. They began to converse, with no one present but Wardan. `Amr asked: “O Commander of the Believers, what pleasures remain for you to enjoy?” Mu`awiya replied: “As for women, I no longer desire them. As for clothes, I have worn soft and fine garments till my skin has grown weak, and I can’t tell which is softer than the other. As for food, I have eaten tender and delicious meals till I no longer know which dish is more delicious than which. As for perfume, my nostrils have sniffed so much till I no longer know which is sweeter than which. There is nothing more delectable to me than a cold drink on a hot summer day, and looking at my children and grandchildren running around me. What about you, `Amr?” `Amr replied: “Wealth in land, which I plant, then reap its fruit or crop.” He turned to Wardan and asked: “What pleasures remain for you?” Wardan replied: “A generous and noble favor which I hang on the necks of men of pedigree and rank, and which they do not reciprocate until I encounter Almighty God, and whose consequences descend down to their progeny after I am gone.” Mu`awiya said: “To hell with our conversation for the rest of this day! This slave has triumphed over the two of us!”

1815. In the year 43 [663-4], `Amr ibn al-`As ibn Wa’il ibn Hashim ibn Sa`id ibn Sahn died in Egypt, aged ninety. He governed Egypt for ten years and four months. On his deathbed he said: “O God, I have no reason to expect forgiveness in order for me to repent, and no strength to be triumphant. You commanded us and we disobeyed You; You forbade us and we sinned. O God, here is my hand resting on my chin.*” He added: “Furrow the earth well for my grave and scatter the earth gently over my body.” He then placed his finger in his mouth until he died. His son `Abdullah prayed over him on the Feast of Breaking the Ramadan

Fast, and began by praying over his body before the Feast prayers, then later led the congregation in the Feast prayers.

1816. The father of `Amr was one of those called the “mockers” by the Qur’an, and it was about him that the following Qur’anic verse was revealed: {He who baits you: it is he who shall be childless}. Mu`awiya appointed `Amr’s son, `Abdullah, to his father’s post and privileges.

`Amr left behind 325,000 gold dinars, 2 million silver dirhams and harvest yields in Egypt worth 200,000 dinars, and an estate known as al-Waht in Egypt, valued at 10 million dirhams. About `Amr, the poet Ibn al-Zubair al-Asadi recited the following verses from a longer poem:

*Do you not see how the vicissitudes of Time afflicted `Amr al-Sahmi,
He for whom the tribute of Egypt was collected?*

Neither his prudence nor his cunning availed him,

Nor the wealth he amassed when power came into his hands.

He ended up a dweller of open ground,

His scheming frustrated, his wealth withered away.

1817. In the year 45 [665-6], Mu`awiya appointed Ziad Son-of-his-Father* as governor of Basra and its provinces. As he entered the city, Ziad recited:

*How many there are who are happy to see us, but whom we do not
please,*

And how many sad to see us, but whom we do not harm!

1818. That year, Mu`awiya sent an expedition led by Sufian ibn `Awf al-`Amiri, ordering him to reach al-Tuwana, but he contracted smallpox and many with him were also stricken. People sorrowed for what had befallen them in the land of the Byzantines. It reached Mu`awiya that when his son Yazid heard the news as he sat drinking with his companions, he recited:

It was a comfort to me, having heard what that expedition had met with

*Of fever and smallpox, at the Battle of Al-Tuwana,
As I reclined on couches, on my elbow,
At Dayr Murran, Umm Kulthum by my side.*

1819. Mu`awiya swore he would send Yazid on an expedition, accompanied by Sufian. This expedition came to be known as the “next in line” during which the army reached Constantinople, and during which Abu Ayyub al-Ansari died and was buried outside the gate of that city. Abu Ayyub’s name is Khalid ibn Zaid. It is stated that Abu Ayyub died in the year 51 [671], on an expedition with Yazid. In our book *al-Awsat*, we recounted the history of that expedition and Yazid’s actions in it.

1820. In the year 49 [669], a plague broke out in Kufa. Al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba, its governor, fled the city, then returned, contracted the plague and died. A Bedouin passed by as he was being buried and recited:
*Will there be a sign to indicate the resting place of al-Mughira that can
be recognized,*

Upon which can be heard the loud sounds of humans and jinn?

*If you [al-Mughira] were to meet Haman and Pharaoh in the afterlife,
Then know that the Lord of the Throne is just.*

1821. It is related that al-Mughira once rode out to see Hind bint al-Nu`man ibn al-Mundhir* who was then living as a nun in a monastery of hers. Al-Mughira was at that time the governor of Kufa, while Hind herself had become blind. Arriving at the monastery, he requested permission to see her. Her maid came to her and informed her that al-Mughira was asking to see her. Hind told her maid to set out some furnishings for him, so she arranged a hair cushion for him, upon which he sat when he entered, and announced: “I am al-Mughira.” She said: “I know you as the governor of the city. What brought you here?” He answered: “I came to offer you marriage.” She said: “I swear by the Cross, had you wanted to marry me for my piety or beauty, you would

have attained your objective, but I'll tell you what you truly intended.”
“And what might that be?” he asked. She replied: “You wanted to marry me so that when the Arabs gather together for some festive season you would stand up and announce that you have married the daughter of al-Nu`man.” He said: “That is so. But tell me this: what did your father say about this clan of Thaqif?” She answered: “He used to affiliate them to Iyad. Once, two men from Thaqif boasted in his presence, one against the other, the first from the clan of Salim, the other from Yasar. He asked them about their genealogy and one of them affiliated himself to Hawazin, the other to Iyad. So my father said: ‘Ma`add is not superior to Iyad’. As they left my father recited:

Thaqif are not from Hawazin,

Nor is it affiliated to `Amir and Mazin,

Except through some report which seeks to embellish its pedigree.”

1822. Al-Mughira said: “As for us, we are from Hawazin, and your father knew best the truth of what he said. But tell me, which Arabs did your father like best?” She replied: “Those most obedient to him.” “Who were they?” he asked. She replied: “Bakr ibn Wa`il.” “What about the Tamim?” he asked. “He never asked them to submit to obedience,” she answered. “What about Qais?” he asked. “They never drew near to him in amity without following this up by doing something he hated.” He asked: “How did your father obey the Persians?” She replied: “He obeyed them as long as it was to his liking.” Al-Mughira then departed.

1823. When al-Mughira died, Mu`awiya attached Kufa to Ziad, who thus became the first to govern the “two Iraqs” i.e. Basra and Kufa. In the year 48 [668], Mu`awiya took possession again of Fadak* from Marwan ibn al-Hakam. He had granted it to Marwan but now took it back. Mu`awiya had gone on pilgrimage in the year 50 [670], and ordered the pulpit of the Prophet to be carried from Medinah to Damascus. When it was being

transported, there was an eclipse of the sun and stars could be seen in the daytime. Mu`awiya was scared and considered this to be an ominous event, so he ordered the pulpit restored to its place and added six steps to it.

1824. In the year 53[673], Ziad-son-of-his-Father died in Kufa during the month of Ramadan. His patronymic was “Abu’l Mughira”. He had written to Mu`awiya saying he had pacified Iraq with his right hand but that his left hand was empty, so Mu`awiya added the Hijaz to his domains, and his governorship extended to the people of Medinah. Hearing the news, both young and old met in the Prophet’s mosque and were loud in their complaints to God. They took refuge for three days in the tomb of the Prophet, knowing what an unjust and violent man he was. Then a pimple appeared on the palm of Ziad’s hand. He scratched it and it spread and turned black in color, becoming a black gangrene from which he died. He was fifty-five years old, though some say he was fifty-two, and was buried in al-Thuwayya, a district of Kufa. Ziad had gathered the people of Kufa at the gate of his palace to incite them to curse `Ali. Whoever refused was put to the sword.

1825. `Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Sa’ib stated: “I arrived in the public square of Kufa with a number of Ansar. As I sat among them, I nodded off and saw a tall creature approaching. I said: ‘What is this?’ The creature answered: ‘I am the Long-necked Shepherd of the Sheep called Naqd* and have been sent to the lord of this palace.’ I woke up, terrified. Hardly an hour later, someone came out of the palace and said: ‘Disperse. The governor is too busy to see you.’ Sure enough, he was stricken with the calamity described above.” Regarding this incident, `Abdullah ibn al-Sa’ib recited:

*He was not about to give up on his designs against us,
Until there came to him the Long-necked Shepherd of the Naqd.*

*He caused the side of his body to fall off, a blow that hit its mark,
When he unjustly abused the man in the public square.*

By the “man in the public square” he meant `Ali ibn abi Talib, though some maintain that `Ali was buried in the palace of Kufa.

1826. It is said that Ziad contracted a disease in his arm and consulted Shuraih* as to whether he should cut it off. Shuraih said: “You have a lifespan allotted to you and a known destiny, and I would hate for you, if you are destined to live longer, that you would spend that term of life as one-armed. If your end is decreed, I would hate for you to meet your Lord one-armed. If He asks you why you cut it, I would hate for you to answer that it was because of reluctance to meet Him or else because you wished to escape His divine decree.” People blamed Shuraih for that view and he answered: “He sought my counsel and he who gives counsel is bound to be honest. Were it not for the honesty required of a counselor, I would have wanted God to cut off his hand one day, his leg the next and the rest of his body the day after!”

1827. In the year 59 [678-9], delegations from the cities of Iraq and elsewhere arrived to see Mu`awiya. Among the Iraqi delegation was al-Ahnaf ibn Qais along with other prominent figures. Mu`awiya said to al-Dahhak ibn Qais: “Tomorrow I shall sit in public assembly and shall speak as God wishes me to. When I am done, speak about Yazid as you ought to, then call for homage to be paid to him. I have ordered `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Uthman al-Thaqafi, `Abdullah ibn `Idat al-Ash`ari and Thawr ibn Ma`n al-Sulami to back up your words and to answer your call to homage.” The following day, Mu`awiya sat in formal assembly, spoke to the people about about what he knew of his son Yazid’s wise leadership and prudence, and that this led him to name him as his heir apparent. Al-Dahhak ibn Qais then stood up and encouraged people to pay homage to Yazid, then turned to Mu`awiya and said: “Be resolute in

your intention.” Then `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Uthman al-Thaqafi, `Abdullah ibn `Idat al-Ash`ari and Thawr ibn Ma`n al-Sulami all rose and backed up his words.

1828. Mu`awiya then asked: “Where is al-Ahnaf ibn Qais?” Al-Ahnaf stood up and said: “People nowadays are living through the reprehensible consequences of a time that has gone, and the beneficial expectations of a time yet to come. Yazid is a lovable and friendly person. If you appoint him as your heir apparent, this should not be the result of an arrogance that drives one to destruction or of a sickness that exhausts, for you have experienced good times and bad, and have had a wide knowledge of affairs. Be fully mindful of the person to whom you entrust your legacy and power after you are gone. Disobey him who advises you but cannot help you, and counsels you but is not cognizant of your circumstances.” Al-Dahhak ibn Qais rose up in anger, castigated the people of Iraq as prone to rebelliousness and hypocrisy, then added: “Fling their opinions right back into their throats.” `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Uthman stood up and spoke in similar terms. Then a man from the Azd stood up, pointed to Mu`awiya and said: “You are the Commander of the Believers. If you die, Yazid is the Commander of the Believers. If anyone disobeys, he’ll have this,” and pulled his sword out of its scabbard. Mu`awiya said to him: “Sit down, for you are indeed the most eloquent of men.”

1829. Mu`awiya was thus the first to arrange for homage to be paid to his son Yazid as his heir apparent. Regarding this, `Abdullah ibn Hammam al-Saluli recited:

If you bring us Ramla or Hind,
We'll pay her homage as Commandress of the Believers.
When one Chosroes dies, another rises in his place,
Counting them as three in a row.
Alas! If only we had thousands,*

*We would not have suffered what we did.
And you [Umayyads] would have been beaten back to Mecca,
There to lick the soup of those living in a time of famine.
We endured such persecution to the point where,
If we drink the blood of the Umayyads, we would not be satisfied.
Your subjects are lost while you hunt rabbits,
Totally indifferent to them.*

1830. Letters were then sent to the various cities announcing the homage to be paid to Yazid. Mu`awiya wrote to Marwan ibn al-Hakam, his governor of Medinah, informing him of his choice of Yazid as heir apparent, and ordering him to pay homage and to obtain homage from people in his province. When Marwan read the letter, he was angry and left for Damascus with his family and maternal uncles from the Kinana tribe. Arriving there, he went to see Mu`awiya whom he found walking among tables laden with food. Approaching him to the point where his voice could reach him, he saluted him then spoke at great length, scolding Mu`awiya. Among other things he told him: "O Ibn Abi Sufian, set things straight and draw back from appointing mere boys to rule. Know that, among your own family, you have those who are your equal, and who would be viziers if you show them favor." Mu`awiya replied: "You are the equal of the Commander of the Believers and his firm support in every crisis and his strong arm, and you shall be the next in line after the heir apparent." So he made him the heir to Yazid and sent him back to Medinah. He later dismissed him from that post and appointed al-Walid ibn `Utba ibn Abi Sufian, thus breaking his promise to appoint him as the successor to Yazid.

Chapter 87

A brief account of Mu`awiya's moral conduct, his policies and some choice and entertaining reports from his history

1831. We mentioned above and in brief something of Mu`awiya's history and conduct. In this chapter, we shall recount in summary form his moral conduct, policies, and some choice and entertaining stories, and other relevant matters until his death.

1832. It was one of Mu`awiya's habits to hold five public audiences every day and night. Once he prayed the dawn prayer, he would sit and listen to the storyteller until he finished his stories. He would then go inside, his copy of the Qur'an would be brought to him and he would read his portion (*juz'*), then go into his chambers, issue his orders and proscriptions, then pray four prostrations. He would then go to his audience chamber and allow his most intimate friends to join him, and they would converse. His viziers would then come in and talk to him about matters of interest to them for the rest of the day and until the evening. Then the small dinner would be brought, that is, the remains of the evening meal such as a cold goat meat or chicken or such like. He would converse at length then return to his chambers for private purposes.

1833. He would then come out and say: "Boy, get me my chair." He would then go the mosque where the chair would be placed, and he would sit on it with his back against the royal enclosure, and surrounded by his bodyguards. He would then be approached by the weak, the bedouin, the young boy, the woman and the person without any kin, and one of them would say: "I have been unjustly treated" to which Mu`awiya would respond: "Do him justice"; another would say: "I've been wrongfully attacked" to which he'd respond: "Send a force of men with him"; another would say: "I've been wronged" and he'd say: "Look into his case". When there was no one left, he would go in, mount on his throne and say: "Permit people to enter according to rank, and let no one distract me from returning any peace greeting." If he is asked: "How is

the Commander of the Believers this morning, long may God allow him to live?" he'd answer: "By the grace of God." When all are properly seated, he would say: "You people have been called men of rank because you outrank those below you in this chamber. So submit to us the needs of those who cannot reach us." A man would then get up and say: "So and so has been martyred," and he'd respond: "Grant a salary to his children"; another would say: "So and so is absent from his family" and he'd respond: "Take care of them; give them; satisfy their needs; serve them."

1834. Lunch would then be brought in and a scribe would stand at his head. As a man came forward, Mu`awiya would say: "Sit at the table". He would sit, stretch forth his hand, eat two or three mouthfuls and meanwhile the scribe would be reading out his petition. Mu`awiya would then issue his instructions regarding him then say to him: "Worshipper of God, let another man follow you." The man would rise, another would take his place, and this would continue until all those with petitions were dealt with. It may happen that some forty petitioners might come forth, depending on the size of the lunch table. Lunch would then be removed and the people would be told to disperse. Once dispersed, he would enter his chambers, and no one would disturb him until the noon prayer is announced, at which point he would come out and pray, then he would re-enter, pray four prostrations, and admit his most intimate friends.

1835. If it is winter time, he would offer them the food taken on pilgrimage such as dried sweetmeats, dried sugar, round pastry made of milk, sugar and semolina flour, cakes made with clarified butter, dried fruits and prunes. If it is summer time, he would offer them fresh fruits. His viziers would enter and consult with him as regards their business for the rest of the day. He would sit in council until the afternoon, then come out and pray the afternoon prayers, following which he would enter his

private chambers when no one was allowed to disturb him. Towards the end of the afternoon, he would come out and sit on his throne and permit people to enter according to rank. Dinner would then be brought in, and as much would be consumed as possible before the call to evening prayer was announced. Petitioners were not summoned at this point. Dinner was then taken away and evening prayers were called out, at which point he would go out and pray, then follow this by four prostrations. At each prostration, he would recite fifty verses of the Qur'an, sometimes aloud and sometimes in a whisper.

1836. He would then retire to his private chambers and none was allowed to disturb him until night prayers were announced, when he would go out and pray. At this point, permission was granted to close intimates, viziers and courtiers, and the viziers would consult him as regards their business for part of the night. He would then spend a third of the night awake, listening to a recital of the history and battles of the Arabs and non-Arabs, their kings and policies, the biographies of the kings of the various nations, their wars, the tricks they employed and their conduct towards their subjects, together with the history of former nations. Then delicacies of sweetmeats would arrive, prepared by his womenfolk, and other choice foods. He would then retire to sleep for a third of the night, then would get up, sit and notebooks would be brought, containing the biographies of kings, their histories, wars and tricks they employed. All this would be read out to him by young boys specially assigned to do so who were instructed to memorize or read them. Each night he would get to hear a summary of histories, biographies, antiquities and diverse kinds of policies. He would then go out, pray the morning prayer, then return each day to act the way we described above.

1837. After him, a few strove to imitate his manner of life such as `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan and others, but they could not match his self-

restraint, nor his consummate handling of political matters, nor his caution in acting, nor his kind treatment of people according to their rank and his gentleness towards all classes.

1838. He was such a skillful and consummate politician and so successful in drawing both elite and commoners to him that one day a Kufan entered Damascus riding on his camel, as the troops were leaving Siffin. A Damascus man came up and claimed that the she camel was his, and had been taken from him in Siffin. Their dispute reached Mu`awiya and the Damascene produced fifty witnesses to testify in his favor. Mu`awiya therefore judged in the Damascene's favor and ordered the Kufan to hand the camel over to him. The Kufan then said: "May God guide you aright! This is a male camel, not a female camel!" Mu`awiya said: "The verdict has already been given." When the people dispersed, he secretly indicated to the Kufan to come and see him. When he came, he asked him about the price of his camel, then paid him double its price and was kind and generous to him, adding: "Tell `Ali I am fighting him with a hundred thousand men none of whom can tell the difference between a male and a female camel!"

1839. His subjects obeyed him so completely that while marching to Siffin he led them in Friday prayers on a Wednesday. They lent him their heads when fighting and carried him on top of them, and believed `Amr ibn al-`As when he told them that it was `Ali who killed `Ammar ibn Yasir when he brought him out to fight for him. They afterwards were so obedient to him that they made the cursing of `Ali a custom on which the young were reared and the old died.

1840. Al-Mas`udi said: One historian recounted that he asked a chieftain from al-Sham, and a man of prudence and rationality: "Who is this Abu Turab whom the prayer leader curses from the pulpit?" The man replied: "I think he is a bandit bred by civil war!"

1841. Al-Jahiz recounts that he heard a commoner to whom, while on pilgrimage, the House [i.e. Ka`ba] was mentioned and he replied: “If I come to it, who will speak to me from it?” Jahiz further states that a friend of his told him that a commoner heard him calling blessings on Muhammad and asked him: “What do you say about this Muhammad?” The man replied: “He is our God.”

1842. Thumama ibn Ashras* recounted: “I was riding in the market of Baghdad and found a man with a crowd gathered around him. I dismounted from my mule and said to myself that there must be some reason for this gathering. So I mingled with the crowd and found the man advertising a kohl he had which he claimed cured every disease of the eyes. I looked and found one of his eyes discolored and the other shrunken. I said: ‘You there! If your kohl were as you claim, it would have benefited your eyes.’ He replied: ‘You fool! Was it here that my eyes became diseased? No, this happened in Egypt.’ The crowd said: ‘He is right.’” Thumama adds that he barely escaped the shower of sandals falling on him.

1843. Some of my friends told me that a commoner in Baghdad petitioned an official who was pursuing deviant theological views, claiming that his neighbor was a secret Manichean [*zindiq*]. The official asked him about his neighbor’s sect and the commoner responded that he was a Murji’i*, a Qadari*, a Nasibi* and a Rafidi*. Investigating the matter further, the man said: “He hates Mu`awiya ibn al-Khattab who fought `Ali ibn al-`As.” The official said: “I can’t tell what I envy more, your knowledge of theological views or your expertise in genealogy!”

1844. One of my scholarly colleagues told me the following story: “We used to sit and debate about Abu Bakr, `Umar, `Ali and Mu`awiya and quote the opinions of the learned in this matter. A group of commoners would come and listen to our discussions. One day, one of them, who was

among the most rational and had the longest beard, said: ‘How complimentary you are towards `Ali, Mu`awiya and so and so!’ I said: ‘So what is your own view?’ He said: ‘Of whom?’ I replied: ‘Let’s say `Ali. What do you say about him?’ He said: ‘Is he not Fatima’s father?’ I said: ‘And who was Fatima?’ He answered: ‘She was the wife of the Prophet and the daughter of `A`isha, sister of Mu`awiya.’ I said: ‘And what was `Ali’s story?’ He answered: ‘He was killed along with the Prophet in the expedition against Khaibar.’”

1845. When `Abdullah ibn `Ali* set out in pursuit of Marwan* in al-Sham---Marwan’s history and death to be recounted later---and arrived in al-Sham, he sent a group of rich and distinguished men from all provinces of al-Sham to Abu`l `Abbas al-Saffah [first Abbasid caliph]. When they arrived, they swore to Abu`l `Abbas that they “never knew that the Prophet had any kin or family to mourn him except the Umayyads until you assumed the caliphate.” Regarding this, Ibrahim ibn al-Muhajir al-Bajali recited:

*O people, listen to this wonder of all wonders!
The wonder being that the `Abd Shams [Umayyads]
Opened wide to people the gates of lying.
They claimed they were the heirs of Ahmad [the Prophet]
To the exclusion of `Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib.
Liars they are, by God! What we know for sure
Is that an inheritance belongs to the near of kin.*

1846. In the days of Harun al-Rashid there was a man in Baghdad who claimed to be a physician and whose prescriptions the commoners regarded as blessed. He was a Materialist [*dahri*] who pretended to be a Sunnite, cursed the heretics and was known as “the Sunni”. The commoners would be drawn to him and each day a large crowd would congregate carrying jugs of water. Once assembled, he’d spring up and

address them as follows: “O Muslims, you state that none brings benefit or harm save God. So why do you come [reading *masirakum*] to me asking about what benefits or harms you? Seek refuge instead with your God and put your trust in your Creator so that your actions can match your words.” They would then tell each other: “Yes, by God, he is telling us the truth.” How many a sick person he left untreated until he died! In some cases, he would leave the patient until he grew still, show him the water, prescribe his medicine and tell him: “Your faith is weak. Were it not so, you would have placed your trust in God. As He made you sick, so He will cure you.” Saying such things, he managed to kill a large number of people by getting them to refuse to do anything to treat their sick.

1847. It is customary among commoners and plebs to accept as leaders those unfit to lead, to prefer one who should not be preferred, and to adopt the opinions of the ignorant. They follow a person instinctively, without distinguishing between virtue and defect, or between truth and falsehood. Consider and reflect upon what we have said. Examine the assemblies of scholars, and you will find them full of the elite, of people of discrimination, integrity and sharp argument. Then turn to examine the throngs and mobs of the common people and you will never see them except hurrying forth to watch someone leading a bear around, or another one thumping a tambourine to make a monkey dance, or else eager to be entertained or play games, or frequenting a juggler, a trickster, or a conjuror, or listening to some mendacious story-teller, or collected around a criminal who is being punished, or crowding around a man who has been crucified. Someone screeches at them and they follow, and if one shouts at them they do not turn back. They do not know sin when they see it, nor virtue when they experience it, and care not if they mix up the decent person with the indecent, or the believer with the unbeliever.

The Prophet has plainly stated the following about them: “People are of two kinds: the learned and those who are learning. The rest are rabble and riffraff, for whom God cares nothing.”

1848. Likewise, when `Ali was asked about the commoners, he replied: “They are rabble and riffraff, followers of anyone who screeches. They have not been enlightened by knowledge nor are they anchored to any firm principle. Mankind has agreed to call them rabble. They are those who, if massed together, are victorious and if dispersed are nonentities.”

1849. Consider how diverse they are in their ways of life and beliefs, then consider the consensus of their masses as regards the following. They accept that the Prophet called mankind to God for twenty-two years, during which time revelations descended upon him, which he dictated to his companions. They would write this down and transcribe it, grasping it phrase by phrase. All this while, Mu`awiya was God knows where. Then, a few months before the death of the Prophet, Mu`awiya acted as his scribe, so they praised him lavishly for this and elevated him in rank by turning him into the distinguished scribe of revelations, venerating him with that title and ascribing it solely to him while deliberately disregarding others. All this originates in custom and habit, and what they were brought up on and reared to believe in. Once they reach the age of deliberation and maturity, this habit has taken hold and reached its limits and goals. Many poets, men of understanding and literary attainments, have discoursed on the subject of custom and habit. Thus, a poet recited:

Do not insult me, after having honored me:

A habit, once having taken hold, is a durable thing indeed.

Another poet, reproving a friend, recited:

What a soul has been weaned upon is heavier

Than a massive rock that you wish to dislodge.

1850. The wise men of the Arabs said: “Habit is mastered through a broad education.” The wise men of the non-Arabs said: “Habit is a second nature.” The state secretary Abu `Iqal composed a book about the morals of commoners, their conduct, character and manner of speaking, and called it *al-Malha*. Were it not that I hate prolixity and to digress from the aim of this book, which is meant to be concise, I would have cited at length anecdotes about the commoners, their morality, and their wondrous and curious acts, and would also have mentioned how people are ranked by their standards of morality and by their actions in conducting their affairs.

1851. Let us now go back to the history and political conduct of Mu`awiya and how liberal he was to his subjects, how he lavished his generosity and gifts upon them and how he embraced them all in his bounty. He thus won their hearts to him and gained their backing, to the point where they preferred him to family and kin. For example, `Aqil ibn Abi Talib once came to visit him and to convalesce from an illness. Mu`awiya gave him a warm welcome and was delighted that he had preferred him to his own brother [`Ali], and showed him considerable gentleness and kindness. He then asked him: “O Abu Yazid, how did you leave `Ali?” `Aqil answered: “I left him in a state beloved by God and his Prophet and I find you in a state hateful to both.” Mu`awiya replied: “Had you not been a guest and a convalescent, I would have given you a reply that would hurt you.” Mu`awiya then wanted to end the conversation for fear `Aqil might say something that would anger him, so he sprang down from his throne, ordered that he be given housing, and sent him an enormous sum of money.

1852. The following day, Mu`awiya sat in his council chamber and sent word to `Aqil to come to him. When he arrived he asked him: “O Abu Yazid, how did you leave your brother `Ali?” `Aqil answered: “I left him

better with regard to himself than you, and you are better for me than him.” Mu`awiya said: “You are by God as the poet says:

*If you count the things about which the Muharriq clan can boast,
Glory in them belongs to the family of `Attab.*

The glory of the family of Hashim is entrusted to you, O Abu Yazid, unchanging throughout the days and nights.” `Aqil replied:

*“Be steadfast in a war that you brought upon yourself,
A war in whose flames you will surely be burnt.*

As for you, O Ibn Abi Sufian, you are like what the other poet recited:

*If one day Hawazin were to proclaim its glories,
Make them dejected by mentioning the clan of Mushaji`,
They who bear the burden on behalf of their clients,
And who strike the heads of their enemies when the battle is fierce.*

But as for you, Mu`awiya, if the Umayyad family were to boast, whom would they boast of?” Mu`awiya said: “I urge you, Abu Yazid, to hold off. I did not sit here to listen to this, but wanted to ask you about the followers of `Ali whom you know well.” `Aqil said: “Ask anything you want.” Mu`awiya said: “Classify his followers for me and start with the Suhan family, for they are the most extraordinary orators.” `Aqil answered: “As regards Sa`sa`a, he is a man of great worth, sharp-tongued, a cavalry commander and killer of heroes. He mends what is torn and tears what is mended. He has few equals. As for Zaid and `Abdullah, they are like two running rivers into which canals pour, and by which whole countries are succored. They are serious men who brook no levity. The Suhan family is similar to what the poet recited:

*When an enemy comes to fight me, I have with me lions
Who seize the souls of real lions.”*

1853. When Sa`sa`a heard what `Aqil had said to Mu`awiya, he wrote the following letter to him: “In the name of God, merciful to all,

compassionate to each. The mention of God takes precedence over everything else, and with it all who begin must begin. You are the keys of this world and the next. To proceed: your lord has heard what you said to the enemy of both God and his Prophet. I thanked God for this and prayed that he would lead you to the highest ranks, to the red tree and the black column*, for this is a column which, when anyone abandons it, has abandoned the radiant religion. Though your soul has tempted you to go to Mu`awiya in search of his wealth, yet you are fully aware of all his moral traits of character. Beware that his fire might cleave to you and thus lead you astray from the right path. God has removed from you, O Family of the Prophet, what He placed in others. All virtue is derived from you, and all charity that has come down to us originates from you. God has made your rank to be august, protected your weighty endeavors and recorded your achievements. Your rank is pleasing to God; your endeavors are protected by Him; your achievements are comparable to those who fought at Badr. You are the ladder of God to His creatures, and the gateways to His paths: munificent hands and radiant faces. You are like the following lines of verse:

Whatever good they do, the fathers of their fathers had bequeathed to them beforehand.

Can anything produce Khatti spears except their own tree?

And can palm trees be planted except in their proper nurseries?

1854. Al-Haitham>Abu Sufian `Amr ibn Yazid>al-Bara' ibn Yazid>Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Harith al-Ta'i, a man from the Ghailan clan, who said: "When `Ali left the scene of the Battle of the Camel, he asked his chamberlain: 'Who is waiting at my door from among Arab nobles?' He replied: 'Muhammad ibn `Umair ibn `Utarid al-Tamimi, al-Ahnaf ibn Qais, and Sa`sa`a ibn Suhan al-`Abdi.' Other names were also mentioned. `Ali said: 'Admit them.' They entered and

greeted him as caliph, and he said to them: ‘You are in my view the noblemen of the Arabs and the leaders of my followers. Advise me what to do with that spoiled youth [Mu`awiya].’ They competed to offer him advice, so Sa`sa`a said: ‘Mu`awiya has been pampered by caprice. The world has been made attractive to him, so the killing of men does not disturb him. He exchanged his afterlife for the worldliness of mankind. If you deal with him wisely, you will be guided aright and hit the mark, God willing, and success comes from God, His Prophet and you. O Commander of the Believers, my advice is that you send him a prominent follower of yours whom you trust, with a letter calling on him to pay you homage. If he responds positively and declares his obedience to you, then his obligations and his rights would be the same as yours. If not, then you must declare jihad against him and be patient in awaiting the judgment of God until you arrive at the end of your life.’ `Ali responded: ‘O Sa`sa`a, I want you to write this letter with your own hand and take it yourself to Mu`awiya. Make the opening of the letter a warning and a threat, and make its ending an appeal to repentance and obedience. Let the letter begin as follows: ‘In the name of God, merciful to all, compassionate to each. From the servant of God, `Ali, Commander of the Believers, to Mu`awiya: Peace be upon you. To proceed.’ Then write what you advised me to say and make the heading of the letter the Qur’anic verse {In truth, all matters shall revert to God}.’ Sa`asa`a said: ‘Please spare me from this task.’ `Ali replied: ‘I insist you should do it.’ Sa`sa`a replied: ‘Then I shall do it.’”

1855. So Sa`sa`a left with the letter, made his travel preparations, then journeyed to Damascus. When he arrived, he went to Mu`awiya’s door and said to his chamberlain: “Obtain permission to enter for the messenger of the Commander of the Believers `Ali ibn Abi Talib.” At the door were a company of Umayyads who began to beat him with their

hands and sandals for what he had said. Meanwhile he would say to them: “Will you kill a man who says his Lord is God?” The clamor and hubbub grew loud and when Mu`awiya heard it he sent some people to keep the Umayyads away from him. They did so, and he admitted the people into his presence. When they entered, he asked them: “Who is this man?” They replied: “He is an Arab called Sa`sa`a ibn Suhan, and he is carrying a letter from `Ali.” Mu`awiya said: “I have indeed heard of him. He is one of `Ali’s arrows and a famous man of eloquence among the Arabs. I have always wanted to meet him. Admit him, boy!”

1856. As he entered, he said: “Peace be upon you, O Ibn Abi Sufian. Here is the letter from the Commander of the Believers.” Mu`awiya said: “Were it not that ambassadors are not killed in the Jahiliyya or in Islam, I would have killed you.” Mu`awiya then decided to provoke him, meaning to discover whether his vaunted intelligence was natural or fake, so he asked him: “What tribe do you belong to?” “Nizar,” he answered. “So what was Nizar like?” He answered: “When raiding, he was fast; when he met the enemy, he pursued him; when he turned away from raiding, he hunted.” “Which of his sons are you?” asked Mu`awiya. “From Rabi`a,” he replied. “So what was Rabi`a like?” “He was tall in stature, fed people, and pitched his tent all over the earth.” “Which of his sons are you?” asked Mu`awiya. “From Jadila,” he replied. “So what was Jadila like?” “In war, he was a cutting sword; in virtue, he was like a beneficial rain; in battle, he was a resplendent flame.” “Which of his sons are you?” asked Mu`awiya. “From `Abd al-Qais,” he replied. “So what was `Abd al-Qais like?” “He was a man of abundant virtues, munificent in his gifts, free from faults, exceedingly generous. He would offer his guest whatever he could find at hand and never inquired about anything he lost. He distributed broth liberally, was fragrant in his pedigree, and was to people like rain from the sky.” “Woe to you, Ibn Suhan! You have left this clan

of Quraish denuded of all glory and exaltation.” “Yes, by God, I have, O Ibn Abi Sufian. I have left them that which cannot be set straight except by them and does not suit anyone but them. I have left them the white, the red, the yellow and the blond.* I have left them the throne, the pulpit and a kingship that lasts to the end of time. How can this not be so when they are the radiance of God upon earth and his stars in the heavens?”

Mu`awiya was delighted and thought that his words of praise applied to all the clans of Quraish so he said: “You have spoken the truth, O Ibn Suhan, for it is indeed so.” Sa`sa`a grasped what he meant and said: “You and your clan have nothing to do with this, either in its beginning or its end. You have wandered far from verdant pastures and turned away from sweet water.” “Woe to you, Ibn Suhan! To whom then are you referring?” Sa`sa`a replied: “Woe to the denizens of hell! All this belongs to the Hashim clan.” Mu`awiya said: “Rise up and throw him out.”

Sa`sa`a said: “It is the truth that reveals your real character, and not threats. He who wishes to engage in a dispute must accept dialogue.”

Mu`awiya said: “It must be for a good reason that his people made him their chieftain. By God, I wish I had been intimately related to him!” He then turned to the Umayyads and said: “This is what real men should be like.”

1857. Mansur ibn Wahshi >Abu`l Fayyad `Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Hashimi>al-Walid al-Habtari al-`Absi> al-Harith ibn Mismar al-Bahrani, who said: “Mu`awiya imprisoned Sa`sa`a ibn Suhan al-`Abdi, `Abdullah ibn al-Kawwa` al-Yashkuri and some followers of `Ali along with a man from Quraish. One day, Mu`awiya went to see them and said to them: ‘I ask you, in God’s name, to tell me only the truth: what sort of caliph do you find me to be?’ Ibn al-Kawwa` replied: ‘Had you not insisted, we would not have told you. This is because you are an obdurate tyrant who pays no regard to God when you kill good men. However, we say about

you what we know for sure, namely, that your attachment to this world is extensive, but is strait and narrow where the other world is concerned.

You are a person from whom good can easily be attained, but from whom pasture is far. Darkness you turn into light and light into darkness.”

1858. “Mu`awiya said: ‘God favored the people of al-Sham with this power, for they defend the territory of Islam, abandon what God forbids, and are not like the people of Iraq who violate the prohibitions of God, who make licit what God declared illicit, and make illicit what God made licit.’ `Abdullah ibn al-Kawwa’ replied: ‘O Ibn Abi Sufian, whatever is said has an answer, but we fear your tyranny. If you allow us to speak freely, we can defend the people of Iraq with sharp tongues and fear no blame from anyone in the cause of God. Otherwise, we shall be patient until God passes judgment and dispels our grief.’ Mu`awiya said: ‘No, by God, we will not allow you to speak freely.’ Sa`sa`a then spoke: ‘You have spoken, O Ibn Abi Sufian, and conveyed your meaning, and did not fall short of what you intended. The reality is not as you described it. How can someone be a caliph when he has gained power over people by force, humiliated them by his arrogance, and usurped rule through false means, deceit and cunning? By God, in the Battle of Badr, you neither struck a blow nor shot an arrow. At that battle you were like the words of the proverb, ‘you neither stayed nor walked away’ [i.e. of no use]. But you and your father were a very important part of that expedition at Badr, and were among those brought to the Prophet as prisoners, and freed by him. So you are simply a freed prisoner, son of a freed prisoner. How can the caliphate be fittingly held by a freed prisoner?’ Mu`awiya replied: ‘Were I not convinced by the line of verse by Abu`l Tayyib, I would have killed you, for he says:

*You responded to their savagery with restraint and forgiveness,
And forgiveness from a position of strength is a kind of nobility.’”*

1859. Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn Habib >Abu'l Haitham Yazid ibn Raja' al-Ghanawi>al-Walid ibn `Ubaid al-Habtari>his father>Ibn Mardu` al-Kalbi, who said: "Sa`sa`a ibn Suhan al-`Abdi entered upon Mu`awiya who said to him: 'O Ibn Suhan, you know the Arabs and their state of affairs well. Tell me about the people of Basra, and beware not to be biased towards some against others.' Sa`sa`a replied: 'Basra is the jewel in the crown of the Arabs and the ultimate in nobility and dominance. Its people were urban dwellers from Islam's earliest times and all the way to the end of time. The violence of the Arabs tossed them about like a millstone turning upon its pivot.' 'Tell me about the people of Kufa,' asked Mu`awiya. He answered: 'Kufa is the vault of Islam, the highest point that speech can attain, and the place where standard-bearers are said to congregate. But it contains some people of a coarse disposition who refuse to obey their leaders. This makes them antithetical to the community at large whose morals are sound and who accept their lot in life.' 'Tell me about the people of the Hijaz,' Mu`awiya asked. He answered: 'They are the quickest to join a civil commotion, the most incapable of waging it, and the lest effective in fighting it. Yet they incline strongly towards religion and hold fast to the bond of certainty in faith. They obey virtuous rulers and depose the dissolute and immoral.' 'Who are the dissolute and the immoral?' asked Mu`awiya. Sa`sa`a replied: 'To abandon deceit is to remove the mask. `Ali and his companions are the virtuous rulers and you and your friends are the other kind.'"

1860. His face showing anger, Mu`awiya nevertheless wanted Sa`sa`a to go on speaking, so he said: "Tell me about the 'red tent'* in the lands of Mudar." He answered: "The Asad of Mudar are like courageous groups between two thickets; if you let them loose, they devour, and if you leave them alone they are on guard." Mu`awiya said: "This is what I call firmly

established glory. But do your own people, O Ibn Suhan, possess its like?” “This glory belongs to those who possess it, though not to you, O Ibn Abi Sufian. Whoever loves a people is counted of their number.” “Tell me about the lands of Rabi`a, and let not passion and ancient fanaticism make light of your bias towards your own people.” Sa`sa`a replied: “By God, I am not happy with them, but I will state what does and does not do them credit. They are, God knows, in the forefront as horsemen but mere appendages in religion and solidarity with others. Their war standards cannot be defeated provided the assaults of religion are firmly attached to the exultation of certainty. He whom they aid is victorious, and he whom they let down stumbles.” “Tell me about Mudar.” “They are the refuge of the Arabs and the mine of glory and warlike might. Through them, the sea expels its harmful flotsam and the land expels its base substances.” At that point Mu`awiya fell silent, so Sa`sa`a said to him: “Ask me more questions, Mu`awiya, or else I will tell you what subject you are trying to avoid.” “And what might that be, O Ibn Suhan?” “The people of al-Sham,” he replied. “Tell me about them,” said Mu`awiya. “They are the most obedient to a creature and the most disobedient to the Creator, rebels against the Almighty, and the arena of evil men. Destruction shall come upon them and {an Evil Abode awaits them}.” Mu`awiya said: “I swear to God, O Ibn Suhan, a sharp knife has been hovering over you for a long time now. But the self-restraint of the Abu Sufian family has thus far protected you.” Sa`sa`a replied: “Rather, the command of God and His might, for {God’s command is a fate decreed}.”

1861. Abu`l Haitham > Abu`l Bashir Muhammad ibn Bishr al-Fazari > Ibrahim ibn `Aqil al-Basri, who said: “One day Mu`awiya said, in the presence of Sa`sa`a who had brought him a letter from `Ali, and with many notables attending: ‘The earth belongs to God and I am the

viceregent of God. What I take from the money of God belongs to me, and what I leave behind is also licit for me to take.’ Sa`sa`a recited:

*Your soul tempts you, O Mu`awiya, to that which cannot be,
Because of your impetuosity. Do not commit a sin.*

Mu`awiya said to him: ‘I see you have learnt to speak.’ Sa`sa`a replied: ‘Knowledge comes through learning. The ignorant person is impetuous.’

Mu`awiya said: ‘You are in sore need for me to make you taste the evil consequences of your attitude.’ He answered: ‘This is not in your power, but in the power of Him who delays not the taking of any soul whose term of life has come to an end.’ ‘Who will come between you and me?’

Sa`sa`a answered: ‘He who comes between a person and his heart’s

desire.’ Mu`awiya said: ‘Your stomach has been enlarged by speech just as a camel’s stomach is enlarged by barley.’ He answered: ‘The stomach of him who is never sated is enlarged, and he has been cursed by one who is never submissive [reading *yakhna`*].’”

1862. Al Mas`udi said: Sa`sa`a ibn Suhan has many charming stories told about him and he had a discourse replete with supreme eloquence, purity of language, and clarity in the expression of meaning, all articulated concisely and succinctly. There is for instance his story with `Abdullah ibn `Abbas as related by al-Mada`ini who transmitted it from Zaid ibn Subh al-Dhuhli al-Shaibani, who said: “I was told by my father, who heard it from Masqala ibn Hubaira al-Shaibani who said: ‘I heard Sa`sa`a ibn Suhan reply as follows when asked by Ibn `Abbas ‘What is lordship in your view?’ He answered: ‘To feed people, to speak softly, to dispense favors, to abstain from begging and obsequiousness to people, significant and insignificant alike, and to treat all people as equal.’ Ibn `Abbas asked: ‘What is chivalry?’ ‘Two brothers who bond together, have few to guard them and whose friend is revered, who safeguard their honor and are chaste and gentle.’”

1863. "Ibn `Abbas asked him: 'Do you memorize any poetry about this?' Sa`sa`a answered: 'Yes. Have you not heard the verses of Murra ibn Dhuhl when he says:

Lordship and chivalry hang in the sky where the mansions of the moon are found,

And if two race horses meet to run a race to its end,

The half-breed horse stumbles, its legs failing it.

But the pure bred horse is safely home, persevering with excellent horses, And keeping up with them, no tremor failing him.'"

These verses are from a longer poem.

1864. Ibn `Abbas said to him: "If a man were to traverse with his camels the east and the west to derive benefit from these verses, I would not blame him. I know you, Ibn Suhan, to be one who has wide knowledge, wisdom and rationality as regards the past history of the Arabs. Who then do you consider among you to be forbearing?" Sa`asa`a replied: "It is he who curbs his anger and does not act rashly; who, if slander reaches him regarding someone, whether true or false, will not accept it; who comes upon the murderer of his father and brother and forgives them, refraining from killing them. This, O Ibn `Abbas, is the forbearing man." Ibn `Abbas asked: "Is this quality found much among you?"

He answered: "No, by God, not even a little, but I simply described to you people whom you will only find as humble worshippers, desiring only God; who are afflicted but pay no heed. The others, however, are those whose violence outstrips their self-restraint and none of them cares, once he obtains his desire in a moment of anger, what comes afterwards, provided he attains his desire and satisfies his craving. If his father or brother slew a person close to him, he would kill his own father or brother. Have you not heard the story of Zabban ibn `Amr ibn Zabban? His father `Amr had been killed by Malik ibn Kawma, so Zabban took his

time then raided Malik with two hundred horsemen at dawn, Malik being in a camp with forty tents. He killed him and his companions, and killed his own uncle among others, though some say his own brother, because he had sought refuge with Malik. When Zabban was told: ‘You have killed our comrade’ he recited:

*If my own mother had been found among them,
Her clothes would have been drenched with streaming blood.
If Umayya, the sister of `Amr, had been at that watercourse,
She would have cried without cease.
I raised my sword against two persons closest to me,
And no relative could use our ties of kinship as cause for mercy.”*

1865. Ibn `Abbas said: “Who is considered a knight among you? Give me a definition I can hear from you, for you, Ibn Suhan, know how to put things in their proper place.” He replied: “A knight is one who, deep in his mind, has shortened his term of life; who has sunk his teeth into his hopes and expectations; for whom war is of less concern than the day that passed him by. Such is the true knight when war is kindled, the spirit of men is stricken with fear, and when warriors call each other out for combat, when they advance to battle, when they seek to shed each other’s blood, or when they break into the thick of the fighting with their swords.” “Well spoken, by God, O Ibn Suhan. You are descended from a long line of noble and eloquent orators. You did not inherit this gift accidentally. Tell me more.” Sa`sa`a replied: “I will. A knight is very cautious and always looks around him. He sees with his heart and does not harbor rancor against his own clan.”

1866. “An excellent description, by God, O Ibn Suhan. Is there any verse that describes this quality?” “Yes, in the verses by Zuhair ibn Jannab al-Kalbi where he laments the death of his son `Amr:

A knight who leaves his companions far behind,

*Wielding a sword that flashes past like a raging fire,
In the thick of the fighting you will not see him in some place,
Turning his eyes away, nor in some narrow locality.
Whoever sees him waging war,
Would think him a foolish person who lost his way.*

1867. Ibn `Abbas said to him: “Where do your two brothers stand with respect to you? Describe them so I can estimate your importance.” He answered: ‘My brother Zaid was as described by the poet from the tribe of Ghaniyy:

*A youth who cares not if his face is seen to be pale and wan,
When generous people can no longer be generous.
When men see him they restrain their tongues,
For how can an ugly word be uttered in his presence?
An ally of generosity who calls on generosity and it answers him,
And when generosity calls, he answers its call.
Generosity seeks him out as its bedfellow, O Umm `Amr,
When, among fat she-camels, none remains that gives milk.
It is as if, when no food crumbs are found in the tents of the encampment,
No foreign visitor will be found.’”*

These verses belong to a longer poem. ‘O Ibn `Abbas, by God he was a man of exceptional chivalry, a most honorable friend, of great dignity and wide authority. While raiding, he was quick and courageous; he was pleasing in appearance, untainted by rancor, little concerned with the evil whisperings of fate, constantly mentioning God {at the two ends of the day and for some hours of the night}, hungry or being sated were the same to him. He did not compete for worldly honor, and those who did so were the rarest among his friends. His silences were long and he held back his speech. When he spoke, nothing could be added to what he said.

The dissolute and the evil ran away from him while the noble and pious flocked to him.”

1868. Ibn `Abbas said: “What can one say about a man in paradise? God have mercy on you, O Zaid! Where did your other brother `Abdullah stand with respect to him?” He answered: “`Abdullah was a courageous chieftain, who gathered the people together and was obeyed; his good deeds spread wide and his bad deeds were done in self defence. By nature, he was well versed in affairs, innately skillful. No man could restrain him from doing what he wanted and he would only tackle a problem head-on. Like poison he was to his enemy but generous in feeding his guests. He was hard-headed but liberal in hospitality. A true brother he was among his brothers and a chivalrous youth among chivalrous youth. He was as described by al-Burjumi `Amir ibn Sinan: *Like poison to his enemy, and like arrows that kill wherever they strike, And he kills too with the sword, and with the Rudaini spear, tearing the enemy apart.*

Greatly feared, a killer, expert in combat,

But long accustomed to acts of generosity and munificence.”

These belong to a longer poem. Ibn `Abbas said: “You, O Ibn Suhan, have run the gamut of the the sciences of the Arabs.”

1869. Among other stories of Sa`sa`a is the one related by Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn Habib al-Hashimi>Abu`l Haitham Yazid ibn Raja` al-Ghanawi, who said: “I was told the following by a man from Fazara and from the clan of `Adiyy: ‘A man from Fazara came upon Sa`sa`a and spoke some harsh words to him which included: “You let loose your tongue upon people and they have come to fear you. By God, if you wish, I will keep up with you so that each time you speak I shall castigate your tongue with words more cutting than the edge of the sword, tearing strongly and with a mighty tongue. Thereafter you will no longer be able

to stay put or move away.” Sa`sa`a replied: “If I had seen a target in you I would have shot at it, but I see a ghost and not a real substance {like a mirage in a far-flung plain, that a thirsty man imagines to be water, until, when he arrives thereto, he finds it to be nothing}. Had you been worth it, I would have flung at your depravities something sharper than a mere tongue lashing and shot you with arrows that would discourage you from ever speaking in your own defence again. I would have notched your nose like a camel with a muzzle, tearing away the place where a rope is attached.” When this exchange reached Ibn `Abbas, he laughed at the man from Fazara and said: “If that Fazara man had taken upon himself to carry boulders from towering mountains down to the plains, it would have been easier for him than taking on the man from `Abd al-Qais [Sa`sa`a]. What a flop! How ignorant he is! He thought him ignorant and did not realize how virulent were his powers.” He then quoted the verse: *Affliction poured down upon him, and not from a near distance; Affliction pours down mightily on those most wretched.*

1870. Al-Mubarrad* > al-Riyashi > Rabi`a ibn `Abdullah al-Numairi, who said: I was told by a man from the Azd: “I saw Abu Ayyub al-Ansari at the Battle of Nahrawan standing above `Abdullah ibn Wahb al-Rasibi. He struck him a blow on his shoulder, which severed his arm, and said ‘Take it with you to hell, you heretic!’ `Abdullah replied: ‘You shall know which of us {most deserves to be scorched therein}’. Abu Ayyub replied: ‘O yes, I surely know!’ At that point Sa`sa`a ibn Suhan approached the two men, stopped and said: ‘More deserving, by God, to be scorched in hellfire is he who in this life went astray, grew blind and died an unrepentant wretch! May God drive you far and keep you away! By God, I warned you only recently that you would meet such a death but you insisted on turning back from the path of righteousness. Taste now, you heretic, the evil consequences of your acts!’ He then joined Abu Ayyub

in killing him, striking him with the sword and severing one leg, then following it up with another blow to his stomach, then said: ‘You have ended up in a fire which never goes out nor does its flame abate.’ He then cut off his head and brought it to `Ali, saying: ‘This is the head of the dissolute and perfidious heretic `Abdullah ibn Wahb.’ `Ali looked at him, frowned and said: ‘His face has become misshapen so that it appears to us to be weeping.’ `Ali added: ‘The man from Rasib [`Abdullah ibn Wahb] memorized the Book of God but neglected the decrees of God.’

1871. ‘`Ali then said to the two men: ‘Go seek for me the man with the nipple.’ They looked but could not find him so turned back and said: ‘We found nothing.’ `Ali said: ‘By God, he was killed today, and the Prophet never lied to me nor I to him. Get up in a body and go and search for him.’ A number of his companions then left and dispersed among the dead until they found him in soft sand with about a hundred bodies piled on top of him. They pulled him out by the leg and his body was brought to `Ali who said: ‘I testify that he is the man with the nipple.’” We mentioned the story of the man with the nipple in an earlier section of this book.

1872. `Ali has spoken much of the tribe of Rabi`a, in praise or lament, in prose and poetry. They were his supporters, helpers and firmest followers. At Siffin he recited:

*We have the red standard, its shadow fluttering.
When it is said: ‘O Hudain, take it forward!’ He advances.
He brings it into the battle line until he makes it drink
From the pools of fate, dripping death and blood.
May God richly reward a people who fought in his cause,
To the point of death. How glorious! How upright!
How pleasant their history! How noble their character!
When the voices of other men are a mere mumble.*

*I am speaking of Rabi`a, a people who rush to give aid,
And a people of courage when they meet a mighty army.*

1873. Al-Mada'ini mentions that Mu`awiya captured Jamil ibn Ka`b al-Tha`labi, who was one of Rabi`a's chieftains and a supporter and follower of `Ali. When he stood before him Mu`awiya said: "God be praised for enabling me to gain power over you. Did you not recite at the Battle of the Camel:

*The Muslim community is now truly in a state to be wondered at,
And kingship will pass tomorrow to the victor.*

I have spoken the truth, with no deceit,

Tomorrow the most prominent among the Arabs shall die."

Jamil said: "Do not recite it, for it was a calamity." Mu`awiya replied:

"What greater fortune can there be than that God should permit me to capture a man who in a single hour killed a number of my most intimate friends? Cut off his neck!" Jamil said: "O God, I call on You to witness that Mu`awiya did not kill me for Your sake, nor because You would be pleased if I am killed, but he killed me in pursuit of trivial earthly gains. If he does so, deal with him as he deserves. If he does not, deal with him as is fitting for You." Mu`awiya said: "May God be your enemy! You cursed and it was most telling, and you prayed to God and it was most telling." He ordered him to be released. Mu`awiya then quoted the only verses ever recited by al-Nu`man ibn al-Mundhir, according to Ibn al-Kalbi, which are as follows:

Kings through their benevolence forgive weighty matters

Though they might punish for small matters, but not out of heedlessness.

They do so in order to advertise their merit,

And to create dread of the severity of their punishment.

1874. Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya, Ibn Da'b and al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy, together with other historians, mention that when Mu`awiya was on his death bed he quoted the following verses:

It is death, and nothing can save one from it,

And what you fear after death is even more calamitous and horrid.

He added: "O God, forgive my faults and pardon my errors. Be generous in Your forbearance towards one who sought none but You, and trusted none other than You. You forgive much and a sinner has no way of escape." When Sa'id ibn al-Musayyab* heard this, he said: "He has sought nearness to one whom someone like him cannot hope to draw near. I hope God does not torment him."

1875. Muhammad ibn Ishaq and other transmitters of historical and religious traditions state that Mu`awiya entered the bath at the beginning of the illness that eventually ended his life. When he saw how his body had grown thin, he wept for his coming end and for his approaching destiny, which afflicts all creation, reciting the following verses:

I see the nights have quickly worked to destroy me,

They've taken some of me and left some.

They've bent my length and bent my breadth,

But, having long held me up, the nights have now immobilized me.

1876. When finally his end was near and it was time to take leave of him, and as his illness intensified, and all hope was abandoned of his recovery, he recited:

I wish I had not enjoyed kingship for a single instant,

Nor ever was so blind in my pursuit of pleasures.

I wish I had been like one who owned two worn out garments,

Who lived a sufficient lifespan till he visited the denizens of the graveyard.

1877. There are many stories involving Mu`awiya, `Ali and others, and we have recounted the choicest of these and the events of his days in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat* as well as in our other works devoted to history. This is a large topic and there is much to be said about this subject and others, both early and late, in this work. But he who undertakes to be brief and concise cannot allow himself to be prolix. In this work we merely mention under each chapter a mere portion of every kind of science or history, and what we have chosen to record of antiquities. This is done in order that he who looks into this work can deduce from what we do mention the import of what we do not, all of which has been described in detail in our earlier works. And now that we have covered the topics we already covered, let us turn to mention in summary form the virtues of the Companions and others, may God be pleased with them, for they act as moral examples and models of conduct to those who came after them. In God is success.

Chapter 88

An account of the Companions of the Prophet, their praise, and of the virtues of `Ali and al-`Abbas

1878. `Abdullah ibn `Abbas once entered upon Mu`awiya, with whom were found some notables of Quraish. Having greeted them he sat down. Mu`awiya said to him: "I would like to ask you about a number of issues." He replied: "Ask whatever you wish." He said: "What do you say about Abu Bakr?" He replied: "May God have mercy on Abu Bakr. He was indeed a Qur'an reciter, one who forbade sins, a man who knew his own failings, who feared God, who scolded insinuations of sin, commanded virtue, spent the night in prayer and the day fasting. He exceeded all his companions in piety and self-sufficiency and was the most ascetical and chaste of them all. May God's anger fall on anyone who detracts from his lofty reputation or charges him with any vice!"

Mu`awiya said: “Indeed, O Ibn `Abbas. What do you say about `Umar?” He answered: “God have mercy on Abu Hafsa! He was, by God, the chief ally of Islam, the refuge of orphans, the ultimate in charitable works, the locus of faith, the shelter of the weak and the stronghold of the believers. He carried out what God had laid down, patiently and in expectation of a divine reward, until the religion became manifest to all. He conquered the lands, and provided security to God’s servants. May God curse anyone who detracts from his lofty reputation all the way to the Day of Resurrection!”

1879. Mu`awiya asked: “What do you say about `Uthman?” He replied: “God have mercy on Abu `Amr! He was by God the most generous to his family and friends, the most virtuous of the pious, spending the night in prayer, weeping much when hellfire was mentioned, quick to perform any commendable deed, preceding all others to offer gifts, a shy, lofty-minded and loyal person. He was the man who financed the “army of hardship”* and he was the Prophet’s son-in-law. May God curse whoever curses him and may he prolong his curses until the Day of Judgment!”

He asked: “What do you say about `Ali?” He replied: “May God be pleased with Abu’l Hasan! He was, by God, the very symbol of right guidance, the shelter of all pious men, the locus of all rationality, the ocean of generosity, the towering mountain of intelligence, the cave of nobility for all mankind, calling to the path of truth, and adhering to the firmest bond, the best who ever believed or feared God, the best who wore a shirt or garment, the most godly of those who ever wore sandals and walked the path of God, the most eloquent of those who exhaled their breath or read, the greatest who witnessed the secret conversation with God except for the prophets and the Chosen Prophet to whom were vouchsafed the two directions of prayer. So how can anyone be his equal when he is the father of the Prophet’s two grandchildren? Can any human

being be his equal when he is the husband of the best of women? Can any virtuous man surpass him when he is a killer of lions and outwits his enemy in war? My eyes have never beheld nor ever will behold his like. Whoever detracts from his lofty station, may the curse of God and of all worshippers pursue him until the Day of the Great Summons!”

1880. Mu`awiya said: “Hold on, Ibn `Abbas! You have praised your cousin excessively, so what do you say about your father al-`Abbas?” He replied: “May God have mercy on Abu`l Fadl! He was of a pair with the Prophet of God and a comfort to the eyes of the Chosen One, Lord of all paternal uncles. He possessed the morals of his noble fathers and the forbearance of his glorious ancestors. The road grows long if one wishes to describe his virtues. He is the possessor of the Holy House, of providing water to pilgrims, of the rituals of pilgrimage and of Qur’an recitals. Why should this not be so when he was educated by the noblest man who ever trod the earth?” Mu`awiya said: “O Ibn `Abbas, I know that you are given to speak much of the virtues of your family.” He answered: “Why should I not do so when the Prophet himself said of me: ‘O God, make him knowledgeable in religion and teach him Qur’an interpretation?’”

1881. Following that conversation, Ibn `Abbas said: “O Mu`awiya, God, may His praise be exalted and His names be held sacred, singled out Muhammad His Prophet along with his Companions who preferred him to their own selves and their wealth, and sacrificed themselves to defend him in every instance. God described them in his book as being {merciful towards one another}. They practised the main teachings of the religion, and through individual judgment gave advice to the Muslims until its highways and byways became well delineated, its principles were strongly entrenched, the signs of God became visible, His religion was firmly established and its basic beliefs became clear. Through these

Companions, God abased polytheism, cut off its heads, wiped out its bases, and the word of God became supreme while {the word of the unbelievers became the lowliest.} May God's benedictions, mercy and blessings descend upon those pure souls and lofty and sacred spirits! In life they were the friends of God and in death they still live on. To God's worshippers they were indeed good counselors, and migrated to the other world before they actually reached it, but they left the world while still in it." Mu`awiya interrupted him, saying: "Hold off, Ibn `Abbas! Let us change the subject."

Chapter 89

An account of the days of Yazid ibn Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan

1882. Yazid ibn Mu`awiya was then paid homage. His days lasted three years and eight months minus eight days. Yazid then, and before his own death, obtained homage for his son Mu`awiya ibn Yazid. Regarding this, `Abdullah ibn Hammam al-Saluli recited:

*Yazid caught it from his father,
So you, Mu`awiya, take it from Yazid.
It has stuck to you, so pick it up,
But don't use it to shoot at a distant target.*

1883. Yazid perished* in Huwwarin, in the district of Damascus, on the fourteenth of Safar in the year 64 [October 12,683], aged 33. A man from the tribe of `Udhra recited:

*O tomb in Huwwarin,
You hold the worst of all mankind.*

The Christian poet al-Akhtal* recited a long elegy which included the lines:

*I swear, upon my life: Khalid [Yazid's son] lowered into the grave
The corpse of a man who was neither mean in heart nor untested in
affairs of state.*

He abides in Huwwarin, departing not therefrom:

May the rainclouds water such a buried corpse and such a tomb.

Chapter 90

An account of the murder of al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib and of those who were murdered from among his family and followers

1884. When Mu`awiya died, the people of Kufa sent the following message to al-Husain ibn `Ali: “We are determined to pay homage to none but you and are ready to die in your defence. We do not attend any Friday prayers or any assembly because of you.” When al-Husain was asked to pay homage to Yazid in Medinah he prevaricated, and went out among his clients, swaggering in his walk and reciting:

Let me not scare grazing camels in a morning raid,

And let me not pay homage to Yazid,

That day when I am gripped by fear of an unjust death,

While the fates lie in wait for me, preventing me from going astray.

1885. He then left Medinah and headed to Mecca, sending his cousin Muslim ibn `Aqil to Kufa and instructing him as follows: “Go to the people of Kufa and find out if what they wrote to me is true and let me know so I can join you.” Muslim left Mecca in the middle of Ramadan and arrived in Kufa on the fifth of Shawwal. The governor of Kufa was then al-Nu`man ibn Bashir al-Ansari. Muslim was a secret guest of a man called `Awsaja. When news of his arrival spread, twelve thousand Kufans paid him homage, though eighteen thousand is found in another version. So he wrote to al-Husain accordingly and asked him to join him.

1886. When al-Husain was on the point of departing to Iraq, Ibn `Abbas came to see him and said: “Cousin, I hear you intend to travel to Iraq. But they are a treacherous people and are simply calling on you to make war. Do not act in haste. If you insist on fighting this tyrant, and dislike your stay in Mecca, go to the Yemen, which is an isolated land where you

have followers and close supporters. Stay there and send out missionaries. Write to the Kufans and to your party in Iraq, and ask them to drive out their governor. If they accept and drive him out, and there is no enemy there to oppose you, you can then go there, though I do not trust them even then not to betray you. If they do not respond positively, remain where you are until God's command is revealed, for Yemen is a land of many fortresses and valleys." Al-Husain replied: "O cousin, I know that you are giving me sound advice and have my best interests at heart, but Muslim ibn `Aqil has written to tell me that the people of Kufa have all agreed to pay me homage and to support me, so I have determined to travel to them." Ibn `Abbas said: "They are people whom I know well and have much experience of. They are the companions of your father and brother and will kill you along with their governor. If you were to go out and rebel, and Ibn Ziad heard about it, he would mobilize them against you, and those who wrote to you will be more ruthless against you than your real enemy. If you disobey me, and insist on heading to Kufa, do not bring out your women folk and children with you for, by God, I fear you will be killed just like `Uthman, with his women and children looking on." His answer was: "By God, I would prefer to be killed in some place than to be hiding shamefully in Mecca."

1887. Ibn `Abbas gave up hope, left al-Husain and passed by `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair, to whom he said: "May your eyes be comforted, O Ibn al-Zubair!" He then recited:

What a lark you are in this spacious abode!

The air has been cleared for you, so lay your eggs and warble,

And peck away to your heart's desire.

Husain is about to leave for Iraq and has left you free to do what you like in the Hijaz."

1888. When Ibn al-Zubair heard that al-Husain intended to go to Kufa, al-Husain having been the single most troublesome person to him--- for he had been displeased by al-Husain's sojourn in Mecca, whose people preferred him to Ibn al-Zubair---no news was more welcome to him than to hear that al-Husain was leaving Mecca. So he went to see al-Husain and said: "What news, O Abu `Abdullah? I swear I was afraid of God when I abandoned the jihad against these people [Umayyads] because of their tyranny and their contemptuous treatment of pious worshippers." Al-Husain said: "I am resolved to go to Kufa." Ibn al-Zubair answered: "May God bring you success. If I had in Kufa supporters like yours, I would not consider any other city as an alternative." Anxious lest al-Husain should accuse him of cowardice, he added: "But if you were to remain here and to call the people of the Hijaz to pay you homage, we would rush to respond, for you are more worthy than both Yazid and his father."

1889. Then Abu Bakr ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Harith ibn Hisham entered to see al-Husain and said: "Cousin, kinship inclines me to have compassion for you and I don't know what to advise you." Al-Husain replied: "O Abu Bakr, you are not one to deceive or be suspected of deceit, so speak up." Abu Bakr replied: "Ali had greater precedence and a more glorious history in Islam, was greater in courage, people expected more of him, were more obedient to him and more united in his support; when he marched against Mu`awiya, the entire community supported him except for the people of al-Sham, though he was stronger than Mu`awiya. Yet his own party let him down and changed sides, out of worldliness and avarice for worldly affairs. They made him swallow his frustrations and opposed him until he passed on to his station of honor and grace with God. Then, following your father, they did what they did to your brother [al-Hasan], all of which you yourself saw and witnessed. Despite all this,

you wish to join those who turned against your father and brother, and to use them to fight the people of al-Sham and Iraq, and to fight one who is better prepared and stronger than you, one whom people fear more and from whom they expect more. When news of your journey reaches your enemies, they will win people over with money, and people are the slaves of this world. He who promised to help you will fight you, and he to whom you are more beloved than the one whom he ostensibly supports will let you down. I remind you, in God's name, of what you owe to yourself." Al-Husain said: "May God reward you with every good thing, cousin, for you have expressed your views most fully and whatever God decides will come to pass." Abu Bakr answered: "We belong to God and we seek only God's reward, O Abu `Abdullah."

1890. Abu Bakr then went to see al-Harith ibn Khalid ibn al-`As ibn Hisham al-Makhzumi, governor of Mecca, and recited:

*How many a counselor we see who gives good counsel and is disobeyed,
While some suspect peddler of the supernatural is listened to.*

When al-Harith asked what this was about, he told him what he had said to al-Husain. Al-Harith replied: "By the Lord of the Ka`ba, you gave him sound advice!"

1891. When the news reached Yazid, he wrote to `Ubaidullah ibn Ziad, appointing him as governor of Kufa. The latter left Basra in haste and arrived in Kufa at noon. He entered the city with his family and courtiers wearing a black turban, which he had wrapped around his face, and riding on a she mule. People were expecting al-Husain's arrival and as Ibn Ziad saluted people with the greeting of peace, they would answer: "Peace be upon you, scion of the Prophet. Your arrival is a blessing." Arriving finally at the palace, he found al-Nu`man ibn Bashir, who had barrickaded himself inside it, then addressed him from on high: "Scion of the Prophet, is there a problem between you and me? What led you to

come to my city, of all cities?” Ibn Ziad replied: “You have been sleeping far too long, O Nu`aim [derogatory diminutive of his name]!” He then removed the veil from his mouth, so al-Nu`man recognized him and opened the palace gate to him. A clamor arose among people: “This is the son of Marjana!”* They pelted him with stones but he eluded them and entered the palace.

1892. When news of Ibn Ziad reached Muslim, he moved his residence to stay with Hani' ibn `Urwa al-Muradi. Ibn Ziad then set spies upon Muslim until he knew where he was hiding. He sent Muhammad ibn al-Ash`ath ibn Qais to Hani' at an unexpected hour and asked him about Muslim. Hani' denied any knowledge of him so Ibn Ziad spoke harshly to him. Hani' then said: “Your father Ziad once did me a big favor and I would like to return the favor, so would you like to hear some honest advice?” Ibn Ziad asked: “And what might that be?” Hani' replied: “You, your family and dependants should safely return with your wealth to the people of al-Sham, for there has now arrived one who possesses a right that overrides your right and that of your master.” Ibn Ziad said: “Bring him close to me.” They did so, and he struck his face with a cane he was carrying until he broke his nose, tore his eyebrow, exposed the flesh of his cheek and broke the cane over his face and head. Hani' stretched his hand to grab the handle of a sword of one of the guards, but the man tugged at his sword and prevented Hani' from getting hold of it. Those accompanying Hani' outside the door began to shout that Hani' was killed. Fearing them, Ibn Ziad ordered Hani' to be imprisoned in a room next to his reception hall, and sent out Shuraih the judge who testified that Hani' was alive and had not been killed, so his companions dispersed.

1893. When Muslim heard what Ibn Ziad had done to Hani' he summoned a crier to cry out: “O Victorious One!” ---this being their

slogan. The Kufans took up the cry and eighteen thousand people rallied to him in a single hour. Muslim then marched against Ibn Ziad, who barricaded himself, and he besieged him in the palace. By nightfall, however, Muslim barely had one hundred men left. As he looked and saw the people leaving him, he headed to to the gate of the Kinda tribe's quarters. By the time he reached their gate, he had three people with him. As he left their gate, he was all alone, so he was confused as to where to go, and found no one to show him the right way. He dismounted and walked, looking left and right in the alleys of Kufa and uncertain where he was heading until he arrived at the door of a female client of al-Ash`ath ibn Qais. He asked her for a drink of water and she gave him to drink, then asked him for his story. When he told her, she took pity on him and took him in.

1894. When her son arrived he discovered where Muslim was. In the morning he went to al-Ash`ath ibn Qais and told him. In turn, al-Ash`ath informed Ibn Ziad who instructed him to go and bring him in. With al-Ash`ath he dispatched `Amr ibn `Ubaidullah ibn `Abbas al-Sulami with seventy men. They broke into the house upon Muslim who sprang to meet them with his sword and pressed them so hard that he drove them out of the house. Once more they attacked and once more he repelled them. When they saw this, they climbed onto the roof of the house [reading *zahr al-bait*], pelted him with stones and set fire to bundles of reeds which they flung on him from the rooftop. When Muslim saw all this he said: "Is all this concourse of people gathered together merely to kill Muslim ibn `Aqil? Spirit of mine, come out to meet inevitable death!" So he came out into the alleyway with drawn sword and fought them. Muslim and Bukair ibn Humran al-Ahmari exchanged blows. Bukair struck Muslim's mouth, the sword cutting his upper lip and nicking his

lower, while Muslim struck him a severe blow to his head, then another to his neck vein which almost reached his stomach, reciting:

*I swore I would only kill a free man
Though I know death is a bitter thing.
Every man will one day meet with evil,
But I fear I shall be lied to, or be deceived.*

1895. When they saw this, Muhammad ibn al-Ash`ath came forward and said to `Aqil: “You shall not be lied to, or deceived”, and granted him safe-conduct. So he surrendered to them, and they mounted him on a she mule and brought him to Ibn Ziad. Ibn al-Ash`ath, when granting him safe-conduct, had stripped him of his sword and armor. Concerning this, some poets recited, denigrating Ibn al-Ash`ath:

*You abandoned your uncle, and failed, like a coward, to defend him;
Were it not for you, he would have been invincible.
You killed a visitor from the House of Muhammad,
And robbed him of his sword and armor.*

1896. When Muslim arrived at the palace gate, he saw a jar of cold water and asked them for a drink. Muslim ibn `Amr al-Bahili, father of Qutaiba ibn Muslim*, prevented them from doing so. So `Amr ibn Huraith ordered that a cup of water be brought to him. Raising the cup to his mouth, the cup filled with blood, so he poured it out and asked for another. When he raised it to his mouth, his incisors fell into it and it filled with blood. He said: “God be thanked! If it had been my divinely allotted portion I would have drunk it.” He was then brought into Ibn Ziad’s presence. When Ibn Ziad finished addressing him, with Muslim answering him harshly, he ordered that he be taken to the roof of the palace. He then summoned al-Ahmari who had been struck by Muslim and said to him: “I want you to be the one who cuts off his neck in order to revenge yourself for the blow you received from him.” They then led

him to the highest place in the palace where Bukair struck him a blow to the neck which made his head roll to the floor, and his body was similarly dismembered.

1897. Ibn Ziad then ordered Hani' ibn `Urwa to be brought out into the marketplace where he was bound and beheaded, all the while crying out: "Where are you, O tribe of Murad!" He was the venerable chieftain of that tribe, commanding in those days four thousand men in coats of mail and eight thousand infantry. If their allies, the Kinda and other tribes had responded to their call, this would have made a total of thirty thousand men in armor. But their chieftain found none to help him, out of cowardice and desertion.

1898. A poet recited the following verses, lamenting the deaths of Hani' and Muslim ibn `Aqil, and recounting what happened to them:

*If you, my lady, do not know what death is,
Just look at Hani' in the marketplace and at Ibn `Aqil:
At one hero whose face was crushed by the sword,
While another fell from a high place, dead.
The orders of the Emir struck them down,
And they became the talk of travellers on all roads.
You see a body, its color changed by death,
With its blood spilled and flowing copiously.
Will he [murderer] ride some high and hardy horse, feeling secure,
While the tribe of Madhhij seek revenge for one of their dead?
A youth more shy than a maiden,
But more cutting than a two-forked, polished sword.
If you do not exact revenge for your brother,
Then become like a prostitute who's satisfied with a little payment.*

1899. Ibn Ziad then summoned Bukair ibn Humran who had struck Muslim's neck and asked if he had killed him. Bukair said he had. Ibn

Ziad asked: “What did he say as you led him up to be executed?” He answered: “He said: ‘God is great!’ ‘Praise the Lord!’ ‘No god but God!’ ‘God forgive me!’ When we brought him forward to behead him he said: ‘O God, be the judge between us and a people who deceived us and lied to us then let us down and killed us!’ I [Bukair] said: ‘Thank God who permitted me to revenge myself upon you.’ I then struck him a blow which had no effect on him. He said to me: ‘Are you not satisfied that you have struck me a blow that grazed me, a blow equal to the shedding of your blood, you slave?’” Ibn Ziad said: “Boasting at the moment of death?!” Bukair continued: “I struck him a second blow which killed him then followed this up by cutting his body.” Muslim had appeared in public in Kufa on Tuesday the the eighth of Dhu’l Hijja in the year 60 [September 9,680], which was the same day that al-Husain set off from Mecca to Kufa. Another version claims this took place on a Wednesday, the Day of `Arafa*, on the ninth of Dhu’l Hijja in the year 60. Ibn Ziad then ordered Muslim’s body to be hung up on a cross while his head was sent to Damascus. He was the first member of the Hashim family whose dead body was hung up on a cross, and the first of them whose head was dispatched to Damascus.

1900. When al-Husain reached al-Qadisiyya, he was met by al-Hurr ibn Yazid al-Tamimi who asked him: “Scion of the Prophet, where are you heading?” “I am heading to that city,” he replied. Al-Hurr informed him of Muslim’s story and his fate, then told him: “Go back. I have not left behind me any good I would wish for you.” Al-Husain turned to go back but the brothers of Muslim said to him: “By God, we will not go back until we have exacted revenge or else we all die!” Al-Husain said: “There is no point in my living if you are gone.” He then continued his march until he met Ibn Ziad’s cavalry, commanded by `Umar ibn Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas. He turned towards Karbala’, with a troop of some five hundred

cavalry made up of his family and followers, and about a hundred infantry. When the armies collected against him grew greatly in number, al-Husain knew there was no escape so said: "O God, be the judge between us and a people who invited us to give us their support, and now we find them fighting us!" So he fought until he was killed, may God be pleased with him.

1901. The man who actually killed him was from the tribe of Madhhij.

He cut off his head and took it to Ibn Ziad, reciting:

Deck my riding apparel with silver and gold!

I have killed the veiled lord.

*I have killed the best of mankind, born to the best of fathers and mothers,
And the best if counted by pedigree.*

Ibn Ziad then sent the man with the head of Husain to Yazid ibn Mu`awiya. Entering into Yazid's presence, the latter had with him Abu Barza al-Aslami. He placed the head before him and Yazid, carrying a cane, began to tinker with his mouth and recited:

We split the heads of men dear to us,

But they were more ungrateful and unjust.

Abu Barza said to him: "Remove your cane, for I swear to God I often saw the Prophet of God kissing that mouth."

1902. All the soldiers who were present at the death of al-Husain and who fought and killed him were in fact Kufans, and did not include a single person from al-Sham. The number of those killed with al-Husain at Karbala' on the tenth day ['Ashura']* was eighty-seven. These included his son `Ali the Elder, son of al-Husain, who recited:

I am `Ali son of al-Husain son of `Ali,

We, I swear by God's House, are more worthy of the Prophet.

By God, we shall not be ruled by a pretender to a pedigree.

1903. Among those who died with al-Husain from the sons of his brother al-Hasan were `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan, al-Qasim ibn al-Hasan and Abu Bakr ibn al-Hasan. Among his brothers: al-`Abbas ibn `Ali, `Abdullah ibn `Ali, Ja`far ibn `Ali, `Uthman ibn `Ali, and Muhammad ibn `Ali, the youngest of them. Among the sons of Ja`far ibn Abi Talib: Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Ja`far and `Awn ibn `Abdullah ibn Ja`far. From the sons of `Aqil ibn Abi Talib: `Abdullah ibn `Aqil, Muslim ibn `Aqil, who had already been killed in Kufa, `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Aqil, Ja`far ibn `Aqil and `Abdullah ibn Muslim ibn `Aqil. This took place on the tenth of Muharram in the year 61 [October 10, 680].

1904. Al-Husain was killed aged fifty-five, though some say fifty-nine and some cite yet other figures. The day he was killed, thirty-three stab wounds and twenty blows were found on his body. Zur`a ibn Sharik al-Tamimi severed his left palm while Sinan ibn Anas al-Nakh`i stabbed him, then dismounted and cut off his head. Regarding this a poet recited:
What calamity can there be compared to that of Husain's,

That day when the hands of Sinan separated his head from his body!

1905. Four Ansar were also killed with him, and the rest of his followers who were killed with him, as already recounted, belonged to various Arab tribes.

1906. Regarding this, Muslim ibn Qutaiba, client of the Hashim clan, recited:

Pour your tears down, my eyes, and weep,

And lament, if you ever lament, the family of the Prophet!

Lament nine dead people, descendants of `Ali,

And five descendants of `Aqil.

Lament too the Prophet's cousin, `Awn, their companion:

Whoso rushed to aid them was not one to let them down.

Among the dead too was one named after the Prophet,

*Whom they struck down with a sharp sword.
Cry also for the old man* among them,
For no old man is like him when virtue is mentioned.
May God curse Ziad, wherever he may be,
His son, and that old and much-married hag.**

1907. `Umar ibn Sa`d ordered his cavalry to trample the body of al-Husain, and chose Ishaq ibn Haywa al-Hadrami and a detachment with him to do so. They then trampled him with their horses' hooves. The people of al-Ghadiriyya, a clan called Bani Ghadira from the Asad tribe, buried al-Husain and his companions the day after they were killed. The number of those killed among the troops of `Umar ibn Sa`d was eighty-eight.

Chapter 91

An account of the names of the progeny of `Ali ibn Abi Talib

1908. These were: al-Hasan, al-Husain, Muhassin, Umm Kulthum the Elder, and Zainab the Elder, their mother being Fatima the Radiant, daughter of the Prophet. Then: Muhammad, whose mother was Khawla bint Iyas al-Hanafiyya, but in another version she is cited as daughter of Ja`far ibn Qais ibn Maslama al-Hanafi. Then: `Ubaidullah and Abu Bakr, their mother being Laila bint Mas`ud al-Nahshali. Then: `Umar and Ruqayya, their mother being from the tribe of Taghlib. Then: Yahya, whose mother was Asma' bint `Umais al-Khath`amiyya. Earlier in this book, we mentioned that when Ja`far al-Tayyar was martyred, he left her with three sons: `Awn, Muhammad and `Abdullah, and that the descendants of Ja`far from her are from `Abdullah ibn Ja`far. We also stated that Abu Bakr later married her and begat from her Muhammad. Then `Ali married her and begat from her Yahya. We also stated that Asma' was the daughter of the old woman from the tribe of Jurash who was the woman with the noblest sons-in-law, the first being the Prophet.

Then: Ja`far, al-`Abbas and `Abdullah whose mother was Umm al-Banin bint Hizam al-Wahidiyya. Then: Ramla and Umm al-Hasan whose mother was Umm Sa`id bint `Urwa ibn Mas`ud al-Thaqafi. Then: Umm Kulthum the Younger, Zainab the Younger, Jumana, Maimuna, Khadija, Fatima, Umm al-Kiram, Nafisa, Umm Salama and Umm Abiha.

1909. We already recounted in full the genealogies of the family of Abu Talib, the places where they were killed and their histories in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*. From `Ali, issue descended through five of his sons: al-Hasan, al-Husain, Muhammad, `Umar and al-`Abbas. In his book on the genealogies of Quraish, al-Zubair ibn Bakkar dealt in detail with their genealogies and cited those among them who left no issue, others who did, and the genealogies of other Quraish clans, from Hashim and others. Better than this work on the genealogies of the family of Abu Talib is the book which was read out by Tahir ibn Yahya al-`Alawi al-Husaini in Medinah. Many books have been composed regarding the genealogies of the Abu Talib family among which is the book of al-`Abbas, a descendant of al-`Abbas ibn `Ali, the book of Abu `Ali al-Ja`fari, and the book of al-Mahlus al-`Alawi, a descendant of Musa ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib.

1910. Regarding the man killed at Taff*, Sulaiman ibn Qatta recited in his lament, as cited in Zubair ibn Bakkar's book on the genealogies of Quraish:

He who died at al-Taff [al-Husain] from the family of Hashim,

Bent the necks of Quraish, and they were humiliated.

If you were to follow this up by persecuting "The man seeking refuge in the Holy House" [Ibn al-Zubair],

You would be like `Ad, who, blind to right guidance, went astray.

Do you not see how the earth itself has grown sick

Because of the killing of Husain, and dusty in color?

*May God not make remote the land and its people,
Though, despite myself, it has abandoned me.*

Chapter 92

A brief account of the history of Yazid, his conduct, and some of his unusual acts

1911. When power passed to Yazid ibn Mu`awiya, he entered his private quarters and did not appear in public for three days. At his door there gathered Arab grandees, foreign delegations and commanders of the various military districts to present their condolences for his father's death and to offer him their best wishes for his elevation to power. On the fourth day, he came out, hair disheveled and full of dust, climbed the pulpit, thanked and praised God, and said: "Mu`awiya was a cord from the cords of God. He extended that cord as long as he wished then he cut it when he wished to do so. He was inferior to those who came before him but superior to those who will come after him. If God forgives him, he would be worthy of forgiveness, and if He torments him it would be for his sins. I have assumed power after him and make no apologies for any rash action nor will I concern myself with acquiring religious knowledge. So be at ease. If God intends something, it will come to pass. Mention God and seek His forgiveness."

1912. Then he stepped down and entered his private quarters, and gave permission for people to enter. As they walked in, they did not know whether to condole or congratulate him. `Asim ibn Abi Saifi stood up and said: "Peace be upon you, Commander of the Believers, and the mercy and blessings of God! Today, you have suffered the loss of the Caliph of God and you have been given the Caliphate of God and granted the gift of God. Mu`awiya has died and may God forgive his sins. You have been given supreme power after him so resign yourself to God's will for this

grave loss and praise God for this best of gifts.” Yazid said: “Come close to me, O Ibn Saifi.” He drew close until he sat near him.

1913. Then `Abdullah ibn Mazin stood up and said: “Peace be upon you, O Commander of the Believers. You have suffered the loss of the best of fathers; you have been given the best of titles and granted the best of things. May God grant you happiness with that gift and may He help you with your subjects. Quraish is now grievously lamenting the loss of its leader but happy too for God’s grace to it in appointing you to the caliphate and in succeeding him.” He then recited:

*God granted you a gift that has no equal,
Though the unbelievers attempted to obstruct its passing to you.
But God declined to do anything but lead it to you,
Until they finally invested you with its ribbon.*

Yazid said: “Come close to me, O Ibn Mazin.” He drew close until he sat near him.

1914. `Abdullah ibn Hammam then stood up and said: “May God reward you, O Commander of the Believers, for bearing up with this calamity! May God bless this gift and grant you the love of your subjects! Mu`awiya has proceeded on his way and may God forgive him and grant him a happy welcome in the afterlife, and may He grant you success in your affairs, for you have suffered a grievous loss but also been granted a great reward. After Mu`awiya, you were given leadership and the conduct of state. You were afflicted with the greatest of calamities and given the greatest object of desire. So resign yourself to God’s will for this grave loss, and thank God for this best of gifts. Renew your thanks to your Creator, and may God grant us pleasure through you and may He protect you in what you possess and what you owe to others.” He then recited:

*Be patient, O Yazid, for you have bid farewell to a beloved,
And be thankful for the gift of one who chose you to rule.*

*None do we know who was afflicted like you,
And none who ended up with such an outcome.
You have been granted the obedience of all God's creatures,
Whom you are to guide as God guides you.
In Mu`awiya [Mu`awiya II] who remains to us is a successor*

If your death is announced, but may we not hear that announcement.

Yazid said: "Come close to me, O Ibn Hammam." He drew close until he sat near him.

1915. Then people came forward to condole and congratulate him for assuming the caliphate. When that reception ended, he ordered that money be distributed to each person in accordance with his worth and status among his people, increased their pay and promoted their ranks. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman* we recounted the story of Yazid, his seclusion when his father Mu`awiya died, and his journey from the region of Homs when he heard about his father's illness, and how he arrived at Thanyat al-`Uqab in the district of Damascus. It is thus unnecessary to repeat that story in the present work.

1916. Several historians and biographers have mentioned the following story. `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan once entered to see Yazid and said: "You own a small plot of land right next to a plot of mine and I would like to expand mine, so give me that small plot as a fief." Yazid answered: "O `Abd al-Malik, no great matter ever impresses me nor am I afraid of a small matter, so tell me about that plot or else I'll ask someone else." He replied: "There is no possession in the whole of Hijaz greater than it in value." Yazid said: "I have granted it to you as a fief." `Abd al-Malik thanked him and prayed for his welfare. When he was gone, Yazid said: "People claim that this fellow will one day be a caliph. If true, we have gained his goodwill. If untrue, we have offered him a gift."

1917. Yazid was a hunter and kept birds of prey, dogs, monkeys, panthers, and had drinking companions. One day, he sat drinking wine with Ibn Ziad to his right. This was after the death of al-Husain. He turned to his cupbearer and recited:

*Give me a draught that moistens my bones,
Then turn and give the same to Ibn Ziad.
He is the keeper of my secrets, and worthy of my trust,
And one who directs my exploits and my jihad.*

He then ordered his singers to sing those verses.

1918. Yazid's shameless conduct spread among his friends and governors. In his days, singers and singing appeared in Mecca and Medinah, frivolous diversions became common, and people began to drink wine openly. He had a monkey called Abu Qais who used to attend his drinking bouts and he would place a cushion for him to sit on. The monkey was bold and cunning and he had him mounted on a wild ass which had been specially trained and tamed for the purpose and provided with a saddle and a bridle and made to race other horses on the day of the races. One day, the monkey won the race, grabbed the cane of victory and entered the victory ring before the other horses. On Abu Qais was an outer garment, tucked up, of red and yellow silk, and he wore a colored silk cap with tassels. The wild ass was decked in a red silk saddle, embroidered and shining with many colors. That day, a poet from al-Sham recited:

*Hold tight, Abu Qais, to the ends of its bridle,
For there can be no guarantee you won't fall off.
Lucky is he who has seen the monkey who, riding on a wild ass,
Outran the horses of the Commander of the Believers.*

1919. Regarding Yazid, his power, his tyrannical behavior and people's obedience to his rule, al-Ahwas recited:

*A blessed king to whom other kings submit,
In awe of him the mountains are almost obliterated.
The taxes of Balkh and the whole of the Tigris
Are conveyed to him, as also what the Euphrates irrigates, and the Nile.*

1920. When al-Husain ibn `Ali was killed in Karbala' and Ibn Ziad carried his head to Yazid, the daughter of `Aqil ibn Abi Talib, with a group of women of her clan, came out, bareheaded and bewildered, having received news of the death of all these noble lords. She recited:
What will you say if the Prophet asks you:

*'What have you done, you being the last religious community,
To my kinsmen and family after you had lost me,
Half being prisoners and the other half drenched in blood?
This was not my just reward, after my having guided you:
To repay me with evil done to my nearest relatives.'*

1921. Regarding what Ibn Ziad had done to al-Husain, Abu'l Aswad al-Du'li recited these verses from a long poem:

*I say, out of utter grief and great love:
May God destroy the power of the family of Ziad!
May he remove them far from us for their treachery and betrayal,
As Thamud was once banished, and the people of `Ad.*

1922. When Yazid's tyranny and that of his governors spread far and wide and his injustice had affected all people, in addition to his dissolute manner of life, his killing the Prophet's grandson and his followers, his open wine drinking and his Pharaonic manner of life---indeed, Pharaoh was more just than him towards his subjects and more fair towards both elite and commoners---the people of Medinah drove out Yazid's governor. This latter was `Uthman ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Sufian. Driven out too was Marwan ibn al-Hakam and the rest of the Umayyad family. This was the time, in the year 63 [682-3], when `Abdullah ibn al-

Zubair pretended to lead an ascetic and totally pious existence and began to claim the caliphate for himself. When the people of the city drove out the Umayyads and the governor, this was done with Ibn al-Zubair's approval. Since the rebels had not arrested the Umayyads and taken them to Ibn al-Zubair, Marwan and the others seized the chance, and hurried to al-Sham.

1923. As news of what the people of Medinah had done to the Umayyads and the governor reached Yazid, he dispatched an army composed of the people of al-Sham and commanded by Muslim ibn `Uqba al-Murri, who proceeded to terrify, plunder and kill the people of Medinah. The people submitted and paid homage to him as being the slaves of Yazid. Muslim called the city "Stinking" (*natina*) though the Prophet had called it "Fragrant" (*tiba*) and had said: "He who scares the people of Medinah will be scared by God." This fellow Muslim was then called *Mujrim* (criminal) and *Musrif* (transgressor) because of his misdeeds.

1924. It is said that when Yazid mobilized that army and it was paraded before him, he recited:

Tell Abu Bakr when this campaign has progressed,

And the troops come upon Wadi'l Qura at dawn:*

Is it the army of a drunkard that you see before you?

The intended addressee of these verses was `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair, whose patronymic was Abu Bakr, while he in turn called Yazid the drunkard and wine bibber. Yazid also wrote the following verses to Ibn al-Zubair:

Call upon your God in heaven to help you,

And I will call upon the warriors of `Akk and Ash`ar.

How will you escape from them, O Abu Khubaib?

Look out for yourself before the troops arrive.

1925. When the army, commanded by Musrif, arrived in Medinah and at a place called al-Harra, the people of the city came out to fight him, led by `Abdullah ibn Muti` al-`Adawi and `Abdullah ibn Hanzala al-Ghasil al-Ansari. It was a fierce battle in which many from the clan of Hashim, the rest of the Quraish, the Ansar and others perished. Among those killed from the Talibids were two sons of `Abdullah ibn Ja`far ibn Abi Talib and of Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib. From the Hashim clan other than the Talibids: al-Fadl ibn al-`Abbas ibn Rabi`a ibn al-Harith ibn `Abd al-Muttalib, Hamza ibn `Abdullah ibn Nawfal ibn al-Harith ibn `Abd al-Muttalib, and al-`Abbas ibn `Utba ibn Abi Lahab ibn `Abd al-Muttalib together with some ninety men from other clans of Quraish and a similar number from al-Ansar. Four thousand others were killed among those whose number was carefully counted but excluding those who escaped count. The people then paid homage as slaves of Yazid. Whoever refused to do so was put to the sword by Musrif, all except `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib *al-Sajjad* [The one frequently prostrating in prayer] and `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib.

1926. Regarding the Battle of al-Harra, Muhammad ibn Aslam recited:

Though you killed us in the Battle of Harrat Waqim

We were the first to be killed as Muslims.

At the Battle of Badr we humiliated you,

And took away your swords as booty.

1927. People watched as `Ali ibn al-Husain *al-Sajjad* sought refuge at the tomb of the Prophet while calling out in prayer. He was brought to Musrif who was very angry with him and declared himself unbound by any obligation towards him or his ancestors. However, when Musrif saw him, he shuddered and made him sit next to him, asking him if he needed anything at all. Every request he made to Musrif to spare the life of a

person about to be executed was granted. `Ali then left. He was asked: “We saw you moving your lips. What were you saying?” He answered: “I said: O God, Lord of the seven heavens and what they overspread, and the seven earths and what they contain, Lord of the Great Throne, Lord of Muhammad and his pure family, I seek refuge with You from his evil and seek Your protection from his slaughter, I ask You to grant me any good he may do and spare me from his evil.” Muslim was asked: “We heard you cursing this youth and his ancestors but when he was brought before you you treated him with great honor.” He answered: “This was not through my own inclination. My heart was filled with awe of him.”

1928. As for `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas, it was his maternal uncles, the Kinda tribe, who protected him from Muslim as also some Rabi`a tribesmen who were in his army. About this, `Ali recited:

My father al-`Abbas is the lord of the tribe of Lu'ayy,

My maternal uncles are the kings from the clan of Wali`a.

They were the ones who protected my honor

The day the troops of Musrif arrived with the clan of Laki`a.

He intended nothing at all honorable towards me,

But he was thwarted by forceful hands.

1929. When the people of Medinah had suffered at the hands of Musrif the slaughter, plunder and enslavement described above, together with other crimes we've decided to omit mentioning, Musrif headed to Mecca with his armies from al-Sham to punish Ibn al-Zubair and the Meccans by order of Yazid. This was now the year 64 [683-4]. Arriving at a place called Qudaid, Musrif died and was succeeded in the command of the army by al-Husain ibn Numair. Al-Husain then continued to march until he arrived in Mecca four days before the end of the month of Muharram, in the year 64 [September 24, 683]. He besieged Mecca from all sides and Ibn al-Zubair took refuge in the Holy House, having called himself “The

Man Sheltering in the House”. He became well known for this name to the point where poets made mention of it in their poems. Among these is the verse quoted above by Sulaiman ibn Qatta:

If you were to follow this up by persecuting “The man sheltering in the Holy House”,

You would be like `Ad, who, blind to right guidance, went astray.*

1930. Al-Husain and his Shami troops set up mangonels and onagers on the mountains and mountain passes, and aimed them at Mecca and the Holy Mosque. Ibn al-Zubair was meanwhile in the mosque along with al-Mukhtar ibn Abi `Ubaid al-Thaqafi, now one of his followers and a member of his party. Al-Mukhtar had accepted his imamate but on certain conditions which he imposed on him such as not to go against any view he expressed and not to disobey any of his commands. As the stones of the mangonels and onagers began to fall heavily on the Ka`ba along with fire, naphta, flax extracts and other combustibles, the Ka`ba itself collapsed and its structure was burnt down. A bolt of lightning then fell and burned eleven of those who were operating the mangonels, some say more. This took place on Saturday the third day of Rabi` al-Awwal of that same year [October 30, 683], eleven days before the death of Yazid. The situation became critical for the people of Mecca and Ibn al-Zubair, with further destruction done through the stones, fire and the sword.

Regarding this, Abu Wajza al-Madani recited:

Evil was what Ibn Numair undertook:

He burnt the Maqam and the Musalla*.*

1931. Strange stories are related of Yazid and others, and many transgressions such as wine drinking, killing the Prophet’s grandson, cursing the Trustee [`Ali], destroying and burning the Holy House, shedding blood, dissolute and shameless conduct, and other sins for which the threat of divine retribution makes any pardon clearly out of the

question. This for instance applies to denial of God's unity or disobedience of the Prophet. In our earlier works we covered these topics in broad terms.

Chapter 93

An account of the days of Mu`awiya ibn Yazid, Marwan ibn al-Hakam, al-Mukhtar ibn Abi `Ubaid and `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair, and a brief narrative of their histories, conduct and some events of their times

1932. Al-Mas`udi said: Mu`awiya ibn Yazid ibn Mu`awiya then succeeded his father in power and his days lasted for forty days before he died, though in some versions two months are mentioned and other periods of time are also found. He was nicknamed "Abu Yazid" and was also nicknamed "Abu Laila" when he assumed the caliphate, this nickname being normally given to weaklings among the Arabs.

Regarding him, a poet recited:

*I see a civil war coming, its cauldrons boiling,
And power, after Abu Laila, will belong to the victorious.*

1933. On his deathbed, the Umayyad family gathered around and said to him: "Name your successor from among anyone you see fit of your family." He replied: "By God I have not tasted the sweetness of your caliphate, so how can I be asked to bear its moral burden as you rush to taste its sweetness and I rush to taste its bitterness? O God, I am quit of it and have abandoned it! O God, I see no solution other than a consultative council to whom I will delegate the matter, and they can appoint anyone they please." His mother said to him: "I wish I had been a menstrual rag and did not hear this talk from you!" He replied: "And I, mother, wish I had been a menstrual rag and had not assumed power! Will the Umayyads win its sweetness while I suffer its moral burden by denying it to its rightful holders? No. I am quit of it."

1934. The cause of his death has been a subject of dispute. Some say he was given a poisoned drink, others say he was a victim of pestilence, and yet others say he died a natural death. He died aged twenty-two and was buried in Damascus. The man leading the prayers over his body was al-Walid ibn `Utba ibn Abi Sufyan in order that he might succeed him. As he uttered the second cry of "God is great!" he was smitten by pestilence and fell dead before prayers were concluded. `Uthman ibn al-Walid ibn `Utba ibn Abi Sufian then came forward and they said to him: "We will pay you homage." He replied: "On condition that I do not fight and I do not commence hostilities." They refused to accept these conditions so he travelled to Mecca and joined the Ibn al-Zubair party. Power now passed from the Harb branch of the Umayyad family. None of them sought it, none longed for it and none could be considered worthy of it.

1935. The people of Iraq then paid homage to `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair who appointed `Abdullah ibn Muti` al-`Adawi as governor of Kufa. Al-Mukhtar ibn Abi `Ubaid al-Thaqafi said to Ibn al-Zubair: "I know a group of people from the ranks of whom, if they have a man who is kind to them and knows the future, I can extract an army with whom you can defeat the people of al-Sham." Ibn al-Zubair asked who might they be and al-Mukhtar replied that they were the Hashimite party of Kufa. So Ibn al-Zubair said: "Go and be that man." He dispatched him to Kufa where he settled in a city quarter and began to weep in public for the Talibids and their party, to display yearning and grief, and to incite revenge for the shedding of their blood.

1936. The Shi`ites inclined to al-Mukhtar and gathered around him. So he marched to the governor's palace, drove out the governor Ibn Muti`, dominated Kufa, built a mansion for himself with a garden, and spent enormous sums of money which he took from the public treasury. He then distributed money very widely among people. He wrote to Ibn al-

Zubair telling him that he had driven Ibn Muti` out of Kufa because he could not cope with the duties of his office, and requesting Ibn al-Zubair to forgive him for what he had spent from the public treasury, but Ibn al-Zubair refused. So al-Mukhtar renounced his allegiance to him and repudiated his oath of homage. Al-Mukhtar then wrote to `Ali ibn al-Husain *al-Sajjad* offering to pay him homage, to proclaim his imamate and make public his cause, sending him an enormous sum of money. `Ali, however, refused to accept the money and to answer his letter, cursing him in public in the Prophet's mosque, and exposing him as a liar and a libertine, and that he gained people's goodwill by pretending to support the Talibids.

1937. When al-Mukhtar gave up hope of `Ali ibn al-Husain, he wrote to `Ali's uncle, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, making him the same offer. `Ali ibn al-Husain advised Muhammad not to answer him or accept anything he offered, since his true motive was to win the people's hearts to him by exploiting the Prophet's family and winning them over to his side through their love for the family. `Ali went on to tell him that, deep down, al-Mukhtar is unlike what he pretends to be, that is, that he is on their side, supports their cause, and is quit of their enemies. In fact, he is an enemy and not a supporter. He added that he ought in truth to expose al-Mukhtar's intentions and his deceit just as he himself [i.e. `Ali] had once done in the Prophet's mosque. Ibn al-Hanafiyya then went to see Ibn `Abbas and told him the story and Ibn `Abbas said: "Do not do it, for you do not know where you stand with Ibn al-Zubair". So Muhammad obeyed Ibn `Abbas and said nothing about the moral failings of al-Mukhtar.

1938. Al-Mukhtar's movement began to grow ever stronger in Kufa. His followers increased and people were drawn to him. He began to preach to people in accordance with their social class, their status as individuals and their degree of understanding. Some he would address in the name of

the imamate of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, while to others he would deny this and talk instead about how an angel comes to him with inspiration and tells him the future. He then pursued the killers of al-Husain, and among those he killed was `Umar ibn Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas al-Zuhri, who was in command of the battle against al-Husain in Karbala', and who had killed him and his companions. So the people of Kufa were drawn ever closer to him, and their love for him increased. 1939. Meanwhile, Ibn al-Zubair pretended to have an ascetic attitude to the world and to practice piety, though still keen to retain the caliphate. He would say: "My stomach is a mere inch (*shibr*) in breadth so how many worldly things can it hold? I am the 'Man Sheltering in the Holy House' and the one who seeks the protection of God." The harmful acts he committed against the Hashim clan increased by his being excessively mean in money matters where all people were concerned. Regarding this, Abu Wajza, a client of al-Zubair, recited:

*Clients are now blaming the Caliph,
Complaining of hunger and spoliation.
What would it have mattered to us, what harm would have come to us,
Whether one king or another from around us had won victory?
Having left Ibn al-Zubair, Abu Wajza recited:
He continues to study the chapter called "The Battlements" in the Qur'an,
Until my heart has become as soft as silk.
Had your stomach been an inch in breadth, you would have been sated by
now,
And left a lot of leftovers for the poor.
A man whose client I was, and who abandoned me,
And yet seeks to be virtuous—such a man is indeed deluded.
About him he also recited:
You, there, O mounted traveller: if it happens that you mention*

The senior member of the `Awwam clan and it is said “Who do you mean?”*

*You are to state that you are taking refuge in the Holy House,
And multiply acts of murder between Zamzam* and al-Rukn*.*

1940. Regarding Ibn al-Zubair, al-Dahhak ibn Fairuz al-Dailami recited:

You tell us a mere handful suffices you,

And that your stomach is an inch or less in breadth.

However, when you gain anything at all, you consume it,

As the fire of the ghada plant consumes the wood of the jujube.

Had you been prone to render any benefit with your rain of generosity,

To someone close to you, tenderness would have inclined you to `Amr.

1941. The `Amr in question is in the following story: When Yazid ibn Mu`awiya had appointed al-Walid ibn `Utba ibn Abi Sufian as governor of Medinah, al-Walid dispatched an army to Mecca to fight Ibn al-Zubair, commanded by `Amr ibn al-Zubair, brother of `Abdullah. `Amr was ill-disposed towards his brother `Abdullah. As the armies lined up in battle, `Amr's troops were defeated and they surrendered him. His brother `Abdullah captured him, displayed him nude in public at the gate of the Holy Mosque, and ordered him whipped until he died. `Abdullah also imprisoned al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya in the prison known as `Arim, a dark and dismal dungeon, and wanted to kill him. The latter however managed through a ruse to escape from prison and undertook a very rough journey through the mountains until he came to Mina, where his father Muhammad was. Regarding this, Kuthayyir* recited:

*You [Ibn al-Zubair] tell everyone you meet that you are a seeker of refuge
in the House,*

But the real seeker of refuge is unjustly imprisoned in `Arim.

Whoso sees that venerable man [Muhammad] in Khaif, in Mina,

Knows that he is not unjust.

He has the same name as the Prophet, and is the son of his Trustee,

A man who sets free those who are in chains, and pays their debts.

Ibn al-Zubair had arrested all the Hashmites in Mecca and had them locked up in the valley. A huge amount of firewood was gathered around them so that a mere spark would have set it off and none of them would have survived. Among them was Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya.

1942. `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Sulaiman al-Nawfali>Fudail ibn `Abd al-Wahhab al-Kufi> Abu `Imran al-Razi>Fitr ibn Khalifa> al-Dayyal ibn Harmala, who said: “I was one of the Kufans whom Abu `Abdullah al-Jadali mobilized on behalf of al-Mukhtar. We set off, being four thousand cavalymen. Abu `Abdullah said: ‘This is a major force of cavalry and I fear that if Ibn al-Zubair hears about us, he will speed things up and kill the Hashim clan. Let me have some volunteers.’ Eight hundred horsemen, including myself, volunteered, constituting a mounted strike force. Ibn al-Zubair was thus suddenly overtaken by pennants fluttering over his head. So we came to the Hashim clan, found them in the valley and rescued them. Ibn al-Hanafiyya told us: ‘Fight only those who fight you.’ When Ibn al-Zubair saw how bold we had been in challenging his power and in assailing him, he sought refuge at the covers of the Ka`ba and announced: ‘I am seeking refuge with God.’”

1943. In his book of history, al-Nawfali reported from >Ibn `A`isha>his father>Hammad ibn Salama, who said: “`Urwa ibn al-Zubair* used to find excuses for his brother `Abdullah whenever mention was made of the Hashim clan and how he imprisoned them in the valley and gathered firewood to burn them, by saying: ‘He only meant to scare them so that they would come to obey him, for they had previously refused to pay him homage.’” This is a report that our present work cannot in fact deal with,

but which we recounted in our book devoted to the virtues and histories of the House of Muhammad, entitled *Hada'iq al-Adhhan*.

1944. Ibn al-Zubair got up to speak and said: "All people have paid homage to me with the exception of this youth Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya. The designated time between him and me is set for sunset tonight. I will then burn down his house on his head." Ibn `Abbas came to see Muhammad and said: "Cousin, I cannot trust what he'll do to you, so pay him homage." Muhammad replied: "A strong veil will protect me from him." Ibn `Abbas looked at the sun while pondering the words of Muhammad, and the sun by that time was about to set. It was then that Abu `Abdullah al-Jadali arrived and said to Ibn al-Hanafiyya: "Give us permission to kill Ibn al-Zubair." He refused, then left for Aila where he resided for a number of years until Ibn al-Zubair was killed. The same report was narrated by `Umar ibn Shabba al-Numairi transmitting from `Ata ibn Muslim, as was relayed to us by Abu'l Hasan al-Mihrani al-Misri in Egypt and by Abu Ishaq al-Jawhari in Basra, in addition to other authorities.

1945. Those who gathered around Ibn al-Hanafiyya are known as the Kaysani Shi`ites. They hold that the imamate belongs to Ibn al-Hanafiyya. Thereafter there was discord among the Kaysanis. Some held that he had definitely died, others that he had not died but was alive in the mountain of Radwa. Then each of these factions also fell into dispute. They were called Kaysaniyya by association with al-Mukhtar ibn Abi `Ubaid al-Thaqafi, whose name was Kaysan and whose patronymic was "Abu `Amra". They claim that it was `Ali ibn Abi Talib who called al-Mukhtar by these names. Others argued that Kaysan Abu `Amra was someone else and not al-Mukhtar. We have recounted the views of the various factions of the Kaysaniyya and of other Shi`ite groups and factions of this community in our work entitled *Al-Maqalat fi Usul al-*

Diyanat. We mentioned therein the views of each faction and the arguments adduced in support of each view, in addition to those who claimed that Ibn al-Hanafiyya had gone into the mountain passes of Radwa with some followers and that nothing has been heard of him or them since.

1946. Some historians state that the poet Kuthayyir was a Kaysani who maintained that Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya was the Mahdi who will come to fill the earth with justice as it was filled with evil and injustice. In his book on the genealogies of Quraish, and under the heading of the genealogies and histories of the house of Abu Talib, al-Zubair ibn Bakkar states that his uncle informed him that Kuthayyir mentions Ibn al-Hanafiyya in a poem which begins:

He is the Mahdi as told to us by Ka`b al-Ahbar in ancient days,
God comforted my eyes when God's Trustworthy Man called on me,
And gently posed his request.*

*He praised my inclinations as virtuous,
And asked about my children and how I was faring.*

Concerning Ibn al-Hanafiyya, Kuthayyir also recited:

The imams from Quraish, justly called rulers, are four and equal in merit:

`Ali and three of his sons; these are the most distinguished issue, as is manifest.

*One distinguished issue is a man of faith and good works,
Another was buried at Karbala'.*

*One is invisible to the eye, until the moment when
He comes leading his cavalry, with the pennant aloft.*

*He went into hiding and will not be seen for a while,
On Mount Radwa, where he is given honey and water to drink.*

1947. About him, al-Sayyid al-Himyari*, who was a Kaysani, recited:

*Tell the Trustee: I offer my soul as ransom for you.
Your stay on that mountain has grown too long.
This has harmed a group of us who paid you homage,
Calling you the caliph and the imam.
Because of you, they withstood the enmity of all mankind,
And you have been absent from them for seventy years.
The son of Khawla* has not tasted death,
Nor has any earth held his bones.
He has ended up in the leafy passes of Mount Radwa,
Where the angels converse with him.*

Al-Sayyid also recited:

*O passes of Radwa, why is he who is with you invisible,
Though we're driven mad by longing for him?
Until when? How long? When will this period end,
O son of the Prophet, though you are alive and thriving?*

1948. Al-Sayyid has many poems about Ibn al-Hanafiyya which this work cannot encompass. In his book of history, `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Sulaiman al-Nawfali transmitted what he had heard from Abu'l `Abbas ibn `Ammar>Ja`far ibn Muhammad al-Nawfali>Isma`il ibn al-Sahir, the reciter and transmitter of the poetry of al-Sayyid al-Himyari, who said: "Right until he died, Al-Sayyid remained firm in his Kaysani beliefs." He also denied that the Sayyid had recited a poem which began:

I have become a devotee of Ja`far in the name of God, Great is He!*

Furthermore, Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn Muhammad al-Nawfali commented as follows following that report: "This verse does not resemble the poetry of al-Sayyid who, with all his eloquence and lucid diction, would never use an expression like 'I have become a Ja`farite (*taja`fartu*) in the name of God.'" "

1949. `Umar ibn Shabba al-Numairi, transmitting from Musawir ibn al-Sa'ib stated that Ibn al-Zubair preached for forty mornings, where he did not call blessings on the Prophet. He said: "What prevents me from doing so is that some people [i.e. the Hashim clan] might lift up their noses in pride." Sa'id ibn Jubair mentioned that `Abdullah ibn `Abbas entered upon Ibn al-Zubair, who said to him: "Is it you who blames me and calls me a miser?" Ibn `Abbas replied: "Yes, for I heard the Prophet say: 'He is no Muslim who is full while his neighbor goes hungry.'" Ibn al-Zubair said: "I have been holding back my hatred for you, members of the Prophet's family, for forty years." A lengthy conversation ensued after which Ibn `Abbas left Mecca, fearing for his life, and settled in Ta'if, where he died. This was mentioned by `Umar ibn Shabba al-Numairi>Suwaid ibn Sa'id>Sa'id ibn Jubair, as related to us by al-Mahrani in Egypt and al-Kilabi in Basra, as well as others, all of whom were transmitting from `Umar ibn Shabba.

1950. In his book of history, al-Nawfali, transmitting from al-Walid ibn Hisham al-Qahdhami, stated: "Ibn al-Zubair made a speech in which he disparaged `Ali. When `Ali's son, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, heard about this, he came and a stool was placed before him, on which he mounted and said: 'O Quraish, shame on you! Is `Ali to be disparaged in your presence? `Ali was a straight arrow, one whom God used to strike His enemies. He killed them for their unbelief and made them throw up what they ate. His presence became burdensome to them so they slandered him by attributing falsehoods to him. We are a people who follow the middle of his road, sons of the elite of the Ansar. If in future we possess a state, we shall scatter their bones and expose their bodies, when their bodies are by then decayed and {Wrongdoers will surely know what adversity they shall fall into}'. Ibn al-Zubair resumed his speech and said: 'I can find an excuse for the sons of Fatima to speak but

what has Ibn al-Hanafiyya to do with this?’ Muhammad replied: ‘O son of Umm Ruman, why shouldn’t I speak? Is not Fatima my father’s wife and mother of my brothers? Is not Fatima bint Asad ibn Hashim my grandmother? Is not Fatima bint `Amr ibn `A`idh my paternal grandmother? By God, were it not for Khadija bint Khuwailid, I would have left no bone unbroken in the clan of Asad! And if I suffer insults by doing so, I will be patient.’”

1951. Ibn `Ammar > `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Sulaiman al-Nawfali > Ibn `A`isha and al-`Utbi > their fathers, their two accounts more or less coinciding, stated: “Ibn al-Zubair made a speech in which he said: ‘What is it with those people who issue legal judgments about temporary marriage (*mut`a*) and they denigrate the Apostle of the Prophet [al-Zubair, his father] and `A`isha, Mother of the Believers? What is it with them? Has God blinded their hearts as well as their eyes [alluding to Ibn `Abbas]?’ Ibn `Abbas said: ‘Boy, hold me up!’ then added, ‘O Ibn al-Zubair:

He who exchanges arrows with the clan of Qarra has done them justice.*

If we meet a group in battle,

We turn their vanguard into their rear.

As for temporary marriage, why don’t you ask your mother, and she’ll tell you. The first *mut`a* whose scent spread forth from an incense burner was that between your mother and your father’---meaning the *mut`a* of pilgrimage according to al-Nawfali. ‘As for your mention of the Mother of the Believers, it was because of us that she acquired that title and through us that the veil was imposed upon her. As for the “Apostle of the Prophet”, I met your father [al-Zubair] as he advanced in an army against us, while I myself was with a rightly-guided imam. If he was as I described him, he committed unbelief by fighting us. If he was as you describe him, he committed unbelief by running away from us.’ Ibn al-

Zubair was reduced to silence. He later went to see his mother, Asma`, and asked her, and she replied: ‘Ibn `Abbas is right.’”

1952. Al-Mas`udi said: This report contains additions that have to do with the Prophet’s cloak and the bush called `awsaja. This report was included in full in our works, to be cited below, together with what people have said about the *mut`a* of women and the *mut`a* of pilgrimage and their disputes concerning these matters, and that the the Prophet declared it illicit in the year of the Khaibar expedition, together with the meat of the domestic ass. Additionally, we have made mention of the report transmitted by Rabi` ibn Sabra from his father and the saying of `Umar: “It was so in the days of the Prophet, and if prohibition had come first, I would do such and such to the transgressor.” Further, we mentioned the report from Jabir who said: “We practiced *mut`a* in the days of the Prophet, during the caliphate of Abu Bakr and up to the first period of the caliphate of `Umar”, together with further views on this matter. All these topics were dealt with in our works entitled *al-Istibsar*, *al-Safwa* and *al-Wajib fi al-Furud al-Lawazim*, where we discussed such matters as the washing of legs, the wiping of sandals, divorce according to Prophetic practice, divorce of the period of waiting (*`idda*), divorce through aggression (*ta`addi*) and other matters.

1953. Al-Nawfali>Mansur ibn Shaiba>Safiyya bint Abi `Ubaid>Asma` bint Abi Bakr, who said: “When we returned with the Prophet from the Farewell Pilgrimage, he ordered all who had no sacrificial animals to be no longer in a state of ritual purity (*ihram*). So I ended my state of ritual purity, wore my clothes, perfumed myself and came and sat next to al-Zubair. He said to me: ‘Go away from me’. I said: ‘What are you afraid of?’ He answered: ‘I fear I might spring upon you.’” This is what Ibn `Abbas was referring to. This same report was transmitted from Abi `Asim from someone other than al-Nawfali. People have disputed

concerning this matter. Some say he [Ibn `Abbas] meant the *mut`a* of women, others that he meant the *mut`a* of the pilgrimage, since al-Zubair had married Asma' as a virgin, Abu Bakr having married them in public. So how can this be considered the *mut`a* of women?

1954. When Yazid ibn Mu`awiya perished and Mu`awiya ibn Yazid succeeded, the news reached al-Husain [ibn Numair] and his army from al-Sham as he was fighting the war against Ibn al-Zubair. So they concluded a truce with Ibn al-Zubair and arrived in Mecca. Al-Husain met Ibn al-Zubair in the mosque and said to him: "What say you if I take you back with me to al-Sham and pay you homage as caliph?" Ibn al-Zubair, raising his voice, replied: "What! After the killing of the people of al-Harra? No, by God, not until I kill five Shamis for every one of our men killed!" Al-Husain replied: "Whoever thinks, O Ibn al-Zubair, that you are shrewd is a fool. I speak to you in confidence and you answer me in a loud voice. I call on you to proclaim you caliph and you threaten us with war and claim you are fighting us? You will soon know which of us will be killed!"

1955. The army of al-Sham then departed with al-Husain back to their country. Arriving in Medinah, its people began to insult and threaten them and mentioned their dead at al-Harra. As this commotion continued and civil strife loomed, Rawh ibn Zinba` al-Judhami ascended the Prophet's pulpit. Rawh, a soldier in that army, said: "People of Medinah, what are you threatening us with? We did not invite you to pay homage to a man from the Kalb tribe or from Balqain or Lakhm or Judham or some other Arab tribe or from their clients. Rather, we invited you to pay homage to a Quraish clan—he meant the Umayyads---then to obey Yazid ibn Mu`awiya. It was over obedience to him that we fought you. Are you threatening us? By God we are nurtured on stabbing, pestilence, and the

dregs of death and fate, so what is your pleasure?" The army then returned to al-Sham.

1956. The mosaics installed in his church by Abraha the Abyssinian were carried from San`a to Ibn al-Zubair, together with three engraved marble columns which were embedded with sandarac and diverse dyes. Whoever saw it imagined it to be gold. Ibn al-Zubair then began the rebuilding of the Ka`ba. Seventy venerable old men of Quraish testified that when Quraish first built the Ka`ba, their expenses were insufficient so they shortened the area of the House by seven lengths from what it had been when laid down by Abraham the Friend of God and by Isma`il. Ibn al-Zubair rebuilt it, adding the lengths mentioned above, and decorating it with mosaics and columns. He built two doors, one for entry and another for exit. The Ka`ba remained in that state until al-Hajjaj killed `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair and wrote to `Abd al-Malik informing him of the extensions added by Ibn al-Zubair. `Abd al-Malik ordered him to destroy these extensions and restore it to what it was before, i.e. as built originally by Quraish and as it was in the days of the Prophet. Furthermore, the Ka`ba was to have only one door. Al-Hajjaj carried out these instructions.

1957. Ibn al-Zubair's power increased and homage was paid to him in al-Sham. On all Muslim pulpits his name was proclaimed as caliph except the pulpit of the mosque of Tiberias in the province of al-Urdunn. This was because Hassan ibn Malik ibn Bahdal refused to pay him homage and wanted instead to pay homage to Khalid ibn Yazid ibn Mu`awiya. The man in charge of homage for Ibn al-Zubair in Mecca was `Abdullah ibn Muti` al-`Adawi. Concerning this, Quda`a al-Asadi, who had paid homage to Ibn al-Zubair, then reneged, reciting:

Ibn Muti` called on us to offer homage,

A homage to which my heart did not incline.

He [Ibn al-Zubair] extended a rough hand to me,

Which, when touching the palm of my hand, I felt it was not a caliph's palm.

1958. Yazid ibn Mu`awiya as well as his son Mu`awiya perished when `Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad was governor of Basra. This latter made a speech in which he announced their deaths and stated that the matter would be settled by a consultative council to which no one had as yet been appointed and added: "No land today is more extensive than yours. None holds as many people or as much wealth as yours. In your public treasury is the sum of one hundred thousand dirhams. Your army counts sixty thousand soldiers. Their pay and the pay of their families amounts to sixty million. So choose someone you agree upon to lead you and fight your enemies, claim justice for the unjustly treated, and distribute the monies among yourselves." The notables of the city, including al-Ahnaf ibn Qais al-Tamimi, Qais ibn al-Haitham al-Sulami and Masma` ibn Malik al-`Abdi, went up to him and said: "We know of no other man but you as our governor and you are most worthy to run our affairs until people agree upon a caliph." He answered: "Had you chosen someone else I would have listened and obeyed him."

1959. The governor of Kufa was `Amr ibn Huraith al-Makhzumi, acting as deputy for `Ubaidullah ibn Ziad. The latter wrote to him telling him what the Basrans had decided. So `Amr ascended the pulpit, addressed the people, and told them what the Basrans had decided. Yazid ibn al-Harith ibn Ruwaim al-Shaibani stood up and said: "Thanks be to God who released us from our oath of allegiance! We have nothing to do with the Umayyads nor with the rule of the Son of Murjana----she being the mother of `Ubaidullah while Sumayya was the mother of his father Ziad, as mentioned earlier----Homage therefore belongs to the People of the Stone---meaning the Hijazis."

1960. The Kufans thus deposed the rule of the Umayyads and the governorship of Ibn Ziad, and were about to choose an interim ruler while they decided what to do. A group of them said: “`Umar ibn Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas would be a good candidate.” When about to set him up as governor, some women from Hamdan and others from Kahlan, Rabi`a and al-Nakh` entered the mosque wailing and weeping, lamenting al-Husain and saying: “Is not `Umar ibn Sa`d satisfied with killing al-Husain so that he now wants to be our governor in Kufa?” The people wept and changed their mind about `Umar. The most prominent among them were the women of Hamdan. `Ali had favored Hamdan and it was he who recited:

*Had I been a gatekeeper of paradise,
I would tell Hamdan: “Enter in peace.”*

He also recited:

I mobilized Hamdan and they mobilized Himyar.

At Siffin, not a single one of them [i.e. Hamdan] was with Mu`awiya and the people of al-Sham, except for a few who lived in the Ghuta of Damascus, in a village called `Ayn Tharma, and even today, in the year 332 [943-44], there are some of them still living there.

1961. When the news of what happened in Kufa reached Ibn al-Zubair, he sent them `Abdullah ibn Muti` al-`Adawi, as recounted above. He oversaw their affairs until Ibn al-Zubair dispatched al-Mukhtar in his wake. Marwan ibn al-Hakam, observing how people had, in their great majority, agreed to pay homage to Ibn al-Zubair, wanted to do the same and join his cause. He was prevented from doing so by `Ubaidullah ibn Ziad when the latter went to al-Sham and said to Marwan: “You are the chieftain of the `Abd Manaf clan so do not act in haste.” Marwan travelled to al-Jabiya in the Jawlan district between Damascus and al-Urdunn. Meanwhile, al-Dahhak ibn Qais al-Fihri managed to draw people

to himself and to lead them, rejected Marwan, and made for Damascus. Al-Ashdaq `Amr ibn Sa`id ibn al-`As was faster than him and got to Damascus before him. Al-Dahhak then headed to the Hawran and proclaimed the caliphate of Ibn al-Zubair. When al-Ashdaq met with Marwan, he said to him: "Would you consider what I have to say to you, being a better outcome for both of us?" Marwan asked: "What might that be?" He replied: "I call for people to pay you homage and take charge of this on condition that the caliphate passes to me afterwards." Marwan said: "No, your turn comes after Khalid ibn Yazid ibn Mu`awiya." Al-Ashdaq agreed and called on people to pay homage to Marwan, and they responded positively. He then proceeded to Hassan ibn Malik in al-Urdunn, invited him to pay homage to Marwan and Malik agreed.

1962. Thus, Marwan ibn al-Hakam ibn Abi'l `As ibn Umayya ibn `Abd Shams ibn `Abd Manaf, with the patronymic Abu `Abd al-Malik, was paid homage in al-Urdunn. His mother was Amina bint `Alqama ibn Safwan. The first to pay him homage were the people of al-Urdunn. It is said that Marwan was the first to receive homage by force and the power of the sword, and without the consent of a large group of people. In fact, everyone made him fear to assume power except for a small number of people who encouraged him to usurp power. Everyone before him had assumed the caliphate while possessing a large number of supporters, except for Marwan, who assumed it under the circumstances described above. Marwan then named Khalid ibn Yazid and `Amr ibn Sa`id as his two successors. Marwan was nicknamed "Thin Beam of the Sun".

Concerning this, his brother `Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Hakam recited:

*God damn a people who made "Thin Beam" to rule over people,
Giving and withholding as he pleases.*

1963. Hassan ibn Malik, then the lord and chieftain of Qahtan in al-Sham, laid down the same conditions for Marwan as he had formerly done to

Mu`awiya, his son Yazid and his son Mu`awiya, namely, that two thousand of his men would each receive a pay of two thousand; that if he [Hassan] dies, his son or paternal cousin would succeed him; that they should have the power to command and forbid; that they should be seated in the front rank of any assembly; and that any major decision could only be taken after consulting with their group [Qahtan]. Marwan agreed to all these conditions, so Hassan joined his cause.

1964. Malik ibn Hubaira al-Sakuni said to Marwan: “We do not owe you any allegiance and we only fight for you for worldly gain. If you treat us the way Mu`awiya and Yazid did, we will support you. If not, then by God all of Quraish are exactly the same to us!” Marwan complied with his wishes.

1965. Marwan then marched against al-Dahhak ibn Qais al-Fihri who was now joined by the Qais, the rest of Mudar and others from Nizar. With him too was a group from Quda`a led by Zamil ibn `Amr al-`Udhri, who held a pennant given to his father by the Prophet. Al-Dahhak and those with him supported the caliphate of Ibn al-Zubair. Marwan, al-Dahhak and their two armies met at Marj Rahit, a few miles from Damascus, and the fighting had its ups and downs. The Yemeni troops were more numerous and Marwan used them with skill to kill al-Dahhak ibn Qais, head of the Zubairid party. Al-Dahhak was killed by a man from the Taym al-Lat tribe, and with him were killed the Nizaris, mostly from Qais, in an unprecedented slaughter.

1966. Regarding this battle, Marwan ibn al-Hakam recited:

*When I saw that people had gathered for war,
And that supreme power can only be assumed by force,
I called out against them Ghassan and Kalb,
And the men of Saksak, victorious warriors,
And al-Qayn in full armor, death-dealing,*

*And noble horses, galloping,
Carrying forward Marwan and a firm religion.*

His brother, `Abd al-Rahman, recited the following regarding the same incident:

*I see that reports about the people of Marj Rahit have reached
The people of Euphrates and the people of the flooding of the Nile.*

1967. Zufar ibn al-Harith al-`Amiri al-Kilabi was with al-Dahhak. When the killing of his people grew intense, he fled with two men from the Sulaim clan. Their horses fell behind and Marwan's Yemeni cavalry caught up with them, so the two Sulaim men said to Zufar: "Escape with your life for we are sure to die." So he ran away while the two men were overtaken and killed. Regarding that battle Zufar ibn al-Harith al-Kilabi recited the following verses from a longer poem:

*I swear by my life: the battle of Rahit,
Has left Marwan with a structure clearly cracked and falling apart.
Pasture may grow on the dung of the earth,
But rancor in the souls remains unaltered.
Show me my weapons, damn you!
For war as I see grows only more intense.
Will Kalb depart without suffering our spears,
And the dead bodies of Rahit left where they are?
Before that day I was not known to have any failings:
I mean my escape and leaving behind my two companions,
That day when, late in the evening, I ran through the two armies,
But could only see enemies, not allies.
Will one day's bad deed cancel out my days of glory and hard fighting?
And do I still cherish false hopes after the deaths of Ibn `Amr and Ibn
Ma`n,
One after the other, and the death of Hammam?*

1968. Those who were present at the battle then rejoined their military districts in al-Sham. Al-Nu`man ibn Bashir, governor of Homs, had proclaimed the caliphate of Ibn al-Zubair, concurring with al-Dahhak. When he heard the news of his death and the defeat of the Zubairid faction he left Homs in a hurry, and walked through the night aimlessly, not knowing which road to take. He was pursued by Khalid ibn `Adiyy al-Kila`i and a group from Homs who aided him. Khalid caught up with him, killed him and sent his head to Marwan. Meanwhile Zufar ibn al-Harith in his flight ended up in Qarqisiya which he overcame. So Marwan established himself firmly in al-Sham and dispatched his men and governors throughout the land.

1969. Marwan then marched with his troops from al-Sham to old Cairo, which he besieged and where he built a ditch to surround it next to the cemetery. The Egyptians were Zubairids and their Zubairid governor was Ibn Jahdam. The lord of Fustat at that time and its chieftain was Abu Rushd ibn Kuraib ibn Abraha ibn al-Sabbah. Some fighting broke out between them and Marwan but then they agreed to a truce. Marwan executed Ukaidir ibn al-Humam, the most prominent knight of Mudar, when he captured him. Abu Rushd said to Marwan: "By God, if you so wish, we can revert to the factionalism of ancient days"---he meant the Day of the Dar in Medinah and the killing of `Uthman. Marwan responded; "I do not wish this in any way." He left Egypt after appointing his son `Abd al-`Aziz as governor. Returning to al-Sham, Marwan camped at al-Sinbara, some two miles from Tiberias in al-Urdunn. He summoned Hassan ibn Malik, and promised and threatened him. Hassan stood up in public and called for homage to be paid to `Abd al-Malik following Marwan, with `Abd al-`Aziz to follow `Abd al-Malik. No one disputed that arrangement.

1970. Marwan perished that year in Damascus, the year being 65 [684-5]. Historians and biographers and others concerned with Umayyad history have disputed the cause of his death: some say he died from pestilence, others say he died a natural death and still others claim that Fakhita bint Abi Hashim ibn `Utba, mother of Khalid ibn Yazid ibn Mu`awiya, was the person who killed him. This is because when Marwan received homage, the designated successor was Khalid ibn Yazid, followed by `Amr ibn Sa`id. Marwan, however, changed his mind and designated his son `Abd al-Malik, to be followed by his other son `Abd al-`Aziz, as his successors. When Khalid went to see him, he spoke some harsh words to Marwan. Marwan grew angry and said: "Are you addressing me, you son of a woman with hanging breasts?" Marwan had married his mother Fakhita in order to humiliate and demean Khalid. Khalid then went to see his mother, condemned her marriage to Marwan, and complained to her about what he had suffered at Marwan's hands. She responded: "He will not shame you hereafter." Some say that she then placed a pillow over Marwan's face as he was sleeping and sat on it with her slave girls until he died; others that she prepared a poisoned drink of milk which she offered him when he came to see her. No sooner was the drink inside his stomach than he fell dying and his tongue was tied. `Abd al-Malik and his other children came to attend to him, and Marwan kept pointing with his head towards Fakhita, to try to tell them that it was she who killed him. Umm Khalid meanwhile was saying: "May my father and mother be your ransom! Even in the throes of death you have not forgotten me! He is trying to tell you to take good care of me." Marwan then expired.

1971. Marwan's days lasted nine months and a few days, or eight months in some versions, and other dates are also found, this to be discussed when we come later in this work to the total number of years of Umayyad rule, if God wills. Marwan perished aged sixty-three, though other ages

are also given. He was short, reddish in color, and was born in the second year after the Hijra, and perished three months after he had obtained homage for his two sons. In his book of history, Ibn Abi Khaithama stated that the Prophet died when Marwan was eight years old. He had twenty brothers and eight sisters, and himself begat eleven males and three females: `Abd al-Malik, `Abd al-`Aziz, `Abdullah, Aban, Dawud, `Umar, Umm `Amr, `Abd al-Rahman, Umm `Uthman, `Amr, Umm `Umar, Bishr, Muhammad and Mu`awiya. We have mentioned these and who among them left issue and who did not.

1972. Yazid ibn Mu`awiya had left issue more numerous than Marwan for he begat: Mu`awiya, Khalid, `Abdullah the Elder, Abu Sufian, `Abdullah the Younger, `Umar, `Atika, `Abd al-Rahman, `Abdullah the Youngest, `Uthman, `Utba the One-Eyed, Abu Bakr, Muhammad, Yazid, Umm Yazid, Umm `Abd al-Rahman and Ramla. His father Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufian begat: `Abd al-Rahman, Yazid, `Abdullah, Hind, Ramla and Safiyya. God knows best.

Chapter 94

An account of the days of `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan

1973. `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan received homage the night of Sunday, the first of Ramadan, in the year 65 [April 11, 685]. He then dispatched al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf to `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair and his followers in Mecca. Ibn al-Zubair was killed on Tuesday, the tenth of Jumada II, in the year 73 [October 27, 692]. His rule had lasted nine years and ten nights. We will later in this work mention the length of Ibn al-Zubair's rule when we cite the total number of years of Umayyad rule. Then there occurred the rebellion of Ibn al-As`ath in the month of Sha`ban, in the year 82 [Sept/Oct, 701]. `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan died in Damascus, on Saturday, the 14th of Shawwal, in the year 86 [October 8, 705]. His rule from the moment he received homage and until his death lasted twenty-

one year and one and a half months. He outlasted `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair and his party by thirteen years and four months, less seven nights. This period is the one counted as being the time when his power was firmly established among people. He died aged sixty-two, more in some accounts. He loved poetry, boasting, panegyrics and praise, and his most prominent characteristic was his miserliness. He was always disposed to shed blood. His governors followed his example, such as al-Hajjaj in Iraq, al-Muhallab in Khurasan, Hisham ibn Isma`il in Medinah and others. Al-Hajjaj was among the most brutal and bloodthirsty. We will deal in detail with all the topics in this introduction in the chapter that follows.

A summary of his actions and conduct and the story of al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, his actions and some of his choice anecdotes

1974. When power passed to `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, he longed to converse with men and to get acquainted with people's news, but found no better boon companion than al-Sha`bi*. When al-Sha`bi was brought to him and he became a favorite companion of his, he said to him one day: "O Sha`bi, you do not help me out when you hear something objectionable, nor do you point out my mistakes in my assembly, nor do you answer on my behalf any words of malice or congratulations, nor any words about begging for a favor or condolences. Leave off all this nonsense of 'How is the Emir this morning? And how did he sleep?' Talk to me in proportion to what I feed you, and instead of praising me, listen carefully to what I say to you. Know that good listening is rarer than good speaking, and when you hear me speak, let nothing of it escape you, and show me that you understood by your looks and your hearing. Do not tire yourself out by praising my answer, and do not thereby encourage me to speak further. The worst of men is he who fatigues kings by speaking falsehoods but even worse is he who takes lightly what he owes to them.

Know, O Sha`bi, that even less than this is enough to cancel previous good deeds and to revoke the rights of respect. Silence at the right time is perhaps more significant than speech at the right time, and when this is accomplished well, it is very opportune.”

1975. One day, `Abd al-Malik asked al-Sha`bi: “Where do the winds blow from?” He responded: “I do not know, O Commander of the Believers.” `Abd al-Malik said: “The north wind blows from the rising of Ursa Major to the rising of the sun. The east wind blows from the rising of the sun to the rising of Canopus. The south wind blows from the rising of Canopus to the setting of the sun. The west wind blows from the setting of the sun to the rising of Ursa Major.”

1976. In the year 65 [684-5], the Shi`ites of Kufa became restless. At their meetings, they blamed one another and expressed deep regret for failing to come to the aid of al-Husain when he was killed, and thought that they had committed a major sin when they did not respond to his call and did not aid him when he was killed in their immediate vicinity. They believed that the only way they could cleanse themselves from the guilt of that crime was to kill his killers or else kill his enemies in revenge. They rallied around five people: Sulaiman ibn Surad al-Khuza`i, al-Musayyab ibn Najaba al-Fazari, `Abdullah ibn Sa`d ibn Nufail al-Azdi, `Abdullah ibn Wali al-Taimi, and Rifa`a ibn Shaddad al-Bajali. They then camped at al-Nukhaila, after having had a lengthy altercation with al-Mukhtar ibn Abi `Ubaid al-Thaqafi, who had discouraged people from joining them.

1977. Regarding that incident, `Abdullah ibn `Awf ibn al-Ahmar, inciting people to rebellion and fighting, recited:

I awakened, bid farewell to youth and pretty girls,

And said to my friends: Answer the caller!

Tell him if he rises and calls to right guidance, or even before he calls:

I am yours to command, yours to command, you who calls!

These verses are part of a longer poem where the poet incites people to rebellion, laments the death of al-Husain and his companions, blames his party, the Shi`ites, for letting him down, and mentions that they have repented before God and atoned for the major sin of not coming to his aid. In that poem he also recited:

Announce the death of the best of mankind, who had the best of grandfathers and of fathers: Al-Husain!

That is, if you care to announce the death of anyone to people of piety.

Let al-Husain be mourned by an impoverished and destitute youth,

And by orphans lamenting their relatives.

Al-Husain has become a target for spears to aim at,

His body stripped and abandoned in al-Taff.

If only I had been present by his side,

I would have struck back at his malicious enemies.

May God send constant rain clouds to that tomb which encloses glory

And piety, on the western edge of al-Taff.

O nation, lost and gone astray and deficient in understanding,

Repent, and gain the goodwill of the One and the Almighty.

1978. The Shi`ites then marched forth, led by the five above-mentioned chiefs, while `Abdullah ibn `Awf ibn al-Ahmar recited:

Speedy she-camels came out, with our armor shining and in groups,

Carrying heroes.

We seek to encounter great warriors who sinned through treachery and error,

We have rejected progeny and wealth, white maidens and their wedding bowers,

And all this in order to gain the goodwill of God, Gracious and Generous.

1979. They reached Qarqisiya on the bank of the Euphrates where they found Zufar ibn al-Harith al-Kilabi, who supplied them with provisions. They went on from Qarqisiya in order to be the first to arrive at `Ayn al-Warda. Meanwhile, `Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad was marching against them from al-Sham at the head of thirty thousand troops. Five of his commanders left his vanguard at al-Raqqa: al-Husain ibn Numair al-Sakuni, Shurahbil ibn Dhi al-Kila` al-Himyari, Adham ibn Muhriz al-Bahili, Rabi`a ibn al-Mukhariq al-Ghanawi and Jabala ibn `Abdullah al-Khath`ami. When they arrived at `Ayn al-Warda, they met the main force of the Shi`ites, though their vanguards had already clashed in minor engagements. At the major battle, Sulaiman ibn Surad al-Khuza`i was martyred after having killed a very large number of the enemy, fighting most courageously and inciting his men forward. Yazid ibn al-Husain ibn Numair killed him with an arrow. The standard was then taken by al-Musayyab ibn Najaba al-Fazari, a prominent follower of `Ali, who charged the enemy reciting:

*A maiden, swinging her locks, comely in chest and neck,
Knows well that on a day of great fear and full of wolves,
I am more courageous than an angry lion.*

He fought until he was killed.

1980. The Penitents (*al-Tawwabun*) stood fast before their enemy and broke the sheaths of their swords. The troops of al-Sham poured down upon them like the night as they cried out: "To paradise! To paradise! Those who remain from the followers of Abu Turab [`Ali]! Paradise, paradise, belongs to the Turabis!" The standard of the Penitents now passed to `Abdullah ibn Sa`d ibn Nufail. They were then joined by about five hundred of their companions from Basra and from al-Mada'in, who had travelled fast, led by al-Muthanna ibn Mukharriba and Sa`d ibn Hudhaifa, peocclaiming: "O God, forgive us our dereliction for we have

now repented!” Someone said to `Abdullah ibn Sa`d ibn Nufail, while he was fighting: “Our comrades from Basra and al-Mada’in have now joined us.” He replied: “Would that they had come when we were still alive!”

1981. The first to suffer martyrdom from those who came to their aid from al-Mada’in was Kuthair ibn `Amr al-Muzani. Si`r ibn Abi Si`r al-Hanafi and `Abdullah ibn al-Khatal al-Ta’i were both stabbed to death. `Abdullah ibn Sa`d ibn Nufail was also killed. When the remaining Penitents realized that they could no longer resist their enemies from al-Sham, they moved away and left the battle, led by Rifa`a ibn Shaddad al-Bajali. Abu`l Juwayriyya al-`Abdi lingered behind with a company of men who were defending the rest. The army of al-Sham then demanded that they stop the fight and leave, having seen how fiercely they fought despite their small number. So the Kufans headed back to their city, as did the people of Mada’in and Basra. One of the Penitents was heard to recite, on their way to and from `Ayn al-Warda, in a loud voice:

O eye, cry for Ibn al-Surad,

Cry when the night becomes still.

When a battle grew hard and grim,

You would imagine him to be a lion.

He died a commendable man who followed right guidance,

In obedience to the Highest and the Eternal.

1982. Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya and other historians and biographers listed the names of the Penitents killed with Sulaiman ibn Surad al-Khuza`i at `Ayn al-Warda but underestimated their number. Abu Mikhnaf in his book, and in the chapter on the Penitents at `Ayn al-Warda, quoted a long poem he attributed to A`sha Hamdan where he mourns the Penitents at `Ayn al-Warda and describes their deeds:

He [Ibn Surad] headed straight towards Ibn Ziad with his vast troops,

His companions marched on, one seeking piety,

While another, previously a sinner, was now penitent.
At `Ayn al-Warda they met an army that outnumbered them,
But they greeted it with sharp-edged swords.
A horde from al-Sham fell upon them,
Followed by other hordes from all sides, like the waves of the sea.
They stirred not, until most of them were wiped out,
And only a few bands of them remained alive.
Those steadfast warriors were left for dead,
Tossed by the east wind and the south.
Their chieftain, al-Khuza`i, fell dead in battle,
As if he had never fought before nor waged war.
Fallen too was the chieftain of Shamkh, and a true knight of his people,
Along with the Taymi, spearhead of the contingents.
Also `Amr ibn `Amr ibn Bishr, Khalid, Bakr, Zaid and al-Hulais ibn
Ghalib:
They all were determined to strike skull-splitting blows,
And to pierce the enemy with the points of their spears.
O best of all armies of Iraq and its people,
May you be watered with the outpouring of every rain-bearing cloud!
May our knights and protectors never be far away,
When the swords of war reveal the anklets of damsels with swelling
*breasts.**
If they are killed, dying in battle is the most noble of deaths,
And every youth must one day meet with some manner of death.
They did not die before they had decimated a group of the enemy,
Fighting in anger like rampaging mountain goats.
 It is said that the battle of `Ayn al-Warda was in the year 66 [685-6].
 1983. In the year 66, and in the days of `Abd al-Malik, al-Harith al-
 A`war, a companion of `Ali, died. It was he who came to `Ali and said:

“O Commander of the Believers, have you seen how people have taken up these traditions and abandoned the Book of God?” `Ali asked: “Have they really done so?” “Yes,” he answered. `Ali said: “I have indeed heard the Prophet of God saying: ‘There will be civil strife.’ I asked the Prophet: ‘How do we escape it, Prophet of God?’ He answered: ‘The Book of God. It relates what happened to those who came before you and what will happen after you, and is the judge between you. It is the decisive criterion and it is solemn and serious. If a tyrant forsakes it, God will crush him. If someone seeks guidance elsewhere, God will lead him astray. His Book is the strong rope of God, the wise reminder, the straight path. It is a book that minds cannot wander from, that tongues cannot deceive, whose marvels are unending and whose knowledge is unequalled. It is a Book that when the jinn heard it being recited they said: { We have heard a marvelous Recitation that guides to righteousness}. Whoso quotes it is speaking the truth and whose swerves away from it has become lost; whoso acts in accordance with it is rewarded and whoso adheres to it is guided onto a straight path.’ So take all this to heart, O A`war.”

1984. Following the events at `Ayn al-Warda, described above, `Ubaidullah ibn Ziad marched on towards Iraq with the troops of al-Sham. Arriving in Mosul, in the year 66, he met Ibrahim ibn al-Ashtar al-Nakh`i, commanding the Iraqi cavalry of al-Mukhtar, at al-Khazir. A major battle took place in which Ibn Murjana `Ubaidullah ibn Ziad was killed along with al-Husain ibn Numair, Shurahbil ibn Dhi al-Kila`, Ibn Hawshab Dhi Zulaim, `Abdullah ibn Iyas al-Sulami, Abu Ashras ibn Ghalib al-Bahili and other notables of al-Sham.

1985. `Umair ibn al-Hubab al-Sulami was leading Ibn Ziad’s right wing in that army. He held a grudge regarding what was done to his people of Mudar and others from Nizar at the Battle of Marj Rahit, so he cried out:

“Revenge for Mudar! Revenge for Nizar!” As a result, the Nizar from Mudar and Rabi`a in the army of al-Sham moved against the Qahtan contingents in their own army. `Umair ibn al-Hubab had once been the secretary of Ibrahim ibn al-Ashtar. The two met in secret and plotted what took place. Ibrahim ibn al-Ashtar then carried back the head of Ibn Ziad to al-Mukhtar, who sent the head to `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair in Mecca.

1986. `Abd al-Malik had advanced in the direction of the army of al-Sham, camping in Butnan, to await news from Ibn Ziad. Learning at night of his death and the death of those with him and of the defeat of his army, he also that same night learnt of the death of Hubaish ibn Dulja, who was commanding the army in Medinah fighting Ibn al-Zubair. He then learnt that Natil ibn Qais had entered Palestine on behalf of Ibn al-Zubair and that Mus`ab ibn al-Zubair was marching to Palestine from Medinah. Finally, he learnt that the king of the Byzantines Lawi ibn Fuknat* was marching on al-Sham and had reached al-Masisa.

1987. He then received news from Damascus that its slaves, riffraff and burglars had rebelled against its population and took up position on its mountain. He then learnt that the prisoners in Damascus prison had opened the gates and left by force, and that the Bedouins were raiding the districts of Homs, Ba`labakk and the Biqa` together with further terrible news he received that very same night. `Abd al-Malik was never seen as lighthearted or as jovial or as eloquent or as firm in resolution as he was that night, seeking to appear patient and truly royal in bearing, and not to show any signs of failure.

1988. He dispatched money and gifts to the king of the Byzantines, thus diverting his attention and making peace with him. He then marched to Palestine where Natil ibn Qais was leading the Zubairid army. The two armies met at Ajnadain, Natil and most of his followers were killed and

the rest were routed. When Mus`ab ibn al-Zubair heard about Natil's death while on the march, he turned back to Medinah. A man from Kalb, Marwanid by sympathy, recited:

At Ajnadain we killed Sa`d and Natil,

In retaliation for what Hubaish and Mundhir had suffered.

1989. `Abd al-Malik returned to Damascus and took up residence there.

Meanwhile, Ibrahim ibn al-Ashtar moved to Nasibin. The people of al-Jazira defended themselves against him, so he turned back and rejoined al-Mukhtar in Kufa, after having appointed someone to govern Nisibin.

1990. In the year 67 [686-7], Mus`ab ibn al-Zubair marched from Basra, his brother `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair having appointed him governor of Iraq. He camped at Harura where he encountered al-Mukhtar. There were major engagements between them and frightful slaughter, after which al-Mukhtar was routed and took refuge in the governor's palace in Kufa.

Muhammad ibn al-Ash`ath and his two sons had been killed in the fighting. Barricading himself in the palace he would go out each day with his kufan followers to fight Mus`ab. Al-Mukhtar had many Shi`ites on his side, called al-Khashabiyya, from the Kaysani Shi`ites and others. One day, he went out to fight them on a black and white she-mule. A man from the Hanifa tribe, called `Abd al-Rahman ibn Asad, charged al-Mukhtar, killed him and cut off his head. As his death became widely known, the Kufans and Mus`ab's followers cut him in pieces. Mus`ab refused to offer safe-conduct to those remaining behind among al-Mukhtar's followers, and these latter fought until they were exhausted. Mus`ab then offered them safe-conduct but later killed them. Among those killed with al-Mukhtar was `Ubaidullah ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib. There is a story involving him to the effect that he escaped from al-Mukhtar, went to Basra where he feared for his life from Mus`ab, but

later came out with al-Mukhtar's army. We recounted his story, and every other incident alluded to above, in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

1991. The number of those killed by Mus`ab from among the followers of al-Mukhtar has been accurately calculated as seven thousand. All of these had been calling for revenge for the blood of al-Husain and for killing his enemies. Mus`ab killed them and called them the *Khashabiyya* [those who fight with wooden swords]. He then pursued the Shi`ites in Kufa and elsewhere and killed them. The women-folk of al-Mukhtar were brought forward and Mus`ab asked them to curse and repudiate al-Mukhtar. All of them did so except for two: one was the daughter of Samura ibn Jundab al-Fazari and the other was the daughter of al-Nu`man ibn Bashir al-Ansari. The two women said: "How can we repudiate someone who says my Lord is God, who fasts by day and prays by night? He shed his blood in the cause of God and his Prophet as he sought the killers of the son of the daughter of the Prophet, his family and followers, until God granted him success, and the souls of people were comforted." So Mus`ab wrote to his brother `Abdullah setting forth their case and what they had said to him. `Abdullah wrote back: "They are to take back what they said, and declare themselves quit of him. Otherwise you are to kill them." Mus`ab brought them forth to be executed, at which point the daughter of Samura renounced her earlier attitude, cursed al-Mukhtar, declared herself quit of him and said: "Had you invited me to embrace unbelief, with the sword over my head, I would have declared myself an unbeliever. I testify that al-Mukhtar was an unbeliever." The daughter of al-Nu`man, however, refused to do the same and said: "Am I to give up a martyrdom that has come my way? No. It's only a death, after which I go to paradise to meet the Prophet and his family. O God, I testify that I am a follower of Your Prophet, his cousin, his family and their party." She was then brought forward and executed in cold blood.

1992. Concerning her death, a poet recited:

*A wonder of all wonders, in my view,
Is the killing of a free, sinless, tall and beautiful woman.
They killed her unjustly, having committed no crime:
How excellent is she among victims!
Killing and fighting is our lot in life,
But beautiful young women should drag their dresses behind them.*

1993. In this book, we have not recounted the story of al-Muhallab and how he killed Nafi` ibn al-Azraq in the year 65. Nafi` is the eponymous founder of the Azariqa branch of the Kharijites. This is because in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we recounted the wars between the Kharijites and al-Muhallab as well as others, both ancient and modern. We also mentioned therein the affair of Mirdas ibn `Amr Abu Bilal al-Tamimi, `Atiyya ibn al-Aswad al-Hanafi, Abu Fudaik, Shawdhab al-Shaibani, Suwaid al-Shaibani, Khutama al-Shaibani, al-Muhadhhab al-Sakuni, Qatari ibn al-Fuja'a al-Mazini, al-Dahhak ibn Qais al-Shaibani, the battle between Ibn al-Mahuz the Kharijite and al-Muhallab and the former's death, and how that day al-Muhallab won victory over them.

1994. In our work entitled *Al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat*, we recounted the story of `Abd Rabbuh and the history of the Kharijites of the Yemen, such as Abu Hamza al-Mukhtar ibn `Awf al-Azdi and Abu Baihas al-Haisam as well as recounting the history of earlier groups of Kharijites such as the Ibadiyya, who are the Kharijites of Oman from the Azd and others, as well as the Azariqa, Najdat, Hamziyya, Jabiyya, Sufriyya and other Kharijite groups. We also indicated the lands they operated in, such as Sinjar and Tall A`far in Diyar Rabi`a, al-Sinn, al-Bawazij and al-Haditha near Mosul, then those Kurds who settled in Adharbaijan and were known as al-Sharat. Among the latter was Aslam, known as Ibn Shadlawaih, who had overcome the provinces of Ibn Abi'l Saj in the

lands of Adharbaijan, al-Ran, al-Bailaqaṅ and Arminia. Other Kharijites settled in Sijistan, the mountains of Harat, Kuhistan and Bushanj in Khurasan. Still others settled in Makran, on the coast between Sind and Kirman, most of whom were Sufriyya and Hamziyya. Some settled in Hara' Istakhr and Sahik, between Kirman and Faris, others in the land of Tahirt in Maghrib, still others in Hadramawt and in other spots on earth. 1995. During the ascendancy of `Abd al-Malik, Abu'l `Abbas `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib passed away in the year 68, or 69 in other versions, in al-Ta'if. He was seventy-one years old. His mother was Lubaba bint al-Harith ibn Hazn, from the progeny of `Amir ibn Sa`sa`a. It is said that he was born three years before the Hijra. Sa`id ibn Jubair cites Ibn `Abbas as saying that he was ten years old when the Prophet died. Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya prayed over his body. He had gone blind, having cried so bitterly over the deaths of `Ali, al-Hasan and al-Husain. He had abundant hair and dyed his grey hairs with hinna. It was he who recited:

*If God has taken away the light of my eyes,
 Yet in my tongue and heart there remains a light therefrom.
 My heart is intelligent and my mind is sound
 And in my mouth is a tongue sharp like a sword, inherited from
 ancestors.*

1996. When he placed the jug of water for the Prophet for ablution in the house of his maternal aunt Maimuna, the Prophet prayed thus: "O God, make him proficient in religious knowledge and teach him interpretation." Ibn `Abbas was asked, "What prevented `Ali from sending you instead of Abu Musa when the two arbitrators met?" He answered: "What prevented him was the intervention of destiny, the shortness of time, and the ordeal whereby humanity is tested. By God, had he sent me in his place, I would have been like a block on the road he

took, cancelling the agreement he concluded, and concluding the agreement he rejected. I would have come down to earth whenever he flew high, and flown high whenever he came down to earth. But destiny decreed otherwise, and all that remains is regret. Today will be succeeded by tomorrow, and the afterlife is better for those who fear God.” The children of Ibn `Abbas were: `Ali, who was the ancestor of the Abbasid caliphs, al-`Abbas, Muhammad, al-Fadl, `Abd al-Rahman, `Ubaidullah and Lubaba, their mother being Lubaba bint Mashrah al-Kindiyya.

`Ubaidullah, al-Fadl and Muhammad left no issue.

1997. In the year 70 [689-90], `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan killed `Amr ibn Sa`id ibn al-`Asi al-Ashdaq, whose full name was `Amr ibn Sa`id ibn al-`Asi ibn Umayya ibn `Abd Shams ibn `Abd Manaf. He was a chivalrous, eloquent, and courageous man. Between him and `Abd al-Malik there took place many conversations, a lot of correspondence and many incidents, all having to do with his pursuit of supreme power. `Abd al-Malik once wrote to him: “Your soul tempts you to the caliphate but you are not worthy of it.” `Amr wrote back: “In drawing to you all these signs of good fortune, you have become envious, and the scent of power has rendered you heedless. You have reneged on what you had once agreed upon and followed a road that you once forsook. If weakness of means makes a seeker of power lose hope, no power would ever have been transferred and no mighty king would have been humbled. It will soon become apparent who is afflicted with envy and is a captive to heedlessness.”

1998. `Abd al-Malik had marched against Zufar ibn al-Harith al-Kilabi in Qarqisiya and the land of al-Rahba, leaving behind `Amr ibn Sa`id as his deputy in Damascus. `Abd al-Malik heard that in his absence `Amr had called on the people of Damascus to pay him homage, so he hurried back to Damascus. `Amr defended himself in the city. `Abd al-Malik appealed

to their ties of kinship and sent word to him as follows: “Do not blight your family’s affairs and spoil their consensus. What you have done has lent strength to Ibn al-Zubair. Return to your former allegiance and I will name you as my successor.” `Amr agreed and made peace and `Abd al-Malik entered Damascus, although `Amr remained cautious, having surrounded himself by about five hundred knights who kept him company wherever he went.

1999. Biographers give diverse versions as to how `Abd al-Malik managed to kill him. Some say that `Abd al-Malik said to his chamberlain: “Woe to you! Can you close the door once `Amr enters into my presence?” He answered: “Yes.” `Abd al-Malik said: “Then do so.” `Amr was a man of immense pride, believing he owed no one any favors. Nor did he look behind him when he walked. When the chamberlain opened the door, `Amr entered but the chamberlain closed the door without admitting his followers. `Amr advanced, not looking behind him and believing that his followers were right behind him, as was their habit. `Abd al-Malik scolded him for a long time, and had instructed the commander of his bodyguard, Abu’l Zu`aizi`a, to cut off his head. As `Abd al-Malik was speaking to him and using harsh language `Amr said: “Are you being arrogant towards me, thinking perhaps you have done me some favor? If you wish, I will renounce the pact between us and will then declare war on you.” `Abd al-Malik said: “Yes, I so wish.” “And me too,” said `Amr. `Abd al-Malik turned and said: “Abu’l Zu`aizi`a, do your job!” `Amr turned around but did not see his followers in the hall, so he drew close to `Abd al-Malik who asked him: “Why are you coming close to me?” He answered: “In order that your kinship may protect me.” The mother of `Amr was the paternal aunt of `Abd al-Malik, being the wife of al-Hakam ibn Abi al-`As. Abu’l Zu`aizi`a then cut off his head and `Abd al-Malik said: “Toss it to his followers.” When they saw his

head, they dispersed. `Abd al-Malik then came out, ascended the pulpit, mentioned `Amr, slighted him and mentioned his deviance and rebelliousness, then descended the pulpit while reciting:

*I drew him near to me, to calm his aversion to me,
And to overpower him, like a determined and forceful man.
I did so out of righteous anger and to protect my religion,
For the wicked cannot be treated like the good.*

2000. It is also said that `Amr left his house to see `Abd al-Malik and tripped on the carpet. His wife, Na'ila bint Quraid ibn Waki` ibn Mas`ud said to him: "In God's name, do not go to him." He replied: "Let me be! I swear if I were sleeping he would not wake me up!"* He went out in full body armor. When he entered into `Abd al-Malik's presence, the Umayyad family members who were there left. When the doors were shut, `Abd al-Malik said: "I had sworn that if I captured you I would tie you up in a collar." A collar was then brought in and placed around his neck then tightened, so `Amr realized he was about to kill him and said: "I appeal to you, Commander of the Believers!" `Abd al-Malik said: "Why have you come in armor, O Abu Umayya? Is it to fight?" `Amr was now certain that evil was intended, so he said: "I beg you to bring me out in public with the collar around my neck." `Abd al-Malik replied: "You are also trying to outsmart me, though I am smarter than you? You want me to bring you out for people to see you, protect you and save you from me?"

2001. `Abd al-Malik went out for prayers and ordered his brother `Abd al-`Aziz, who had arrived that day from Egypt, to kill `Amr once he had left. It is also said that he ordered his son al-Walid to do so. When `Abd al-`Aziz approached him, `Amr appealed to their kinship so he left him. When `Abd al-Malik returned from prayers and saw `Amr was still alive, he said to `Abd al-`Aziz: "By God, I only wanted to kill him for your

sakes so that none other than you will succeed me to power.” He then made him lie on the floor. `Amr said to him: “Will you kill me treacherously, O son of al-Zarqa’?” `Abd al-Malik then slit his throat. `Amr’s brother, Yahya ibn Sa`id, came up to the door with some of his men to break it down, but al-Walid and the clients of `Abd al-Malik went out to them and fighting ensued. Yahya and al-Walid exchanged blows. Yahya struck him with the sword on his buttocks, flooring him. `Amr’s head was thrown out to the people and they dispersed when they saw it, and after some bags of dinars were thrown down to them from the rooftops. They busied themselves collecting the money and forgot the fighting.

2002. `Abd al-Malik said: “By your father’s life, if they had killed al-Walid they would have gained their revenge.” Al-Walid had been lost when wounded because Ibrahim ibn `Arabi had carried him during the tumult into the records office. Yahya was then led in to `Abd al-Malik who now won universal approval and obedience. Other versions of `Amr’s death are also found which were included in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*. Later on in this present work we shall cite the verses about `Amr recited by his sister, who was the wife of al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik, under the history of the Abbasid caliph al-Mansur, where they more fittingly belong rather than here. This is because our account here strayed from its proper course and wandered into this subject.

2003. For the rest of the year 70 [689-90], `Abd al-Malik remained in Damascus. Mus`ab ibn al-Zubair, having established his power in Iraq following the killing of al-Mukhtar and his followers, had marched out and reached a place called Bajumaira, near al-Jazira, intending to reach al-Sham in order to fight `Abd al-Malik. There, he learnt that Khalid ibn `Abdullah ibn Khalid ibn Asid had left Mecca and was heading to Basra with his family and clients, having renounced his allegiance to `Abdullah

ibn al-Zubair, and that he had settled in some quarters of Basra. He further learnt that groups from Rabi`a and Mudar had joined him, including `Abdullah ibn al-Walid, Malik ibn Masma` al-Bakri, Safwan ibn `Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn al-Ahtam al-Tamimi, and Sa`sa`a ibn Mu`awiya, uncle of al-Ahnaf. Battles were fought between Mus`ab and this group, the last of which ended with the defeat of Khalid ibn `Abdullah who then escaped with his two sons in the desert and joined `Abd al-Malik, while Mus`ab returned to Basra. This took place in the year 71. From Iraq he then returned to Bajumaira, concerning which a poet recited:

O Mus`ab, you insist on marching forth!

Each day Bajumaira awaits you.

2004. `Abd al-Malik camped at Qarqisiya where he besieged Zufar ibn al-Harith al-`Amiri al-Kilabi, who had paid allegiance to Ibn al-Zubair. Zufar submitted, accepted safe conduct and paid `Abd al-Malik allegiance. `Abd al-Malik then continued to Nasibin where Yazid and al-Habashi, two clients of al-Harith, were entrenched with two thousand horsemen, remnants of the followers of al-Mukhtar. They were calling for the imamate of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya. `Abd al-Malik besieged them and they submitted to his safe conduct and joined his forces.

2005. In the year 72 [691-2], Mus`ab marched out with the Iraqis, intending to fight `Abd al-Malik, who moved towards him with the armies of Egypt, al-Jazira and al-Sham. The two armies met at Maskin, near the land of Iraq and on the bank of the Tigris. Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf ibn Abi `Aqil al-Thaqafi led `Abd al-Malik's vanguard, though some say his rearguard. He was highly regarded for carrying out his duties well. `Abd al-Malik then wrote in secret to the notables of Iraq and others who were in Mus`ab's army, offering them both promises and threats.

2006. Among those `Abd al-Malik wrote to was Ibrahim ibn al-Ashtar al-Nakh`i. When the letter, carried by a spy, arrived, Ibrahim placed his leg in chains and took the spy with the letter to Mus`ab, before even opening the letter to know what it contained. Mus`ab asked him: "Have you read it?" He answered: "God forbid I should read it before the Emir does. Am I to arrive on Resurrection Day as one who treacherously renounced his homage and obedience?" When Mus`ab examined the letter, he found it to contain assurances of safe conduct, a governorship of any province in Iraq, and a grant of fiefs and other offers. Ibrahim then said to Mus`ab: "Has any army commander brought you a letter?" "No," said Mus`ab. Ibrahim said: "I swear to God he wrote to them as he did to me, and the only reason they did not hand these letters over to you is because they are content with what is on offer and intend treachery. Listen to me and start with them. Let the sword pass over them or else lock them up securely in irons and dismiss this spy." Mus`ab refused to comply.

2007. The Rabi`a tribesmen in Mus`ab's army were bewildered when he killed Ibn Ziad ibn Zabian al-Bakri, a notable of Rabi`a and a chieftain of Bakr ibn Wa'il. Ibrahim ibn al-Ashtar then led Mus`ab's vanguard on fast horses and met the horsemen of `Abd al-Malik, commanded in their vanguard by the latter's brother, Muhammad ibn Marwan. When `Abd al-Malik heard of Ibrahim's advance and his engagement with his brother Muhammad, he sent the latter a message insisting that he should not fight that particular day. There was a prominent astrologer in the entourage of `Abd al-Malik who advised him not to engage in any cavalry combat that day because it was a day of ill omen, and to delay fighting for three days, at which point victory will be won. Muhammad sent back the following message: "I am determined to fight, and not to take any notice of your astrologer's vanities and his impossible falsehoods." `Abd al-Malik turned to his astrologer and those present and said: "Do you see how he

reacted?” He then lifted his eyes to heaven and said: “O God, Mus`ab calls for obedience to his brother and I call for obedience to myself! O God, grant victory to whomever is better suited for the community of Muhammad!” Muhammad ibn Marwan and Ibn al-Ashtar met in battle and Muhammad was reciting:

Someone like me, on your horses, is more worthy [reading awla] of robbing you,

Horses white in the legs, pure bred of tail.

2008. They fought until nightfall. `Attab ibn Warqa' al-Tamimi, who was with Ibn al-Ashtar, said to him: “O Ibrahim, the men are exhausted, so order them to retire.” He said this out of envy since victory was at hand. Ibrahim replied: “How can they retire while the enemy is still facing them?” `Attab said: “Then order the right wing to withdraw.” When they retired from the line, the left wing of Muhammad charged and the two armies intermingled. Muhammad’s cavalry withstood the assaults of Ibrahim, their spears surrounded him but he was able to cut off a number of them. Those with him let him down so he was dislodged from his horse, the troops surrounded him in force and he was killed after having fought them very bravely and wounding many of his enemies. The person who decapitated Ibrahim is a matter of dispute. Some say it was Thabit ibn Yazid, client of al-Husain ibn Numair al-Kindi, while others say it was `Ubaid ibn Maisara, client of the Yashkur clan from the tribe of Rifa`a. The body of Ibrahim was then brought to `Abd al-Malik and thrown down in front of him. A client of al-Husain ibn Numair then took his body, gathered some firewood and burnt it.

2009. The following morning, `Abd al-Malik moved from where he was and camped at Dair al-Jathaliq, in the region of the Sawad. `Ubaidullah ibn Ziad ibn Zabian and `Ikrima ibn Rib`i came forward with the standards of the Rabi`a tribe and joined the ranks of `Abd al-Malik’s

army, declaring their obedience to him. As the two armies lined up for battle, Mus`ab was left alone, all who were with him from Mudar and Yemen abandoned him, and he was left with seven people, among them Isma`il ibn Talha ibn `Ubaidullah al-Taymi and his own son `Isa ibn Mus`ab. So he said to his son `Isa: "Son, mount and escape with your life, go to your uncle in Mecca, tell him what the Iraqis did to me and leave me, for I shall surely be killed." His son answered: "No by God! The women of Quraish will never say I abandoned you, and I shall never have occasion to talk to them about you." Mus`ab said: "If you insist, go forward so that I can ask God to reward you." `Isa went forth and fought until he was killed.

2010. Muhammad ibn Marwan then asked his brother `Abd al-Malik to offer safe conduct to Mus`ab, and `Abd al-Malik consulted his companions. `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib advised him against it, while Khalid ibn Yazid ibn Mu`awiya advised him to do so. A dispute arose between `Ali and Khalid to the point where they exchanged insults while lined up for battle. `Abd al-Malik then ordered his brother Muhammad to go to Mus`ab, offer him safe conduct and to grant him anything he wished on `Abd al-Malik's behalf. Muhammad left, drew near to Mus`ab and said: "O Mus`ab, come close to me. I am your cousin, Muhammad ibn Marwan. The Commander of the Believers offers you safety for your person and possessions, has forgiven you your past actions, and permits you to settle in any land you wish. Had he intended any other fate for you, he could have brought it about. Let me therefore appeal to you, in God's name, to save your soul."

2011. A man from al-Sham came up to `Isa ibn Mus`ab to cut off his head, but Mus`ab turned upon him while the man was unaware, so the Shamis shouted: "Look out, you fellow! The lion has approached you!" Mus`ab pursued the man and killed him. Mus`ab's horse was then

hamstrung so he fought on foot. `Ubaidullah ibn Ziad ibn Zabian came up to him and they exchanged blows, with Mus`ab first striking him a blow to his head. By then Mus`ab was severely wounded, so `Ubaidullah killed him, cut off his head and brought it back to `Abd al-Malik. `Abd al-Malik fell to the ground in prostration while `Ubaidullah grabbed the handle of his sword and pulled most of it out of its sheath in order to strike `Abd al-Malik as he prostrated. But he repented and pronounced the formula "We belong to God and to God we shall return" and in later days would say: "The slaughter of people would have stopped that day when I was about to act but refrained, for I would have killed the two kings of the Arabs, `Abd al-Malik and Mus`ab, in the space of an hour!" As `Ubaidullah brought in the head of Mus`ab, he quoted the following line of verse: *We pledge true allegiance to kings as long as they act justly towards us, While killing them is not a forbidden act for us.*

`Abd al-Malik said: "When will Quraish ever bring forth a man like Mus`ab?" Mus`ab was killed on Tuesday, 13 Jumada I, in the year 72 [October 12, 691]. `Abd al-Malik ordered the bodies of Mus`ab and his son `Isa to be buried in Dayr al-Jathaliq, then called on the people of Iraq to pay him allegiance and they did so.

2012. Muslim ibn `Amr al-Bahili, a follower of Mu`awiya and his son Yazid, was that day fighting with Mus`ab. He was led into `Abd al-Malik's presence, having been granted safe conduct. He was told: "You are surely about to die and without any chance of survival being so severely wounded, so what use is safe conduct to you?" He answered: "To protect my possessions and family." As he came into the presence of `Abd al-Malik, the latter said: "May God cut off the hand that struck you! Why did he not finish you off? You disavowed the favors done to you by the Harb* family." He then granted him security of wealth and family, and the man died soon thereafter.

2013. Regarding the death of Mus`ab at Dayr al-Jathaliq in Iraq,

`Ubaidullah ibn Qays al-Ruqayyat* recited:

The two cities [Kufa and Basra] are bequeathed shame and humiliation,

By the man who died and was buried in Dayr al-Jathaliq.

The tribe of Bakr ibn Wa`il did not give honest advice,

And the tribe of Tamim did not stand fast in battle.

That day, all honor was lost,

And no man from Mudar acted decently.

May God penalize the men of Basra and of Kufa,

For the transgressor shall surely be punished.

A poet from al-Sham recited the following verses from a longer poem:

*Our cavalry, I swear, has gone into the desert, in the vicinity of the
Tigris,*

In order to confront Mus`ab,

Shaking tall spears, straight in their shaft, and spear points.

*If the hypocrite of Iraq were one day to be required to repent but does not
repent,*

We march forth against him in a war,

Where we do not require any absent allies.

2014. Mus`ab was a handsome and beautiful man, and perfect in appearance and form. Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyat describes him thus in his verse:

Mus`ab is a shooting star, sent by God,

Whose face illuminates the darkness.

In our book, *al-Awsat*, we recounted his story and that of his wives Sukaina bint al-Husain, `A`isha bint Talha, and Laila among his other women.

2015. Al-Minqari>Suwaid ibn Abi Sa`id>Marwan ibn Mu`awiya al-Fazari>Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Rahman >Abu Muslim al-Nakha`i who

said: "I saw the head of al-Husain being brought into the residence of the governor of Kufa and placed before `Ubaidullah ibn Ziad; then I saw the head of `Ubaidullah being brought into the same spot and put before al-Mukhtar; then I saw the head of al-Mukhtar being brought into the same spot and put before Mus`ab; then I saw the head of Mus`ab being brought into the same spot and put before `Abd al-Malik." In another version of this story, the same narrator adds: "`Abd al-Malik noticed my agitation and when he asked me why I was agitated I replied: 'O Commander of the Believers, I came once into this very place and saw the head of al-Husain being placed before Ibn Ziad; then I entered once more and saw the head of Ibn Ziad being placed before al-Mukhtar; then I entered and saw the head of al-Mukhtar being placed before Mus`ab, and now here is the head of Mus`ab being placed before you. May God protect you, O Commander of the Believers!'" `Abd al-Malik sprang up and ordered the arch above the chamber to be destroyed." This story is mentioned by al-Walid ibn Hubab and others.

2016. `Abd al-Malik then proceeded from Dayr al-Jathaliq and camped at Nukhayla, outside Kufa, whose people came out and paid him allegiance. He fulfilled his earlier promise to the people to whom he had written in secret, and distributed precious gifts and grants of land. He then arranged people in their proper ranks and widely proclaimed his policy of reward and punishment. As governor of Basra, he appointed Khalid ibn `Abdullah ibn Khalid ibn Asid, and as governor of Kufa he appointed his brother Bishr ibn Marwan. To help the latter, he assigned a group of wise counselors from al-Sham including Rawh ibn Zinba` al-Judhami, and dispatched al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf to carry on the war against Ibn al-Zubair in Mecca. He then returned to his capital, Damascus, with the rest of the army of al-Sham.

2017. Bishr ibn Marwan was a man of culture and sophistication who loved poetry, nightly conversations, music and wine drinking. `Abd al-Malik had instructed him thus: “Rawh is your uncle whom you should consult before taking any action because of his honesty, abstinence, sound advice and love for our family.” Accordingly, Bishr was shy in his presence and told his drinking companions: “I fear that if we enjoy ourselves excessively, Rawh might write and report us to the Commander of the Believers. Yet I enjoy entertainment and pleasant company as much as anyone in my position.” One of his drinking companions, an Iraqi, offered to help him out by the use of subtle trickery and said to him: “I will free you from anxiety with regard to Rawh so that he will depart to see the Commander of the Believers and will have no doubts or complaints to report.” Bishr was delighted and promised to reward him handsomely if he fulfilled his word.

2018. Rawh was an exceedingly jealous person who had a female slave. Whenever he left his house to go to the mosque or some other place, he would stamp the door of his bedroom after having closed it until he returned. The young fellow took an inkstand and pen and went at night to Rawh’s house, concealing himself well. When Rawh left to attend prayers, the young fellow managed to sneak into the corridor as Rawh left the house, then hid himself beneath the stairs. He spent the night trying to gain access to Rawh’s bedroom until he succeeded, then wrote the following verses on a wall nearest to where Rawh slept:

*O Rawh, who will take care of young girls and a widow,
When someone announces your death to the people of the west?
The death of Ibn Marwan is imminent,
So take good care of yourself, O Rawh ibn Zinba`!
Let not virgins living in luxury tempt you,*

And listen to the words of a counselor who means well, may God guide you!

He then returned to his hiding place in the corridor and spent the night there.

2019. When morning came, Rawh went out to pray followed by his servants, and the youth, disguised, slipped out and joined them. When Rawh returned and opened the door of his bedroom, he saw the writing on the wall, was scared and amazed and said: “What is this?

By God, no human enters this chamber except me. There is no way I can remain in Iraq.” He rose, went to see Bishr and said to him: “Nephew, let me know if you need anything or have any business to relate to the Commander of the Believers.” Bishr asked: “Do you intend to depart, uncle?” “Yes,” he answered. Bishr asked: “Why? Have you found something objectionable or witnessed something truly offensive which you cannot abide?” Rawh answered: “No, by God. Rather, may God reward you personally and also for your sound governance, but something has happened and I must go to the Commander of the Believers.” Bishr swore that he should tell him so he said: “The Commander of the Believers has either died or will die in a few days.” Bishr asked: “How do you know?” Rawh then told him about the writing on the wall and added: “No one enters my bedroom except me and my slave girl so-and-so. This writing could only have been done by the jinn or the angels.” Bishr said: “Stay here, for I hope that this is just an illusion.” Rawh could not be persuaded and so departed to al-Sham and Bishr now felt free to immerse himself in drinking and entertainment.

2020. When Rawh finally met `Abd al-Malik, the latter was puzzled and said: “What brought you here could only have been an incident related to Bishr and some action of his which you found reprehensible.” Rawh praised Bishr and his manner of governance and added: “The reason I

came can only be revealed to you in private.” `Abd al-Malik turned to his companions and said “By your leave.” When closeted with Rawh, the latter told him what had happened and recited the verses. `Abd al-Malik fell back laughing and said: “Your presence grew tiresome to Bishr and his friends, so they played this trick on you. Have no fear.”

2021. When news of Mus`ab’s death reached his brother `Abdullah, he refused to speak of him to the point where even the slaves of Mecca, male and female, talked about it in the alleys of the city. Ascending the pulpit, his brow wet with perspiration, he said: “Praise be to God, king of this world and of the hereafter. He grants kingship to whomever He wishes and deprives it from whomever He wishes. He exalts whomever He wishes and abases whomever He wishes. In His hand is goodness, and He is omnipotent. But He will not humiliate those who are in the right, and will not exalt the devil’s party. News from Iraq has reached us that filled us with both sorrow and joy, namely, the death of Mus`ab. The sorrow is for the loss of an intimate, which leaves an anguish felt by intimates whenever a calamity occurs. One should then resort to pious patience and a seemly solace. As for joy, a person killed can also be considered a martyr, and God may count this martyrdom, for him and us, as a virtuous deed. I swear to God, we do not die peacefully like the Abu’l `As* family, but rather we die from spear thrusts and beneath the shadow of swords. This world is a thing merely lent from the All-Powerful King whose authority never vanishes and whose kingship never disappears. If the affairs of this world turn in my favor, I do not grasp them like one who exults in his pride or insolence, and if they turn their back upon me I do not cry over them like some abject and stupid person.”

2022. Al-Hajjaj arrived in al-Ta’if where he stayed for some months, then marched towards Mecca, besieged Ibn al-Zubair and wrote to `Abd al-Malik: “I have captured Abu Qubais”* When his letter reached `Abd al-

Malik, informing him that Ibn al-Zubair was besieged and Abu Qubais had fallen, he cried out “God is Great!” and the cry was picked up by the people of his household, then reached the people in the mosque who repeated the cry which then reached the markets. When they asked why they had uttered that cry, they were told that al-Hajjaj was besieging Ibn al-Zubair in Mecca and had captured Abu Qubais. They said: “We will not be satisfied until he brings him to us in chains, a long cap on his head, and riding a camel through the markets, that damned greedy man!” The siege of Ibn al-Zubair by al-Hajjaj in Mecca began at the start of the month of Dhu’l Qa`da in the year 72 [March 25, 692], the same year in which Mus`ab was killed. What we related above concerning the remarks made by the Damascenes about Ibn al-Zubair was mentioned by `Umar ibn Shabba al-Numairi, transmitting from Ibn `Asim.

2023. Ibn al-Zubair forbade the pilgrims from circumambulating the holy House while al-Hajjaj led the people on Mount `Arafa in a state of ritual consecration, whereas he was wearing a coat of mail and a helmet cap. He was then thirty-one years old. Ibn al-Zubair performed the ritual sacrifice in Mecca but did not come out to `Arafa because of al-Hajjaj. The siege of Ibn al-Zubair by al-Hajjaj lasted for fifty nights. Ibn al-Zubair went in to see his mother Asma’, daughter of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, who was then a hundred years old. She had not lost a single one of her teeth, her hair had not turned grey and her mind was as sound as ever, as we previously mentioned in this work. Ibn al-Zubair said: “Mother, how do you feel?” She replied: “Son, I am in pain.” He said: “Death grants repose.” She replied: “You may have wished this for me but I would not like to die before you reach one of two ends: either you are killed, in which case I will ask God to reward you, or else you are victorious, in which case my eyes will be comforted by your sight.” Ibn al-Zubair then made his will as needed for himself, and ordered his women folk that

when they hear women's laments for his death they were to include his mother Asma' in their number.

2024. `Urwa ibn al-Zubair was a partisan of `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, and Abd al-Malik's letters to al-Hajjaj constantly instructed him to treat `Urwa as an ally and not to harm him or his possessions. `Urwa went out to see al-Hajjaj then returned to his brother [`Abdullah] and said: "Here is Khalid ibn `Abdullah ibn Khalid ibn Asid and `Amr ibn `Uthman ibn `Affan, both of whom give you assurances of safety from `Abd al-Malik for what you have done, you and your followers, and that you can settle in any land you wish, guaranteed by God's oath and covenant." More words followed in the same vein. `Abdullah however refused and his mother Asma' said to him: "Son, do not accept a proposal which might imply fear of death for yourself. Die honorably and never be captured as a prisoner or surrender." He said: "Mother, I fear that I will be mutilated after I am killed." She replied: "Son, does a sheep feel the pain of skinning once it is slaughtered?"

2025. The forces of al-Hajjaj came upon Ibn al-Zubair in the mosque at prayer time, he having sought refuge there. They called out: "O son of the woman with the two girdles!"* Ibn al-Zubair then quoted a line of verse: *Slanderers reproach her that I love her,*
But this is a reproach that does you no dishonor.

2026. He saw a group of them advancing towards him with drawn swords and asked his companions who they were. When told they were Egyptians he exclaimed: "By the Lord of the Ka`ba, they are the killers of the Commander of the Believers, `Uthman!" He attacked them and struck one of them, dark-colored, and cut him down, saying: "Take that, son of Ham!"* The men crowded around him from al-Sham and Egypt, but he continued to strike them until he drove them out of the mosque and returned home, reciting:

*I will not buy my life in return for disgrace,
Nor do I seek a ladder on which to escape the fear of death.*

2027. He then took up his position at the Black Stone of the Ka`ba where many were now fighting him. He charged them, reciting:

*Your companions instruct you to strike at the necks,
And war between us is now raging.*

He was struck by a stone which hit and bloodied his forehead exposing the bone beneath, so he recited:

*It is not on our backs that our wounds bleed,
But blood flows over our feet.*

2028. He once again drove them away from the mosque and turned back to the remnants of his followers at the Ka`ba, saying: “Throw away the sheaths of your swords and let each man take as good a care of his sword as of his face. Let not him who breaks it sit down like a woman, and let no one ask ‘Where is `Abdullah?’ for whoever asks will find me in the thick of the fighting.” He then recited:

*O God, I am weak in power and hard pressed,
So send me Your troops to back me up.*

As the people of al-Sham surrounding him grew greatly in number, and came through each gate in their thousands, he charged them, but was crushed by the hail of stones and fell to the ground where two of his clients fell upon him to protect him, one of them reciting:

The servant protects his master and is protected by him.

All three were then killed and his remaining followers melted away.

2029. Al-Hajjaj ordered his body to be placed on a crucifix in Mecca. He was killed on Tuesday, 14 Jumada I, in the year 73 [October 1, 692]. His mother Asma’ asked al-Hajjaj to be allowed to bury him but he refused, at which point she said to him: “O Hajjaj, I testify that I once heard the Prophet of God say: ‘From Thaqif [the clan of Hajjaj] will come a liar

and an exterminator.’ The liar is al-Mukhtar and the exterminator, I believe, must be yourself.” Later in this work we will recount in brief other reports to do with al-Hajjaj, although we dealt with his history at length in our earlier books. Al-Hajjaj remained as governor of Mecca, Medinah, al-Hijaz, Yemen and al-Yamama for three years, and was later appointed governor of Iraq as well, following the death of Bishr ibn Marwan in Basra.

2030. In the year 78 [697-8], and in the days of `Abd al-Malik, Jabir ibn `Abdullah al-Ansari* died in Medinah. He had turned blind and was ninety- some years old. He had gone to see Mu`awiya in Damascus but was not granted permission to see him for several days. Once admitted, he said: “O Mu`awiya, have you not heard the Prophet say: ‘He who refuses to admit the poor and needy will be refused admission by God that day when he himself is poor and needy?’” Mu`awiya was angry and replied: “And have you not also heard him say: ‘You [Ansar] will be treated unfairly after I am gone, so be patient until you meet me at the Pool’?” So have you been patient?” Jabir replied: “You have reminded me of what I had forgotten,” and he mounted his camel and left. Mu`awiya later sent him six hundred dinars but he returned them and wrote the following verses to him:

*I am one who prefers frugality to riches,
When both are available, and prefer water to cold milk.
If matters do not go my way, I pass judgement upon myself,
Though some people are judged but do not judge themselves.
I wear the garments of modesty and believe that wealth
Must not be used to dishonor me.*

To Mu`awiya’s messenger he said: “Tell him this: O ‘Son of her who ate livers’*, may you never find in your celestial record* a mention of any good deed done to me.”

2031. Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, that is, Ibn al-Hanafiyya, died in Medinah in the year 81[700], during the days of `Abd al-Malik, and was buried in al-Baqi`. The prayers over his body were pronounced by Aban ibn `Uthman, by permission of Muhammad's son, Abu Hashim, whose patronymic was "Abu'l Qasim." Ibn al-Hanafiyya died at the age of sixty-five. It is also mentioned that he fled from Ibn al-Zubair to Ta'if where he died, and also that he died in the territory of Ayla. The site of his tomb is thus a subject of dispute. In an earlier section of this work we cited the views of the Kaysaniyya and those among them who asserted he was on Mount Ridwa. His children were: al-Hasan, Abu Hashim, `Abdullah, Ja`far the Elder, Hamza, and `Ali, all born to a freedwoman, then Ja`far the Younger and `Awn whose mother was Umm Ja`far, then al-Qasim and Ibrahim.

2032. Nasr ibn `Ali>Abu Ahmad al-Zubairi>Yunus ibn Abi Ishaq>Sahl ibn `Ubaid>`Amr al-Khaburi, who said: "Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya sent the following message to `Abd al-Malik: 'Al-Hajjaj has arrived in our country and I am afraid of him. I wish you would grant him no power over me, in deed or in word.' `Abd al-Malik wrote to al-Hajjaj: 'Muhammad ibn `Ali has written to me asking me to grant you no authority over him. I hereby instruct you to exercise no authority over him in deed or in word, so leave him alone.' During circumambulation, al-Hajjaj met Muhammad, bit his lip and said: 'The Commander of the Believers has not permitted me to deal with you.' Muhammad replied: 'Woe to you! Do you not know that each day and night God directs three hundred and sixty glances at this world so maybe He will direct one of His glances at me and thus be merciful to me, and grant you no power over me in deed or word.' Al-Hajjaj reported these words to `Abd al-Malik who then used them in a message he sent to the Byzantine king, who had threatened him. The Byzantine king wrote back: 'These words

do not emanate from your natural disposition or that of your ancestors, but could only have been pronounced by a prophet or someone from the family of a prophet.”

2033. Al-Sha`bi said: “`Abd al-Malik sent me on a mission to the Byzantine king. When I arrived, I answered every question he posed. Ambassadors were not normally allowed to remain long in his kingdom but he detained me for many days to the point where I longed to depart. When about to leave, he said to me: ‘Are you a member of the royal family?’ I replied: ‘No. I am simply one Arab among many.’ The king then whispered something, a piece of paper was handed to me, and I was told: ‘When you have delivered the letters to your master hand over this piece of paper to him.’ Upon arrival, I delivered the letters to `Abd al-Malik but forgot the piece of paper. Arriving at the gate on my way out, I remembered the paper, turned back and handed it over. When he read it, `Abd al-Malik asked me: ‘Tell me, did he say anything to you before he gave you that piece of paper?’ I replied: ‘Yes. He asked whether I was a member of the royal family and I told him no, but simply one Arab among many.’ I then left but at the gate I was summoned back. When again in his presence, `Abd al-Malik asked: ‘Do you know what is written in this piece of paper?’ I said I did not, so he asked me to read it and it went as follows: ‘I am amazed that a people among whom such a man lives would not appoint him as their king.’ I said: ‘By God, if I’d known what was written in it I would not have carried it. He said that because he has not seen you.’ `Abd al-Malik asked: ‘Do you know why he wrote it?’ I said: ‘No.’ He said: ‘He was jealous of me for having someone like you in my service, and was therefore tempting me to kill you.’ When this conversation was reported to the Byzantine king he said: ‘Yes, that is precisely what I intended.’”

2034. `Abd al-Malik's name once came up in Mu`awiya's presence who commented: "Abd al-Malik possesses three qualities and is deficient in three. He captures people's hearts when he speaks, is a good listener when addressed, and tends to take the easier of two courses of action if opposed. He rejects flattery, back-biting and apologizing for what requires an apology."

2035. One of `Abd al-Malik's regular companions once said to him: "I want a private audience with you." `Abd al-Malik replied: "Provided you abstain from three things: do not flatter me for I know myself better than you do; do not slander anyone to his back for I will not listen to you; and do not lie to me, for a liar cannot give sincere counsel." The man said: "May I leave?" `Abd al-Malik answered: "If you wish."

2036. Al-Haitham and other historians state that `Abd al-Malik once learnt that one of his governors was accepting gifts. He summoned him, and when the man entered he said to him: "Have you accepted any gifts since you were appointed to your post?" The man answered: "Commander of the Believers, your lands are prosperous, your tax returns are plentiful and your subjects are living the best kind of life." He said: "Answer my question: Have you accepted any gifts since you were appointed to your post?" The man said: "Yes." `Abd al-Malik said: "If you accepted a gift and did not reciprocate, you would be mean. If you rewarded the giver from what is not your wealth, and recompensed him with what someone like him should not be recompensed, you would be treacherous and unjust. What you have committed cannot be free from either baseness or treachery or pretended ignorance." He then ordered him dismissed from his post.

2037. Al-Minqari>al-`Utbi> Al-Walid ibn Ishaq>Ibn `A'isha, who said: "Atika bint Yazid ibn Mu`awiya, her mother being Umm Kulthum bint `Abdullah ibn `Amir, was a wife of `Abd al-Malik. She was once angry

with him so he sought to appease her by all means possible, but she refused. She was the closest of people to his heart. When he complained of this to his intimates, `Amr ibn Bilal, a man from the tribe of Asad, who had married the daughter of Zinba` al-Judhami, said to him: “What will I benefit if I appease her?” `Abd al-Malik answered: “You shall be the judge of that.” So `Amr left, sat by `Atika’s door and began to cry. Her housekeeper said to him: “Why are you crying, Abu Hafs?” He answered: “I have come to seek the help of my cousin. Please ask her to permit me to visit her.”

2038. `Atika gave permission, with a screen between them. `Amr said: “You know my good standing with Mu`awiya, Yazid, Marwan and `Abd al-Malik. I had only two sons and one of them attacked and killed the other. So the Commander of the Believers said that he would kill the aggressor. When I said that I was the one entitled to exact revenge and that I had forgiven the killer, he refused and said he did not wish his subjects to develop such bad habits, and intends to kill him tomorrow. I beseech you in God’s name to ask him to forgive him.” `Atika replied: “But I am not on speaking terms with him.” `Amr answered: “I doubt whether there is any greater reward than saving a life.” Her courtiers, servants and nannies all urged her to accept until she finally said: “Get me my clothes,” and she dressed. There had been a door between her and `Abd al-Malik which she had blocked up, so she ordered it unblocked and entered.

2039. The eunuch rushed in and said: “Commander of the Believers, it’s `Atika!” He said: “Damn you! Did you actually see her?” “Yes,” he replied. `Atika soon appeared. `Abd al-Malik was reclining on his couch and when she greeted him he remained silent. She said: “I swear to God I would not have come to see you were it not for the high regard I have for `Amr ibn Bilal. By God, is it true that one of his sons killed the other and

`Amr, being the one charged with revenge, has forgiven him, yet you intend to kill him?" "Yes, by God," he answered, turning his face away from her. She took hold of his hand, but he took no notice, then grabbed his feet and kissed them. He said: "He is yours," and they made up. `Abd al-Malik then went and sat to receive his intimates. When `Amr ibn Bilal entered, he said to him: "O Abu Hafs, your subtle and pimping trick has worked, and it is up to you to name your reward." He replied:

"Commander of the Believers, I want a thousand dinars, and an estate complete with its slaves and implements." `Abd al-Malik answered: "It is yours." `Amr added: "And salaries paid to my children." "Yours too," he answered. When `Atika heard what had happened, she said: "Woe to me, the pimp has deceived me!"

2040. `Abd al-Malik once wrote to al-Hajjaj: "Describe civil strife to me." He answered: "Civil strife arises in secret, causes slaughter because of general dissatisfaction, and is brought to an end by some major event." `Abd al-Malik wrote back: "Well said and well described! If you wish to establish stable rule over those whom you govern, order them to meet as a body, distribute their stipends individually and let them be in constant need of you."

2041. Al-Minqari>Abu'l Walid al-Sabbah ibn Marwan>Abu Riyash Dabba ibn Nufaqa>Ma`kis ibn Sabiq al-Dimashqi al-Saksaki, who said: "When `Abd al-Malik heard that Ibn al-Ash`ath* had rebelled, he mounted the pulpit, offered thanks and praise to God and said: 'The people of Iraq seem anxious to shorten my destined lifespan before the hour of my appointed death. O God, do not let us oppress those who are better than us, and do not allow those worse than us to oppress us. O God, raise the sword of the people of al-Sham against the people of Iraq until they gain Your favor. Once they do, let them not exceed this bound to win Your disfavor.'"

2042. `Abd al-Malik once wrote to al-Hajjaj: “You are safe (*salim*) with me.” Al-Hajjaj did not know what he meant so he wrote to Qutaiba ibn Muslim* to ask his opinion and sent the letter with an emissary. When the emissary brought the letter and handed it to Qutaiba, he farted, causing him great embarrassment. Qutaiba read the letter and instead of saying to him “Sit” he said, “Fart.” The emissary replied, “I’ve already done so.” Qutaiba was embarrassed and said: “I just wanted to say sit and I mistakenly said fart.” The emissary replied: “Well I made a mistake and you made another.” Qutaiba answered: “It’s not the same. My mistake was from my mouth but yours was from your arse. Tell the emir [al-Hajjaj] that Salim was the servant of a man who greatly appreciated him but who was the subject of many calumnies relayed to his master, who then recited:

They wish to turn me against Salim but I turn them away,

For Salim is the skin between my nose and my eyes.

So `Abd al-Malik intended to say that you are like Salim to him.” When Qutaiba’s letter was brought back to al-Hajjaj, he rewarded him by appointing him governor of Khurasan.

2043. A similar story is told of a man who attended the assembly of Khalid ibn `Abdullah al-Qasri*. The man farted. When lunch was brought in, the man stood up to leave but Khalid told him to sit down. When he refused, Khalid said: “I adjure you to fart.” The man replied: “I have farted already.” Khalid was embarrassed, apologized to the man and gave him a sum of money.

2044. `Abd al-Malik once received a gift of shields studded with pearls and rubies which he admired. He had with him a number of his intimates and associates, so he turned to one of them, named Khalid, and said: “Get up and squeeze one of them,” intending for him to test its strength. The man got up, squeezed the shield and farted. `Abd al-Malik and his

companions laughed so he asked them: “What is the indemnity of a fart?”

One of them answered: “400 dirhams and a garment.” `Abd al-Malik

ordered this to be given to him. A man who was present recited:

Is it the case that Khalid farts when squeezing a shield,

And the ruler rewards him with heaps of money?

What a fart you are, bringing riches!

What a fart you are which made a poor man rich!

People might then wish they'd farted

So as to be recompensed with a tenth of that reward!

It is not commonly known that farting brings riches,

Otherwise I would have farted. May God grant success to our ruler!

`Abd al-Malik said: “Give him [the poet] four thousand dirhams, and tell him we don't need his farting.”

2045. Ahmad ibn Sa`id al-Dimashqi, al-Tusi and others informed us that in the book known as *Al-Muwaffaqiyyat* by al-Zubair ibn Bakkar, with al-Zubair transmitting from Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn

Muhammad ibn Yazid >`Utba ibn Abi Lahab, who said: “One year `Abd al-Malik went on pilgrimage and ordered that monies be distributed to people. A large purse was then produced on which was written “money from voluntary alms”. The people of Medinah refused to accept any of it and said: “Our salaries always come from the land-tax.”

2046. Ascending the pulpit, `Abd al-Malik said: “O tribe of Quraish, the best example of the relationship between you and us is the following story. Two brothers in pre-Islamic times went on a journey, camping beneath the shade of a tree below a boulder. When time came for them to depart, a snake came out to them from beneath the boulder carrying one dinar in its mouth which it then deposited before them. They said this must have come from a treasure so they stayed at that spot for three days, and each day the snake would come out carrying a dinar for them. One

brother said to the other: ‘How long do we need to wait for this snake? Why not kill the snake and dig up and take the treasure?’ The other brother advised against doing so and said: ‘How do you know you will not be harmed and not get to the money?’ The first refused to heed his advice, laid hold of an axe he carried, observed the snake and, when it emerged, struck it a blow which wounded its head but did not kill it. The snake was enraged, killed him and returned to its hole. So the other brother got up and buried his brother. The following day, the snake came out with its head bandaged but carrying nothing. He said to it: ‘You there, I swear to God I was not happy with what happened to you, and I advised my brother against it. So how about calling on God as witness that you do not harm me and I do not harm you, and we return to our earlier practice?’ ‘No,’ said the snake. ‘Why not?’ he asked. ‘Because I know that deep down in your heart you will never feel comfortable with me as you behold the grave of your brother, and I will never feel comfortable with you when I recall that wound on my head.’”

2047. `Abd al-Malik then quoted to them the line of verse by al-Nabigha al-Dhubyani:

*She said: I see a grave which you see before me,
And a blow from an axe on my head that broke my bones.*

`Abd al-Malik continued: “O Quraish, `Umar ibn al-Khattab ruled you, and he was a harsh, severe and very strict ruler, but you heard and obeyed him. Then `Uthman ruled you and he was gentle, kind and generous, but you rebelled against him and murdered him. We sent Muslim against you and killed you in the Battle of the Harra. So we know, O Quraish, that you will never like us as long as you remember that battle, and we will never like you as long as we remember the murder of `Uthman.”

2048. Al-Mada'ini and Ibn Da'b report that Rawh ibn Zinba`, an intimate of `Abd al-Malik, once observed a certain coldness and avoidance on the

part of `Abd al-Malik so he asked al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik: “Do you not see my present state of affairs with respect to the Commander of the Believers and how he turns his face away from me? It has reached the point where wild beasts have opened their jaws wide at me, and are about to dig their claws into me.” Al-Walid answered: “Play a trick on him to make him laugh as was once done by Maziyar, the intimate of Shapur son of Shapur, the Persian king.” Rawh said: “And what did he do?” Al-Walid said: “Maziyar was one of the those who kept Shapur company at night. When he detected a coldness towards him from Shapur, he learnt to bark like a dog, howl like a wolf, bray like a donkey, crow like a rooster, whinny like a mule and neigh like a horse. He then contrived to sneak into a place near where the king sat with his intimates on his couch, and managed to remain hidden. When the king was alone with his intimates, Maziyar barked like a dog and the king had no doubt it was a dog, so he said to his companions: ‘Go and see what this is about.’ He then howled like a wolf, so the king stepped down from his couch, at which point he brayed like a donkey. The king fled, and his attendants followed the sound. As they came near, he would stop one animal sound and start another. They turned away, but then gathered themselves together, burst into his hiding place and led him out. When they saw him they said to the king: ‘This is Maziyar the clown.’ The king burst out laughing and said: ‘Woe to you! What made you do this?’ He answered: ‘When you were angry with me, God transformed me into a dog, a wolf, a donkey and all the other creatures.’ The king ordered that he be given fine clothes, returned him to his former standing and was once again happy in his company.”

2049. Rawh said to al-Walid: “When the Commander of the Believers’ assembly settles down, ask me about `Abdullah ibn `Umar* and whether he ever said, or listened to, anything that could be called humorous.” Al-

Walid replied: "I will do so." `Abdullah ibn `Umar was a man free from all vice and neither joked nor had anything to do with joking. Al-Walid went in first, followed by Rawh. When the assembly settled down, al-Walid asked Rawh: "O Abu Zur`a, did `Abdullah ibn `Umar say or listen to anything that might be called funny?" Rawh replied: "I was once told by Ibn Abi `Atiq that his wife `Atika bint `Abd al-Rahman defamed him in the following verse:

*God deprived you of your livelihood,
And you utterly wasted your wealth.
You spent all you owned, shamelessly,
On every whore and on wine.*

Ibn Abi `Atiq was a frivolous and humorous man so he wrote these verses on a slip of paper and went out. Encountering `Abdullah ibn `Umar, he said: "O Abu `Abd al-Rahman, take a look at this piece of paper and give me your advice." When `Abdullah read it, he pronounced the formula "We belong to God and to him we shall return." Ibn Abi `Atiq asked him: "What is to be done in your view with the person who defamed me in this verse?" He answered: "I think you should forgive and pardon." He answered: "I swear to God, O Abu `Abd al-Rahman, if I ever meet the person who composed this verse I will fuck him good and hard!" Ibn `Umar was deeply shocked, began to shake, changed color and said: "What's the matter with you, may God's anger fall upon you?" Ibn Abi `Atiq said: "It will be exactly as I tell you." The two then went their separate ways. Some days later, Ibn Abi `Atiq met `Abdullah who turned his face away, so he said to him: "O Abu `Abd al-Rahman, I found the person who wrote these verses and I fucked him!" `Abdullah was thunderstruck, and when Ibn Abi `Atiq saw how badly he had reacted, he came close and whispered in his ear: "It was my wife!" `Abdullah stood,

kissed him between his eyes, laughed and said: “Well done! Do it some more.”

2050. `Abd al-Malik laughed so much he scraped the floor with his feet, then said: “Damn you, Rawh! How delightful is your conversation!” He then stretched his hand to him. Rawh stood, ran to him, kissed his hands and legs and said: “O Commander of the Believers, did I do something for which I should apologize or were you bored with me so that I can bear it and hope it ends well?” “No, by God,” said `Abd al-Malik, “There was never any reason to make us dislike you.” Rawh then regained his favored status at the court.

2051. A similar tale is told of `Abd al-Malik ibn Muhalhil al-Hamdani who was a boon companion of Sulaiman, son of al-Mansur.* Sulaiman had shunned him, so he came to him one day at high noon when the heat was at its worst, and sought permission to enter. The chamberlain told him that it was not the right time to visit the Emir. `Abd al-Malik said: “Just tell him I am here.” The chamberlain went in and announced him and Sulaiman said: “Tell him to remain standing and to make it quick.” The chamberlain came out, granted him permission to enter and told him to make it quick. So `Abd al-Malik entered, greeted Sulaiman while still standing and said: “May God prosper the Emir, I went home yesterday night and as I came close to my house I heard a *muezzin* calling, so I came near. The muezzin then climbed into a towering mosque and I followed him, and up and up and up I ascended...” Sulaiman interrupted: “And you reached the heavens and then what?” He said: “Then a person came forward, either a Kurd or someone who knew little Arabic, led the people in prayer in a speech and language I could not understand, and said: ‘Woe to every zamama zamma wealth and counted it’ and what he meant was {Woe to every backbiter, defamer [*humaza, lumaza*]}! He who amasses wealth, forever counting it!} Standing behind him was a

drunkard, barely conscious, who, when he heard that Qur'anic verse being recited, clapped his hands and legs and said: 'The prick of *`abki darnika** in the cunt of the mother of your Qur'an reader!' When Sulaiman heard this, he fell back laughing, rolling over on his couch, then said: 'Come near, Abu Muhammad. You are the funniest person in Muhammad's community.' He then ordered a fine garment for him and said: 'Stay by my door and come every day', and he regained his high standing with him."

Chapter 95

A brief account of the history of al-Hajjaj and his speeches, and how he acted on certain occasions

2052. The mother of al-Hajjaj was at one time married to al-Harith ibn Kalada. This latter came to her one day at dawn and found her cleaning her teeth, so sent her a message, divorcing her. She said: "Why have you divorced me? Have I done anything to make you suspect me?" He answered: "Yes, I came to you at dawn and found you cleaning your teeth. If you had already begun to eat you must be a glutton, and if you'd gone to sleep with bits of food still in your teeth you must be dirty." She said: "Neither this nor that. I was merely cleaning my teeth from the remnants of my toothpick."

2053. After al-Harith, Yusuf ibn Abi `Aqil al-Thaqafi, father of al-Hajjaj, married her, and she begat al-Hajjaj, a malformed infant who had no sphincter, so a sphincter had to be hollowed out for him. He then refused his mother's or anyone else's breast, and they were at loss what to do with him. It is recounted that the devil appeared to them, taking on the figure of al-Harith ibn Kalada and asked them: "What is your problem?" They answered: "A child born to Yusuf from al-Fari`a---this was her name---who refuses to accept his mother's or anyone else's breast." He said: "Slaughter a black kid and make him lap up his blood. The

following day, do the same. On the third day slaughter a black billy goat and make him lap up his blood, then slaughter a billy goat, skinned, and let him lap up his blood and cover his face with its blood. On the fourth day, he will accept the breast.” The narrator continues: “So they did this and he grew up to be a person who could not possibly refrain from shedding blood because of what had happened to him in his earliest childhood. Hajjaj himself would confess that his greatest pleasure was to shed blood and commit other deeds that none had attempted or committed before him.”

2054. Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn Sulaiman ibn Dawud al-Basri al-Minqari >Ibn `A`isha>his father, who said: “When the Kharijites occupied Basra, `Abd al-Malik sent an army against them which they defeated, so he said: ‘Who can deal with Basra and the Kharijites?’ He was told that al-Muhallab ibn Abi Sufra was the only person for the job. `Abd al-Malik sent for al-Muhallab who said: ‘I will go provided I receive the land-tax of any territory from which I drive them away.’ `Abd al-Malik responded: ‘In that case you would be my partner in kingship.’ ‘Then two-thirds’ ‘No,’ said `Abd al-Malik. ‘Then half and not a penny less, by God, but provided you supply me with the soldiers and, if I fail, you have no right over me.’ So `Abd al-Malik appointed a weak person to govern Iraq who reduced al-Muhallab’s force until the Kharijites crossed over, reaching the Tigris. Al-Muhallab then wrote to `Abd al-Malik: ‘I have no troops with which to fight, so either you send me these troops or I withdraw, allowing the Kharijites to enter Basra.’

2055. ‘`Abd al-Malik came out to his companions and said: ‘Woe to you! Who shall I send to Iraq?’ They were silent. Al-Hajjaj then stood up and said: ‘I am the man for it.’ `Abd al-Malik said: ‘Sit down.’ This scene was repeated twice and the third time Hajjaj said: ‘I swear to God, O

Commander of the Believers, I am the man for it.' `Abd al-Malik said: 'You are its wasp.' He then wrote him his official letter of appointment. 2056. When al-Hajjaj reached al-Qadisiyya, he ordered his army to march behind him, then ordered a camel with a saddle brought to him, without padding or cover, upon which he mounted. He held the letter of appointment in his hand, wore the garments of travel and a turban, and entered Kufa alone. He called out that prayer time was at hand. Every Kufan who sat in his usual place had around him twenty or thirty or more of his family and clients. So they said to one another: 'Let us get up and pelt him with stones.' When Muhammad ibn `Umair al-Darimi entered the mosque with his clients and saw al-Hajjaj seated on the pulpit, who neither moved nor spoke, he said: 'Damn the Umayyads when they appoint such a man to govern Iraq! God has surely abandoned Iraq when such a man is to govern it!' He then bent down to pick some pebbles from the mosque floor to pelt him and said: 'I swear to God, if they had found a more despicable character, they would have sent him here!' When about to pelt him, someone from his family said to him: 'God guide you! Leave him alone and let us first hear what he has to say.' Meanwhile, one person would say the man has been struck dumb and cannot speak, and another would say this is just a bedouin who has yet to discover what he wants to talk about.

2057. `When the mosque filled up with people, he removed the veil from his face, stood, removed the turban from his head and---the narrator continues---he neither praised God nor called down blessings on His Prophet, and his very first words were to quote a line of verse:

I am the son of one well known for his honor, a climber of mountain trails,

When I remove my turban, you will recognize me

He continued: ‘Before me I see rebellious looks and necks grown long with ambition, and heads grown ripe and ready for plucking, and I am the person to pluck them. It is as if I see blood gurgling between turbans and beards.’ He then quoted more verse:

Now is the season of turbulence, so grow turbulent , O Ziyam,*

The night has wrapped it around with a rider called Hutam.

He is neither a camelherd nor a shepherd,

Nor yet a butcher at his butcher’s block.

He then quoted another verse:

Camels which night had gathered together with a hardy driver,

A man fearful to behold, who traverses deserts,

An Emigrant, not a Bedouin.

And another:

War has exposed her leg, so attend to it in all seriousness,

A war in which bowstrings are tightly drawn,

Like the sinews of camels, or even tighter.

He went on: ‘The Commander of the Believers tipped his quiver, chewed its arrow shafts and found me to be the bitterest of all in taste, the sharpest pointed and the toughest in its wood. If you straighten your ways, matters will be made straight for you, but if you decide to frequent the alleyways, you will find me lying in wait for you at every turn. By God, I shall never forgive any slip you make nor accept any excuse from you. People of Iraq! People of dissensions, hypocrisy, and low morals! By God, I am not a man who can be squeezed like a fig to know if it is ripe. I have been closely examined and found to be intelligent, and tested and found to be well experienced. By God, I shall brandish my cane at you and tie you up as one ties the thorn bush called *salama*, and beat you as one beats runaway camels, and lash you with a thong of hard pebbles. O people of Iraq, long have you wandered in the paths of error, pursued

the roads of temptation, followed evil modes of conduct and transcended the normal in your savagery! O slaves of the rod, and sons of slave women, I am al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. By God, I never make a promise without fulfilling it, nor measure any hide without knowing its length! Beware of these small groups that gather together, exchanging gossip, and discussing present and future events! In any case, what have you to do with this, you children of nasty slave women! Let each man mind his own business and let him beware of becoming one of my quarries! People of Iraq, you are just like what is found in the Book of God: {a town, once secure and content, its livelihood coming to it in plenty from all directions}. So come together in obedience, behave properly, act responsibly, do not swerve from the straight path, pay deference and homage, and submit to authority. Know that you will not hear much talk and chatter from me, nor do I expect you to bolt and flee. My only act would be to brandish my sword, nor will I ever sheathe it, winter or summer, until God sets straight for the Commander of the Believers what is crooked in you and subdues for him whomever is found headstrong among you. I have looked into matters and found that truthfulness accompanies virtue and virtue ends in paradise, and I have found lying accompanies viciousness and viciousness ends in hell. The Commander of the Believers has ordered me to distribute your military payments and to send you off with al-Muhallab on an expedition against your enemy. I now give you the same order and grant you a grace period of three days. I swore an oath to God, an oath that He will hold me to and will exact from me, namely, that I will cut off the head, and confiscate the wealth, of anyone on the Muhallab expedition whom I find lingering after these three days have passed. O page, read them the letter of the Commander of the Believers!

2058. The scribe began to read: 'In the name of God, Merciful to all, Compassionate to each. From the servant of God, `Abd al-Malik, Commander of the Believers, to all believers and Muslims in Iraq: Peace be upon you. I offer thanks to God than whom there is no other god...'

Al-Hajjaj interrupted his reading: 'Silence!' he said. Then he turned in anger and said: 'People of Iraq! People of dissensions, hypocrisy, and low morals! People of divisions and error! The Commander of the Believers greets you with the greeting of peace and you fail to respond?! I swear to God, if I remain as your governor, I shall cut and hue you as one cuts a cane, and will teach you manners different from your present manners! These are the manners of Ibn Nihya---he was once a police chief in Iraq. Page, read it again!' When he reached the greeting part, the people in the mosque said: 'And upon the Commander of the Believers peace and the mercy and blessings of God.' Al-Hajjaj then descended and ordered military salaries to be paid to people. At that time, al-Muhallab was at Mihrajan Qudhq fighting the Azariqa wing of the Kharijites.

2059. On the third day, al-Hajjaj sat to review the people. In front of him there passed `Umair ibn Dabi` al-Tamimi al-Burjumi, a Kufan aristocrat and a member of the Muhallab expedition. `Umair said: 'May God guide the Emir! I am an old man, sick, weak and ill, but I have several sons, so let the Emir choose any one of them to take my place, namely, the one most effective in the saddle, and who has the best horse and is best armed.' Al-Hajjaj responded: 'Nothing wrong with a young man taking the place of an old one.' When `Umair left, `Anbasa ibn Sa`id and Malik ibn Asma` said to al-Hajjaj: 'May God guide the Emir, do you know that man?' 'No,' said al-Hajjaj. They said: 'He's `Umair ibn Dabi` al-Tamimi who sprang upon the Commander of the Believers `Uthman when already murdered and broke one of his ribs.' Al-Hajjaj ordered him summoned back and said to him: 'You there, old man! Are you the man who sprang

upon the Commander of the Believers `Uthman after he was murdered and broke one of his ribs?’ He replied: ‘He had imprisoned my father, a weak old man and released him only when he died in prison.’ Al-Hajjaj said: ‘So you yourself attack the Commander of the Believers but send substitutes to fight the Azariqa? Is not your father the person who recited the verse:

*I was about to do it, but did not; I almost did it, and wish I had,
And gave vent to my tears.*

I swear to God, old man, killing you would be of benefit to both Basra and Kufa.’ He then looked him up and down, glared directly at him, bit his beard at times and smoothed it at others, then turned to him and said: ‘O `Umair, did you hear my speech from the pulpit?’ He answered: ‘Yes.’ He said: ‘It is indeed reprehensible of someone like me to be a liar! Guard, up and cut off his head!’ and the guard did so.

2060. When `Umair was killed, the people mounted on every animal, headstrong or easy, and departed in unseemly haste to join al-Muhallab. At the bridge, the crowds pressed together so tightly that some fell into the waters of the Euphrates. The bridge superintendent came to see al-Hajjaj and said: ‘God guide the Emir! Some people have fallen into the Euphrates.’ ‘Woe to you, and why was that?’ said al-Hajjaj. He responded: ‘The people on the expedition crowded upon the bridge so much that some fell into the water.’ Al-Hajjaj ordered him to go at once and build two bridges for them.

2061. `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair al-Asadi* left Kufa in panic. Reaching al-Lujamain, he was met by a fellow clansman called Ibrahim who asked him for news. Ibn al-Zubair responded: ‘Evil, Evil! `Umair, from the Muhallab expedition, has been executed.’ He then recited:

*I said to Ibrahim, when I met him, that in my view,
Matters have become deadly and increasingly difficult.*

Get ready, for you will either join `Umair ibn Dabi`, or else join al-Muhallab.

Both alternatives are fatal and you can only be saved,

If you mount on a young and strong animal, whiter than snow,

One who, even if Khurasan were his destination,

Would see it as close as the marketplace or even closer.

Otherwise, al-Hajjaj will never sheathe his sword,

Until baby hair turns grey.

2062. People fled into the region of al-Sawad and sent messages back to their families to send them supplies where they had fled. Al-Hajjaj said to the bridge superintendant: 'Keep the bridge open and do not prevent anyone from leaving.' He then dispatched the troops passed in review to al-Muhallab. Barely ten days later, the troops were crowding around al-Muhallab, so he said: 'Who is this man who has been appointed to govern Iraq? By God, he must be quite a man! The enemy shall be overcome, God willing.'

2063. Al-Hajjaj had appointed `Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn al-Ash`ath to govern Sijistan, Bust and al-Rukhkhaj, from which regions he fought certain races of the Turks called Ghuzz and Khallukh. He was also fighting neighboring kings of India like Zunbil and others. In an earlier section of this work we discussed the various ranks of Indian and other world kings, and mentioned the kingdom of each, its location and those among them who were distinguished. We further explained that a king of that neighboring region was called Zunbil. Ibn al-Ash`ath then rebelled against al-Hajjaj and marched to Kirman where he also declared a rebellion against `Abd al-Malik. He was obeyed by the people of Basra and al-Jibal, near Kufa, and other regions. So al-Hajjaj marched to Basra and Ibn al-Ash`ath headed against him. Major engagements ensued. On Ibn al-Ash`ath, a poet recited:

*He rebelled against kings, and beneath his standards,
There marched a great concourse of saddle-less riders,
And a vast number of troops.*

2064. Al-Hajjaj then wrote to `Abd al-Malik, informing him of Ibn al-Ash`ath's rebellion and `Abd al-Malik wrote back: 'I swear that he broke off obedience to God with his right hand and obedience to the ruler with his left, and has departed, stripped from religious faith. I pray that his killing and that of his family and their utter extirpation will take place at the hands of the Commander of the Believers. My only answer to him, now that he has cast off obedience, is to quote the verse:

*Patience, self-restraint and lying in wait for the enemy on the morrow,
For I am neither faint-hearted nor humble and inexperienced.
I feel that the vagaries of time and the stupidity of these rebels,
Shall bring them hardship from me.*

*Do you not know that my enmity is to be feared?
That my spear does not bend or break?*

2065. Ibn al-Ash`ath then entered Kufa, so al-Hajjaj wrote to `Abd al-Malik, mentioning the armies of Ibn al-Ash`ath and their great number, and calling on `Abd al-Malik for help and reinforcements. In his letter, he included the phrase: 'Help! Help!' `Abd al-Malik sent him reinforcements and wrote to him: 'Here I come! Here I come!' The two armies met at a place known as Dayr al-Jamajim, and there followed some eighty battles between them where vast numbers were killed. This took place in the year 82 [701]. Ibn al-Ash`ath was defeated and fled until he reached the kings of India, but al-Hajjaj would not rest and contrived to have him killed and his head brought back to him.

2066. So al-Hajjaj ascended the pulpit of the mosque of Kufa, thanked and praised God and called down blessings on his Prophet and said: 'People of Iraq! The devil has penetrated your very innards, mixing with

your flesh and blood, with your bones and extremities and limbs, flowing through you like blood, and ending up in your ribs and brains. He filled everything there with dissension, discord and hypocrisy. He then ascended up your body, built his nest, laid his eggs and hatched there. So you took him as your guide to whom you pay homage, a leader whom you obey and a conspirator whose counsel you seek. Were you not my companions in al-Ahwaz when you sought to act treacherously towards me and gathered together for that purpose, imagining that God would fail His religion and His caliphate? I swear to God, I can see you then while you were sneaking away to save yourselves, quickly giving up the fight and dispersing, with each one of you thinking, out of fear and cowardice, that the sword was upon his neck. And what about the Battle of the Zawiya? This was where you utterly failed and deserted the fighting, and where God declared Himself quit of you, and your master [the devil] let you down. At that battle, you fled like runaway camels fleeing to their abodes, and no man asked about his offspring nor did anyone tarry for his brother, until the enemy's weapons fell upon you and their spears pierced you. Then there was the Battle of Dayr al-Jamajim, and what a battle it was! It was a battle that witnessed epic fights and vast bouts, as in the verse:

Blows that severed heads from shoulders,

And made friends forget one another.

People of Iraq, what can I possibly hope from you? What can I expect from you? Why should I keep you alive, and to what end do I hold you in reserve? To commit grave sins after having committed treacheries? Or to exhibit even more acts of willfulness? What can I possibly expect from you or hope you might yet do? If deployed to frontier posts, your hearts fill with malice and you act treacherously. When feeling safe, you shake with fear, and when frightened you pretend otherwise. You are never

content when a good deed is done to you, and you never give thanks to any favor received. People of Iraq, has there ever been a man who barked at you, or a tempter who called you forth, or a faithless fellow who deceived you, or a rebel who urged you forth but that you paid him homage, and followed him, sheltered him and satisfied all his needs? People of Iraq, has there ever been a troublemaker who made trouble, a croaker who croaked, a liar who hooted but that you became his supporters and followers? People of Iraq, has experience not benefited you in any way? Have the sermons you heard not made you mindful? Have you not learnt the lessons of past events? Have you not taken to heart what God has inflicted upon you as events unfolded? People of al-Sham, I am to you like a male ostrich which kicks with its hind legs in order to protect its chicks, drives away filth from their path, shelters them from the rain, protects them from the wolves, and guards them from all other animals. When it is present, no filth comes their way, no death approaches them, and no harm touches them. People of al-Sham, you are our assets and massed troops, our armor in battle. If we go to war, you fight alongside us, and if we avoid war you avoid it also. You and the people of Iraq are as described in the verses of al-Nabigha al-Ja`di:

*When you called to one another in battle, hoping for good fortune,
But you do not win victory, and we do not lie,*
It was as the Jews say: We killed the Messiah,
But they neither killed nor crucified him.”*

These verses are part of a longer poem.

2067. When `Abd al-Malik heard that al-Hajjaj had exceeded all bounds in killing the prisoners captured at Dayr al-Jamajim and in spending monies, he wrote to him as follows: “To proceed. The Commander of the Believers has heard of your excessive bloodshedding and your liberality in spending monies. The Commander of the Believers cannot abide these

two kinds of behavior in anyone at all. His verdict upon you is as follows: for an unintentional crime, indemnity is required; for an intentional crime, retaliation in kind. As for monies, these you must return to their original place, then spend them as the Commander of the Believers sees fit. The Commander of the Believers is placed in trust by God, and to withhold a right or to disburse something unlawfully is the same in his eyes. If, by disbursing money, you wanted to win people over to the side of the Commander of the Believers, they would have no need of you; if you wanted to win them over to your person, you would have no need of them. You will receive two kinds of instructions from the Commander of the Believers: leniency and harshness. Do not feel easy in mind about anything except through obedience, and do not feel uneasy except through disobedience. Think whatever you like about the Commander of the Believers except that he would tolerate your misdemeanors. If God grants you victory over a people, do not kill one who surrenders peacefully or a prisoner.”

2068. To the end of his letter he appended the following verses:

*If you do not abandon measures that I hate,
And ask for my consent as regards what I ask of you,
And if you fear not what someone like you should fear,
Fleeing to God from him, the milkman would miss the udder.
If you detect from me an occasional lapse of attention of a Quraish man,
Well, a drinker can sometimes choke on what he's drinking.
But if you detect from me an Umayyad leap, both this and that can come
from me.
So do not blame me when events are so critical,
For you shall be rewarded according to what you earn.
Do not transgress any orders you receive from me, and if you do,
Mourners will one day stand around and mourn you.*

*Do not withhold from what you know is rightfully owned by people,
And do not disburse money to one who is not devoted to God.”*

These are among the good verses of `Abd al-Malik that we selected.
2069. When al-Hajjaj read the above letter, he answered: “To proceed. I have received the letter of the Commander of the Believers in which he mentions my excessive bloodshedding and squandering of monies. Upon my life, I have not punished those criminals as much as they deserve nor have I rewarded the obedient as much as they deserve. If my killing of these rebels is considered excessive and my giving those who obey is considered squandering, then let the Commander of the Believers sanction what has already taken place, and let him establish for me a limit which I can limit myself to, God willing, for there is no power except from God. I swear I do not owe anyone any bloodwit or any retaliation in kind. Nor have I committed any unintentional crime whereby I am liable to restitution, nor have I acted unjustly and so am liable to retaliation, nor have I disbursed any monies except in your cause, nor killed anyone except for your sake. As for the two instructions you sent me regarding leniency and harshness, the lenient one includes a threat while the harsh one is a tribulation. I have prepared myself to endure the threat and to bear the tribulation with patience.”

2070. To the bottom of his letter he added the following verses:

If I do not gain your goodwill and avoid your harm,

May scorching heat never leave my days.

Apart from the caliph, none can defend themselves,

Against any action he might commit.

*I make peace with all those well inclined towards you, with whom you
make peace,*

And wage war on all with whom you do not make peace.

If al-Hajjaj commits a crime in your estimation,

*Let mourners come and mourn him at dawn.
If I do not bring close to me one who gives sincere counsel,
And cut out him whose malicious slanders reach me,
Who can hope to gain my generosity, and who can avoid my severity,
When time is ever full of disasters?
Deal with me as long as I remain within the bounds of your pleasure,
And do not transcend them, for all time, until the milkman returns to his
udder.
Otherwise, leave me to deal with matters, for I am one
Who gives sincere counsel, a true companion, made wise by experience.”*

These are verses from a longer poem which we selected as representing the best of al-Hajjaj’s verse. When the letter reached `Abd al-Malik, he commented: “Abu Muhammad [al-Hajjaj] feared my assault and will not go back to doing anything we dislike.”

2071. Hammad “the transmitter”* relates that al-Hajjaj stayed up one night, and said to one of his guards: “Get me a narrator of Hadith from the mosque.” The guard encountered a large fat man and said: “Answer the summons of the Emir.” The guard took him and led him into the presence of al-Hajjaj but the man neither greeted him nor opened his mouth, until al-Hajjaj said: “What’s the matter with you?” The man remained silent, so he said to his guard: “Take him away, may God take away your soul! I ordered you to bring me a Hadith narrator and you bring me a person mindless with terror.” Al-Hajjaj then went out to the mosque carrying a money purse and began to disburse money to the people, which they accepted. Stopping by an old man, he tried to give him money but the old man refused to take it. He tried three times but was thrice rejected, so al-Hajjaj came up to him and said: “I am al-Hajjaj” and the old man took the money. He then entered his mansion and said to the guard: “Bring him here.”

2072. The old man entered and greeted al-Hajjaj eloquently and with a brave heart. Al-Hajjaj inquired as to the man's tribe and was told he was from Shaiban. "And what is your name?" he asked. "Sabra ibn al-Ja'd," he answered. "O Sabra, have you read the Qur'an?" He answered: "I have collected it in my breast. If I act according to its precepts I have memorized it, and if not, then I have lost it." Al-Hajjaj asked: "Do you know anything about the apportioning of inheritance?" The man answered: "I know how inheritance is apportioned to the immediate family and I know the dispute about the grandfather."* "Are you proficient in jurisprudence?" asked al-Hajjaj. "Yes, to the extent that I can discipline my family and guide the blind among my tribe." "Do you know anything about the stars?" "I know the mansions of the moon and enough to guide me while travelling." "Do you recite poetry?" "I recite the poetry of proverbial wisdom and of evidence." "Proverbial wisdom we know, but what is the poetry of evidence?" "The battle-days of the Arabs are recorded in poetry as evidence, so I recite that sort of poetry." Al-Hajjaj then adopted him as a boon companion. Whenever he sought information on any topic he found that man to possess some knowledge of it. The man was a Kharijite, a follower of Qatari ibn al-Fuja'a al-Tamimi---al-Fuja'a being his mother from the Shaiban tribe, whereas Qatari himself was from Tamim. At that time, Qatari was fighting al-Muhallab.

2073. When Qatari heard that Sabra had become an intimate companion of al-Hajjaj, he sent him a poem in which the following verses occur:

*What a distance there is between Ibn Ja`d and us,
As we march forth in our armor and shields!
We contend with the cavalry of al-Muhallab,
All of us enduring the slash of sharp swords.
Meanwhile he [Sabra] drags behind him a silken robe,*

*In the company of his emir, an emir who orders not the fear of God.
 O Abu'l Ja`d, what happened to your knowledge, restraint and nobility,
 The heritage you inherited from glorious ancestors?
 Do you not know that death is inevitable,
 And that men of old will surely be resurrected from their graves,
 Barefoot and naked, with their reward resting with God,
 The one a winner, the other a loser?
 What you have gained will pass away:
 Your life will be like a humble bird falling to earth.
 Think again, Abu Ja`d, and be not indifferent
 To an unjust regime that has blinded all eyes.
 Repent and a martyrdom will be granted to you,
 For you have sinned, but you are not an unbeliever.
 Come and join us, and you will find the jihad will profit you:
 A winning commercial transaction, not a losing one.
 This is the ultimate attainment whose reward may be desired,
 When compared to any amount of wealth that a merchant may gain.*

2074. When he read these verses Sabra wept, mounted his horse, put on his weapons and rode off to join Qatari. Al-Hajjaj pursued him but failed to catch him. Soon, al-Hajjaj received a letter from Sabra which included the poem sent to him by Qatari. At the end of his letter to al-Hajjaj was a poem which included the following verses:

*Who will tell al-Hajjaj that his boon companion
 Has renounced every religion except that of the Kharijites?
 He finds all people who do not believe what he believes
 To be damned, having abandoned the paths of righteousness.
 I have therefore taken the path to God, with full trust in Him,
 For only God can relieve my anxieties.
 I have joined a group who, in daytime,*

*Are like lions of the thickets, when full of fury,
But who, when night descends, stay awake, like women loudly mourning.
They call for God's arbitration,
And believe that `Amr's* arbitration is like a howling wind,
And that the arbitration of Ibn Qays* is likewise futile;
Hence, they cling to a rope, tightly fastened, unbreakable.*

Al-Hajjaj tossed the letter to `Anbasa ibn Sa`id and said: "This is a letter from our boon companion, the man from Shaiban, who was all the while a Kharijite and we knew nothing about him."

2075. Sabra ibn Ja`d, boon companion of al-Hajjaj, was a prolific poet.

Among his verses are the following:

*I wonder at the changes that come over mankind, and at eternal time,
And how death comes to a person from where he knows not;
How people choose to go astray after the All-Merciful
Sent them a light like the full moon.*

But God will not forget our good deeds,

And will protect us, whether at rest or on the move.

He rises above a throne, atop seven heavens, and below Him

Is a sky, beneath which He sees souls going to and fro.

It is said, however, that these verses were recited by another Kharijite.

2076. Interesting reports are found concerning the various Kharijite sects like the Azariqa, the Ibadiyya and others, reports that we recounted in our *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In these works, we mentioned the major points on which all the Kharijites agree such as holding both `Uthman and `Ali to be unbelievers; the necessity of rebellion against an unjust ruler; holding all major sinners to be unbelievers; renouncing the two arbitrators, Abu Musa al-Ash`ari and `Amr ibn al-`As and their arbitration, and further renouncing all who accepted or were content with their arbitration; and maintaining that Mu`awiya and all who supported

him or imitated his conduct or loved and admired him are unbelievers. These are the views that all the Kharijites agreed upon, and these Kharijites are also known as al-Sharat and al-Haruriyya. Apart from these points of agreement, their views differed with respect to their understanding of such topics as the unity of God, His promise of paradise and threat of hell, God's attributes, legal questions and other such topics.

2077. In an earlier section of this work, when discussing the two arbitrators, we mentioned that the first person who proclaimed God as the only arbiter at the Battle of Siffin was `Urwa ibn Udayya al-Tamimi. But it is also reported that the first to do so was Zaid ibn `Asim al-Muharibi or alternatively that it was a man from the tribe of Sa`d ibn Zaid Manat ibn Tamim. The first to proclaim renunciation of arbitration at Siffun was a man from the clan of Yashkur who was a chieftain of the Rabi`a tribe. He had been fighting alongside `Ali but that day he asserted that only God could arbitrate, and declared: "There is no arbitration except God's, and no obedience is owed to one who defies God." He then left the ranks and charged `Ali's ranks, killing a man. He next charged Mu`awiya's ranks but they protected themselves well and he was unable to kill any of them. Charging `Ali's ranks once again, he was killed by the tribe of Hamdan.

2078. Al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy, Abu'l Hasan al-Mada'ini, Abu'l Bakhtari al-Qadi and other authors have given accounts of the Kharijites and their history and diverse groups, as also of Kharijite literature. Writers on the views of sects and religions mention the points of dispute among them as their movement branched into sects, and state also the doctrines which united them. In our work entitled *Al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat* we made mention of most points on which their views diverged, and recounted all those among them who rebelled, from the time of arbitration and then in each succeeding era, bringing the story down to those who rebelled

against the Hamdanid dynasty* in the land of Diyar Rabi`a in the year 318 [930]. This involved a man called Ghayrun who declared a rebellion in the territory of Kafar Tuta, then came to Nisibin where he waged war against its inhabitants. He was captured, and a very large number of Kharijites was killed. Another rebel, called Abu Shu`aib, declared a rebellion while leading the clan of Malik and other clans of Rabi`a. This man was taken before the caliph al-Muqtadir Billah. In the years after 320 [932], the Ibadiyya in the land of `Uman waged many wars in the territory around Nazwa and elsewhere, where they proclaimed God's arbitration, rebelled against authority and set up their own imam, who was later killed along with his followers.

2079. In the year 77 [696-7], war broke out between al-Hajjaj and the Kharijite Shabib. Al-Hajjaj fled after the slaughter of his army, a slaughter so severe that the dead were measured by a measuring rod. Al-Hajjaj entered Kufa and barricaded himself inside the governor's mansion. In the morning, Shabib, his mother and his wife Ghazala entered Kufa. Ghazala had vowed she would enter the mosque of Kufa and pray two prostrations during which she would read out the Qur'anic chapters of the Cow and the House of `Imran. So they entered the mosque with some seventy men, performed the forenoon prayer and Ghazala fulfilled her vow. That year, the people of Kufa recited:

Ghazala fulfilled her vow:

O God, do not forgive her.

Ghazala was a woman of immense courage and skill in horsemanship, as was Shabib's mother.

2080. When al-Hajjaj fled from Shabib, `Abd al-Malik sent a large army commanded by Sufian ibn al-Abrad al-Kalbi to fight Shabib. Arriving in Kufa, Sufian and al-Hajjaj then went out to fight Shabib, whom they defeated, and Ghazala and Shabib's mother were both killed. Shabib fled

with a few mounted followers, and Sufian set off in pursuit with the army of al-Sham, and caught up with him in al-Ahwaz. Shabib slipped away and, arriving at the bridge over the Dujail canal, his horse bolted and tossed him into the water with his heavy armor of shield and helmet. Some followers said to him: “Are you to die by drowning, O Commander of the Believers?” He answered: {Such is the disposition of the Almighty, the All-Knowing}. The Dujail later brought up his dead body on its banks. He was carried by the postal service to al-Hajjaj, who ordered him to be disemboweled and his heart to be extracted. When removed, his heart was found to be as hard as a stone, and when thrown on the ground it would bounce off. It was then cut up and a smaller heart, like a ball, was found inside. When this last was also sliced, it was found to contain the blood clot.

2081. In the year 84 [703], al-Hajjaj killed Ibn al-Qirriyya, who had joined the rebellion of Ibn al-Ash`ath, acted as his secretary for correspondence, and composed his proclamations and speeches. He was a man celebrated for eloquence, knowledge and clarity of style. In our *al-Awsat*, we recounted his story and what he said to al-Hajjaj, who killed him in cold blood. He was killed with the sword but it is also claimed that when he was brought before al-Hajjaj, the latter stabbed him with a spear above his chest and killed him. Ibn al-Qirriyya is the author of the saying: “People are of three kinds: sane, rash and sinful. As for the sane person, religion is his law, self-restraint is in his nature and sound opinion is in his character. When he speaks, he hits the mark; when addressed, he responds; when he hears an item of knowledge, he understands it and when he hears a legal Hadith, he transmits it. On the other hand, when the rash man speaks, he is voluble and hasty; when addressed, he looks vacant and when encouraged to commit a sin he does so. As for the sinful person, he is one who, if you put your trust in him, will betray you; if you

befriend him, he will bring you shame; if asked to keep a secret, he will reveal it; if taught something he will not learn it; if a Hadith is related to him he is not sincere and if taught the law he does not grasp it.”

2082. Al-Mada’ini states that al-Hajjaj was never jovial or magnanimous in the company of his intimates except on the day when Laila al-Akhyaliyya* came to see him. He said to her: “I was told you passed by the tomb of Tawba ibn al-Humayyir but did not stop. By God, you were not faithful to him! Had he been in your place and you in his, he would surely have stopped.” Laila answered: “May God guide the Emir! I have an excuse.” “What is your excuse?” he said. She responded: “I once heard him recite:

*If only Laila al-Akhyaliyya were to greet me,
Though I be buried in the ground and covered with blocks of stone,
I would warmly return her greeting, or else a screech will reach her,
An echo from the side of my grave, loud and clear.*

I had some women with me who had heard these verses, so I hated to make him out to be a liar.” Al-Hajjaj liked her answer, satisfied all her demands and was happy conversing with her. Never was he seen to be jovial or magnanimous except on that day.

2083. Hammad (“the transmitter”) has another version of this story. He states that Laila’s husband adjured her with an oath, when they were passing by Tawba’s tomb at night, to descend, visit his tomb, greet him and expose the lie in his verses. She, however, refused, so her husband solemnly vowed that she should do so. She dismounted, came to the tomb with tears pouring down her chest like rain pouring down from the clouds, and said: “Peace be upon you, Tawba.” She had hardly completed her greeting when the tomb split open and there emerged a bird resembling a white pigeon which struck her in the chest, and she fell

down dead. So they prepared her body for burial, wrapped her in a shroud and buried her next to him.

2084. In their beliefs and doctrines, the ancient Arabs, as already mentioned in this book, had much to say about the bird that hovers over the corpse of the unavenged person (*al-ham*), the echoing screech of that bird (*al-sada*) and the belly serpent (*al-safar*). The Arabs used to tie up a camel, next to the person when buried, upon which was placed a saddle cloth or a stuffing which they called *al-baliyya*, or affliction. They used this word in their proverbs and it was mentioned by their orators who would say: “Afflictions are unavoidable.” Some Arabs considered it an ill-omen if a bird passed from right to left and a good omen if it passed from left to right while other Arabs held the opposite belief. Thus the people of Najd consider a bird passing from right to left to be a good omen while the people of the Tihama believe the opposite. This is all related by `Ubaid al-Ra`i, as stated earlier in this work.

2085. Al-Minqari>`Abd al-`Aziz ibn al-Khattab al-Kufi>Fudayl ibn Marzuq, who said: “When Busr ibn Artat dominated the Yemen, which was ruled before [reading *qablihi*] by the two sons of `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas, and there took place the events which involved the people of Mecca, Medinahh and the Yemen, `Ali rose to speak, thanked and praised God, then said: ‘Busr ibn Artat has conquered Yemen. By God, I predict that these people shall conquer the lands you possess. Nor is this because of any just or right cause that they are upholding, but simply because they obey their master whereas you disobey me; they support one another whereas you neglect your duties; they build up the lands they possess whereas you corrupt yours. By God, O Kufans, I wish I could exchange you as one exchanges ten dinars [of you] for one [of them].’ He then raised his hands to heaven and continued: ‘O God, I am tired of them and they are tired of me; I am sick of them and they are sick of me. Let me

have better followers than they, and let them have a ruler worse than me! O God, hasten to bring them the young man of Thaqif [al-Hajjaj], that strutting, swaggering fellow who will consume whatever is green in this land and don its fur, and rule according to the precepts of the Age of Barbarism [*al-Jahiliyya*], who will not accept any excuse proffered by decent men nor forgive minor infractions.” The narrator adds: “Al-Hajjaj was not even born yet when `Ali delivered that speech.”

2086. Al-Jawhari>Sulaiman ibn Abi Shaikh al-Wasiti>Muhammad ibn Yazid> Sa`id ibn Husain, who said: “Al-Hajjaj once asked Khuraim al-Na`im: ‘What is a life of ease?’ He replied: ‘Security and safety, for a frightened man cannot otherwise derive any benefit from living.’ Al-Hajjaj said: ‘Tell me more.’ He replied: ‘Good health, for a sick man in my view cannot otherwise derive any benefit from living.’ ‘Tell me more,’ said al-Hajjaj. ‘Wealth,’ he responded, ‘for the poor man cannot derive any benefit from living.’ ‘Tell me more,’ said al-Hajjaj. ‘I have nothing else to add,’ Khuraim answered.”

2087. Al-Jawhari>Muslim ibn Ibrahim ibn `Amr al-Farahidi> al-Salt ibn Dinar, who said: “One day al-Hajjaj fell ill, and rumors were rife among the Kufans. When he recovered, he ascended the pulpit, dragging himself up by its banisters and said: ‘The devil has breathed into the noses of the people of dissension and hypocrisy to the point where they said that al-Hajjaj has died. And what if I die? By God, it is only after death that I hope to meet with all that is good. God has not chosen to confer immortality on any of His creatures except on Satan, the easiest of His creatures for Him to deal with. By God, that virtuous servant of God Solomon son of David has said {My Lord, forgive me, and grant me a kingship which none after me shall possess}. This came to pass but that person shrank until it was as if he never existed. O men, all of you are that man. Each living thing will soon die; each moist thing will soon turn

dry; each human being will be taken to a hole in the ground, with the clothes on his back. Measure out for him in the soil three *dhira`*s in length and two in breadth. The earth will then eat up his flesh and suck his pus and blood. The two things best loved by him will then divide him up: his beloved children will divide amongst themselves his beloved wealth. People of understanding will know what I am talking about. Farewell.”

2088. Al-Minqari> Muslim ibn Ibrahim ibn `Amr al-Farahidi> al-Salt ibn Dinar, who said: “I once heard al-Hajjaj saying: ‘The Almighty says: {So fear God as best you can}. This refers to God, and it contains a limitation clause. He then says: {And listen and obey} This refers to the servant of God, the caliph of God and the elect of God, `Abd al-Malik. By God, were he to order people to follow one particular mountain path and they enter another, it would be licit for me to shed their blood. None can blame me with regards to the inhabitants of this land of emancipated slaves. A person among them will fling a stone to earth and say that wherever that stone lands will be the extent of the relief granted by God. I will turn them into something that resembles a decaying ruin or a yesterday that has gone for ever. None can blame me with regards to that slave from the tribe of Hudhail, who recites the Qur’an as if it were in the *rajaz* meter of the ancient Arabs. I swear that if I lay my hands on him I will strike off his neck---he meant `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud. None can blame me with regards to Solomon son of David when he says to his Lord {My Lord, forgive me, and grant me a kingship which none after me shall possess}. He was as far as I know an envious and miserly creature.”

2089. Al-Minqari>`Ubaid ibn Abi al-Sariyy>Muhammad ibn Hashim ibn al-Sa’ib>his father `Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Sa’ib, who said: “Al-Hajjaj was once speaking to `Abdullah ibn Hani’, a man from Awd, a Yemeni

clan. He was held in honor by his people and took part in all the battles of al-Hajjaj, including the burning of the House of God, and was one of his most loyal supporters. Al-Hajjaj said to him: 'We have not rewarded you yet.' He then sent word to Asma' ibn Kharija, chieftain of the Fazara tribe, asking him to marry his daughter off to 'Abdullah ibn Hani'. Asma' replied: 'I will not do so, or anything else of the kind.' When al-Hajjaj summoned the guard with the whip, Asma' said: 'I will allow him to marry her.' So al-Hajjaj married him off to her. He then sent word to Sa'id ibn Qais al-Hamdani, the chieftain of the Yemenite tribal federation, asking him to marry his daughter off to 'Abdullah ibn Hani'. Sa'id replied: 'And from Awd too? No, I will most certainly not allow her to marry him.' Al-Hajjaj said: 'Bring the sword.' Sa'id said: 'Let me consult my family.' When he consulted them, they told him: 'Let him marry her or else that immoral person will kill you.' So al-Hajjaj married him off to her and said to 'Abdullah: 'O 'Abdullah, I have married you off to the daughter of the lord of the Fazara and to the daughter of the lord of Hamdan and Kahlan, and what is Awd when compared to them?' He replied: 'Do not say this, may God guide the Emir, for we have certain virtues which no other Arab tribe possesses.' 'What are they?' demanded al-Hajjaj. 'The Commander of the Believers 'Uthman was never cursed in any of our assemblies.' 'Yes, by God, this is a virtue.' 'At Siffin, seventy of our number took part in that battle on the side of the Commander of the Believers, Mu'awiya, and only one person from our tribe took part in it on the side of Abu Turab [Ali]; and so far as I know he was a wicked man.' 'Yes, by God, this is a virtue,' said al-Hajjaj. 'Not a single person from our tribe married a woman who loved Abu Turab or considered him her ruler.' 'Yes, by God, this is a virtue,' said al-Hajjaj. 'Every single woman in our tribe vowed that if al-Husain is killed, she would sacrifice ten of her camels, and they fulfilled that vow.' 'Yes,

by God, this is a virtue,' said al-Hajjaj. 'Every single man of our tribe who was ever offered the opportunity to abuse or curse Abu Turab did so, and added that he would also include his sons al-Hasan and al-Husain and Fatima their mother.' 'Yes, by God, this is a virtue,' said al-Hajjaj.

'Abdullah added: 'And no Arab tribe is as handsome and fine-looking as we are.' He said this and laughed because he was an ugly man, very dark in color and pock-marked, with a protruberance on his head, a corner of his mouth drooping down, cross-eyed, and unsightly and repulsive to look at.'"

2090. Al-Minqari>Hafs ibn `Umar al-Hawdi>Murajja ibn Raja'>'Imran ibn Muslim Abu Bakr al-Hudhali>al-Sha`bi, who said: "I was led in chains before al-Hajjaj. When about to be brought into his presence, I was received by Yazid ibn Abi Muslim who said to me: 'We are in God's hands, Sha`bi. With all the knowledge you hold in your breast, this is not a day when al-Hajjaj accepts any intercession. So confess to the Emir that you are a polytheist and a hypocrite, and this is the most likely way of escaping his punishment.' When taken before him, I was received by Muhammad ibn al-Hajjaj who said exactly the same thing to me as Yazid. Standing before al-Hajjaj, he said to me: 'And you, Sha`bi, are one of those who rebelled against us, and did so with great enthusiasm?' I replied: 'Yes, may God guide the Emir. Our habitat became one of sorrows, our region suffered drought, our options became narrow, the nights kept us awake, fear overspread us and so we tumbled into a calamity in which could be found neither virtuous and God-fearing men nor criminals possessing any power.' Al-Hajjaj said: 'By God, he has spoken the truth. They were neither virtuous in rebelling against us nor powerful enough when they chose the path of criminality. Set him free.'"

2091. Al-Sha`bi added: "Al-Hajjaj then needed me to settle an inheritance issue. He asked me: 'What do you say about a deceased person who

leaves behind a mother, a sister and a grandfather?’ I answered: ‘It was a point of dispute among five of the Prophet’s companions: `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, Zaid, `Ali, `Uthman and Ibn `Abbas.’ He asked: ‘What was the view of Ibn `Abbas, for he was a pious man?’ I answered: ‘He treated the grandfather as a father, gave the mother one third and nothing to the sister.’ Al-Hajjaj asked: ‘How did `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud settle it?’ I replied: ‘He divided the inheritance into six portions. He gave the sister one half, the mother one sixth, and the grandfather one third.’ ‘What was Zaid’s view?’ he asked. I replied: ‘He divided it into nine portions. He gave the mother three shares, the sister two shares and the grandfather four shares.’ ‘What was the view of the Commander of the Believers `Uthman?’ ‘He divided them into three equal shares,’ I answered. ‘What about Abu Turab [`Ali]?’ ‘I replied: ‘He divided them into six portions: he gave the sister one half, the mother one third and the grandfather one sixth.’ He touched his nose with his hand and said: ‘This person will decidedly not adopt his view.’ He then turned to the judge and said: ‘Judge the case in accordance with the view of the Commander of the Believers `Uthman.’”

2092. Al-Minqari>al-`Utbi>his father, who said: “Al-Hajjaj wanted to go on pilgrimage so he rose and addressed the people as follows: ‘People of Iraq, I have appointed Muhammad [his son] in my place, though he has no desire to deal with you, and you certainly do not deserve him. I have given him instructions that contradict the instructions of the Prophet regarding the Ansar. For he had recommended that the excuses proffered by the virtuous among them should be accepted while their sinners should be forgiven, whereas I instructed him not to accept the excuses of the virtuous among you, and not to forgive your sinners. When I set out on my journey I know that you will say: ‘May God be displeased with his visit to the abodes of the Prophet.’ What prevents you from expressing

this sentiment at once is simply your waiting for my departure. But I will answer you at once: ‘May God cause you to be displeased with my successor.’ He then descended.’”

2093. Al-`Utbi>`Abd al-Ghaniyy ibn Muhammad ibn Ja`far>al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy>Abu `Abd al-Rahman al-Kinani>Ibn `Abbas al-Hamdani>`Ubaidullah ibn Abi al-Makhariq, who said: “Al-Hajjaj appointed me as governor of Falluja, so I said: ‘Is there a *dihqan** here whose counsel I can rely on?’ They said: ‘Yes, a man called Jamil ibn Basbahriyy.’ I summoned him, and before me stood an old man whose eyebrows overshadowed his eyes. He said: ‘You bothered me, for I am an old man.’ I replied: ‘I wanted to obtain your auspicious blessings and your sound advice.’ He ordered his eyebrows to be lifted up with a silken kerchief and said: ‘What is it you want?’ I replied: ‘Al-Hajjaj has appointed me to govern Falluja, and he is a man from whose evil one cannot ever feel safe, so advise me.’ He asked: ‘Which is more to your liking: the good pleasure of al-Hajjaj, the good pleasure of the public treasury or the good pleasure of yourself?’ ‘I’d like to please all three but I also fear al-Hajjaj who is a hard-hearted tyrant.’ He said: ‘Then remember the following four policies: keep your door open and do not employ a chamberlain, so that a person can come to you knowing he will be able to see you. This way, your sub-governors are more likely to fear you. Remain seated on your governor’s seat for long periods of time to receive the people of your governorate, since the longer a governor remains seated, the more awe he inspires, and let not your judgments differ, but judge with fairness and impartiality between notable and commoner. Do not allow the people you govern to hope for too much from you, and do not accept any gift from any of them, for the giver will not be satisfied unless he receives many times the value of his gift, to say nothing about ugly rumors that circulate about such matters. Finally, skin the area between the backs of

their necks and their coccyx and they will be content with you*, and al-Hajjaj will have no reason to do you any harm.”

2094. Al-Minqari>Yusuf ibn Musa al-Qattan>Jarir>al-Mughira> al-Rabi` ibn Khalid, who said: “I once heard al-Hajjaj addressing people from the pulpit as follows: ‘Whom do you hold in greater honor: one who succeeds another in marrying your wife, or a messenger dispatched by him to convey his wishes?’* The narrator said: ‘I swear to God I will never pray behind you, and if I encounter a group of people who resist you, I will join their ranks and fight you.’ So he fought at Dayr al-Jamajim until he was killed.”

2095. Al-Minqari>al-`Utbi>his father, who said: “Al-Hajjaj dispatched al-Ghadban ibn al-Qaba`thara to the region of Kirman to gather for him news of Ibn al-Ash`ath when the latter had rebelled against al-Hajjaj. Leaving al-Hajjaj and arriving in Kirman, he pitched his tent and settled down. A Bedouin approached and greeted him and al-Ghadban responded appropriately. The Bedouin asked: ‘Where have you come from?’ He answered: ‘From behind.’ ‘Where are you heading?’ ‘Ahead,’ he answered. ‘On what [mission] did you come?’ ‘On my mare.’ ‘In what [errand] have you come?’ ‘In my clothes.’ ‘Would you permit me to enter?’ ‘The area behind you is far more spacious.’ ‘I swear to God I do not covet your food or your drink.’ ‘Then don’t allude to them for I swear you will not taste them.’ ‘Do you not have with you anything other than what I see in front of me?’ ‘Yes, a club made of hard wood with which I will beat your head.’ ‘The intense heat has burnt my feet.’ ‘Piss on them and they will cool down.’ ‘What do you think of my mare?’ ‘It’s better than another worse than it, and worse than another better than it.’ ‘Yes, I see that.’ ‘If you see it why do you ask me?’ The Bedouin then left and al-Ghadban went on until he entered upon Ibn al-Ash`ath, who said to him: ‘What brought you here, Ghadban?’ He answered: ‘Evil! Eat al-

Hajjaj for lunch before he eats you for dinner.’ He then ascended the pulpit, spoke of the evil actions of al-Hajjaj, declared himself quit of him, then joined the cause of Ibn al-Ash`ath. Soon thereafter, Ibn al-Ash`ath was taken prisoner and Ghadban was captured among those captured with him.

2096. Brought before al-Hajjaj, the latter said to him: ‘O Ghadban, how did you find the region of Kirman?’ He answered: ‘May God guide the Emir, it is a land whose waters come in drips, whose dates are tiny, whose thief is considered a hero, and whose horses are scrawny. If many soldiers are quartered there, they become hungry, and if a few soldiers are found there, they are lost.’ Al-Hajjaj said: ‘Are you not the person who spoke that mischievous phrase: Have al-Hajjaj for lunch before he has you for dinner?’ He answered: ‘God guide the Emir, this did not benefit the person to whom it was addressed and did not harm the person of whom it was said.’ Al-Hajjaj said: ‘I will cut your hands and legs on opposite sides and then crucify you.’ He answered: ‘I do not see the Emir doing that, may God guide him.’ Al-Hajjaj ordered him chained and thrown into prison. Ghadban remained in jail until after al-Hajjaj had built the Green Palace in Wasit. When it was completed, he sat in its central hall and asked; ‘How do you find my dome?’ His attendants answered: ‘Nothing like it was ever built for a human being.’ Al-Hajjaj asked: ‘And yet there is a fault in it. Can someone tell me what it is?’ They said: ‘By God, it is faultless.’ He ordered Ghadban to be brought from prison, who staggered in, shackled in his chains. When he entered, al-Hajjaj said to him: ‘I see you’ve grown fat, Ghadban.’ He responded: ‘O Emir, it is a matter of chains and plenty, and whoever is a guest of the Emir will grow fat.’ ‘How do you find my dome?’ He replied: ‘It is a dome the like of which was never built for anyone, but it does have a fault. If the Emir guarantees my safety I will tell him what that fault is.’

Al-Hajjaj said: ‘Speak and no harm will come to you.’ He said: ‘It was built in a place other than your own city and for other than your own children, so you will not enjoy it or derive pleasure from it. Whatever cannot be enjoyed will give neither gratification nor pleasure.’ Al-Hajjaj said: ‘Take him back to jail for he is the author of that mischievous phrase.’ Ghadban said: ‘God guide the Emir, my chains have eaten into my flesh and are scraping my bones.’ Al-Hajjaj said: ‘Carry him off.’ As the guards were carrying him away, he said: {Glory be to God who placed all this at our disposal, a thing we could not ourselves undertake.}’ Al-Hajjaj said: ‘Set him down.’ When rested firmly on the ground, he said: ‘{My Lord, grant me a blessed resting place for you are the best of those who grant a place of rest}’ Al-Hajjaj said: ‘Drag him off.’ As they were dragging him away he said: ‘{In the name of God may it sail and anchor. My Lord is All-forgiving, Compassionate to each.}’ Al-Hajjaj said: ‘Set him free.’”

2097. Al-Minqari>Muhammad ibn Hafs al-Taymi>al-Hasan ibn `Isa al-Hanafi, who said: “When Bishr ibn Marwan expired and al-Hajjaj was appointed governor of Iraq, the news reached the Iraqis. So al-Ghadban ibn al-Qaba`thara, rose in the mosque of Kufa and addressed the congregation. After thanking and praising God he said: ‘People of Iraq, People of Kufa! `Abd al-Malik has appointed to govern you a man who will not accept the excuses of the virtuous among you nor forgive the sinners. He is al-Hajjaj, a grasping tyrant, but you have earned some esteem with `Abd al-Malik because of the way in which you let down Mus`ab and his subsequent death. So intercept this evil man on his way here and kill him, and this could not be counted as a rebellion on your part. However, once he ascends your pulpit and sits upon his governor’s chair and the central hall of your mansion, and you then kill him, that would indeed be counted as a rebellion. So obey me, and have him for

lunch before he has you for dinner.’ The Kufans responded: ‘You are a coward, Ghadban. Let us wait and see how he behaves, and if we find him doing something objectionable we will change it.’ He said: ‘You will soon know.’”

2098. When al-Hajjaj arrived in Kufa, he heard what Ghadban had said, so ordered him imprisoned and he remained in jail for three years. A letter from `Abd al-Malik then arrived which ordered al-Hajjaj to send him thirty female slaves: ten who bred excellent children, ten who are good for copulation and ten who have attained puberty. When al-Hajjaj read the letter, he did not understand these descriptions of female slaves so showed the letter to his courtiers, but they too were puzzled. Then one of them said: ‘God guide the Emir. A man who began life as a Bedouin ought to be able to understand it, since he would be familiar with Bedouin ways, familiar with raiding, and then went on to drink wine and acquired the sinful ways common to those who drink.’ Al-Hajjaj said: ‘Where is such a man to be found?’ The man replied: ‘In your jail.’ ‘Who is he?’ asked al-Hajjaj. He was told: ‘Al-Ghadban al-Shaibani.’ Al-Ghadban was summoned and when he stood before him, al-Hajjaj said to him: ‘Are you not the fellow who told the Kufans to have me for lunch before I have them for dinner?’ He replied: ‘God guide the Emir, this did not benefit those to whom this was said and did not harm him of whom it was said.’ He said: ‘The Commander of the Believers sent me a letter but I did not understand it. Have you anything to say about it?’

2099. Al-Ghadban said: ‘Let the letter be read out to me.’ When this was done, he said: ‘It is perfectly clear.’ Al-Hajjaj asked: ‘So what does it mean?’ He answered: ‘The woman who breeds fine children is a woman with a very broad forehead, a long neck, a wide space between her shoulders and breasts, large palms and thick knees. If this sort of woman brings forth a child, he will be like a wild lion. As for those who are good

for copulation, they have a large bottom, dangling breasts and a lot of flesh, with many folds. These women cure the sexually aroused and quench the thirsty. As for those women who have attained puberty, the reference is to women between the ages of thirty-five and forty who are summoned to give milk, as the milkman does with a she camel, and from whom he extracts every hair, nail and vein.'

2100. Al-Hajjaj said: 'Damn you! Tell me about the worst kind of woman.' Al-Ghadban replied: 'May God guide the Emir, the worst kind is a woman with a short neck, very hard to mount upon, with a fast bounce in her step, and is among the noblest women of her clan. She is one who, when angered, a hundred others are angered in sympathy with her, and when she hears a word being spoken will not rest until she gets to the bottom of it. It is a woman who is carrying a female in her belly, delivers another female child, and is cuddling a female child in her lap.' Al-Hajjaj said: 'May God curse such a woman! But, damn you, tell me what is the best kind of woman.' He replied: 'A woman who is almost as tall as the sky, who walks firmly on the ground, who is gentle and bears many children, who carries a male in her belly, delivers another male, and is cuddling a male child in her lap.'

2101. Al-Hajjaj said: 'Damn you, tell me about the worst kind of man.' He answered: 'The worst of men is one with long and smooth hair, an even temperament, and popular with the women of his clan. If one of these women drops a water bucket in a well he would descend into the well and recover it for her. The women would thank him profusely and say: 'The best of health to so and so.' Al-Hajjaj said: 'May God curse such a man! Now tell me what is the best kind of man.' He answered: 'The best of men is he to whom the poet al-Shammakh refers in his verses:

A youth who is not satisfied with a humble life,

*Nor does he snoop on women in the encampments of his tribe;
A youth who fills jars made of walnut wood,
Giving his mount to drink,
And strikes the head of a well armed hero.*

Al-Hajjaj said: ‘Enough! How long have we withheld your soldier’s pay?’ ‘Three years,’ he answered. He ordered the sum to be paid to him and released him from jail.”

2102. Al-Minqari>Muhammad ibn Abi al-Sariyy>Hisham ibn Muhammad ibn al-Sa’ib>Abu `Abdullah al-Nakha`i, who said: “When al-Hajjaj was finished with Dayr al-Jamajim, he went to see `Abd al-Malik, accompanied by the notables of Basra and Kufa, whom he introduced to `Abd al-Malik. One day, as they sat together, they began to discuss various cities. Muhammad ibn `Umair ibn `Atarid said: ‘God guide the Commander of the Believers, Kufa is more elevated than Basra, with its heat and low-lying situation but is less elevated than al-Sham with its plagues and its cold. The Euphrates is nearby, so its waters are sweet and its fruits are delicious.’ Khalid ibn Safwan said: ‘May God guide the Commander of the Believers, our open spaces are much wider than theirs, our troops are much quicker to mobilize, we have more sugar-cane, ivory and teak wood than they, our waters are healthy and clear, and none comes out from our city except a leader, a horse driver and a shepherd.’ Al-Hajjaj said: ‘May God guide the Commander of the Believers, I know the two cities well and have lived in both.’ `Abd al-Malik said: ‘Speak, for your testimony is in our view credible.’ He said: ‘Basra is a grey-haired old woman, with a strong stench in her body and mouth, but decked in every sort of jewelry and finery, whereas Kufa is a young and attractive girl but without any jewelry or finery.’ `Abd al-Malik retorted: ‘You have preferred Kufa to Basra.’”

2103. Al-Minqari>`Amr ibn al-Hubab al-Bahili>Isma`il ibn Abi Khalid, who said: “I once heard al-Sha`bi say: I heard al-Hajjaj speak certain words the like of which none had ever spoken before him. I heard him saying: ‘To proceed. The Almighty decreed extinction upon this world and eternity upon the other world. Thus there can be no extinction for what has been decreed to be eternal, and no eternity for what has been decreed to suffer extinction. So do not be tempted by what you behold of this world and do not ignore what cannot be seen of the next world. Hope, if prolonged, curtails the time appointed for death.’”

2104. Al-Minqari>Sahl ibn Tammam ibn Bazi` >`Abbad ibn Habib ibn al-Muhallab> his father, who said: “When al-Muhallab killed `Abd Rabbihi ibn al-Saghir in Kirman, he said: ‘Get me a man of eloquence, rationality and experience whom I can send to al-Hajjaj with the heads of those whom we have killed.’ They recommended Bishr ibn Malik al-Jurashi. When Bishr came into the presence of al-Hajjaj, the latter asked for his name and was told it was Bishr ibn Malik al-Jurashi. Al-Hajjaj asked: ‘How was al-Muhallab when you left him?’ Bishr responded: ‘I left him in a good condition having attained what he hoped for and feeling secure from his earlier fears.’ Al-Hajjaj asked: ‘How did you allow Qatari to escape you?’ He answered: ‘He tricked us just as we had tricked him.’ ‘Why didn’t you pursue him?’ ‘He fled and our good fortune in battle was of more concern to us than his flight.’ ‘You did the right thing. How did the Muhallab family perform?’ ‘They kept their distance from their tents until they felt safe, and were in the saddle until recalled.’ ‘Fine, but who is the best among them?’ ‘This is a matter for their father to decide. Whomever among them he entrusts with a task, he fulfills it.’ Al-Hajjaj said: ‘I see you are a rational man so tell me.’ He answered: ‘They are like a solid and unbroken ring whose ends are unknown.’ ‘How do they compare with their father?’ ‘His superiority to

them is like their superiority to the rest of mankind.’ ‘How did the troops behave?’ ‘The rightness of the cause pleased them and the spoils of war they won satisfied them completely. They were fighting with a commander who fought alongside them like a bandit but ruled over them like a king. He won their love as if they were his children, and showed his concern for them as if he was their parent.’ ‘Did you prepare all this speech beforehand?’ ‘Only God knows the unseen.’ Al-Hajjaj turned to `Anbasa and said: ‘This kind of speech is natural and not affected.’”

2105. Al-Hajjaj arrested Jarir ibn al-Khatafa* in order to kill him [reading *liqatlihi*] so his clan from Mudar went to see al-Hajjaj and said: “May God guide the Emir! He is the spokesman of Mudar and its poet. Spare his life for our sake.” Al-Hajjaj did so. Hind bint Asma’, the wife of al-Hajjaj, was among those who pleaded for his life. She said to al-Hajjaj: “Allow me one day to get him to recite his poetry from behind a screen.” He consented, so she ordered an assembly to be set up for her, then sat with al-Hajjaj next to her and summoned Jarir. He came in and could hear what she said but could not see her. She said: “O Ibn al-Khatafa, recite to me some of your verses where you flirted with women.” He replied: “I never did flirt with any woman and God has created nothing I hate more than women.”

2106. She said; “Enemy of God, what about the following verses?:

*The female hunter of hearts knocked on your door
At a time not suitable for visits. So depart in peace!
She passes her tooth-pick over a mouth, with teeth like hailstones,
That poured down from the folds of clouds.
Had you been truthful in your words to us,
You would have kept the bond between us unbroken.
Troubling thoughts came to him at night, preventing sleep,
And he who is troubled seeks whatever he can attain.”*

Jarir answered: “No, I did not compose these verses but I did indeed compose the following:

Al-Hajjaj has drawn his sword in the cause of righteousness,

So follow the straight path, and let none veer from it.

He who calls to falsehood is not to be compared to him who calls to right guidance,

Nor can right be compared to wrong when the two foes clash.”

2107. Asma’ said: “Forget these verses. What about the following:

My two companions, do not, I beg, cry many tears over Hind:

May God protect you from suffering my anguish!

I am thirsty to drink wine and for its charms,

Like one who hopes a rain-cloud will pour, but it does not.

Jarir answered: “No, I did not compose these verses but I did indeed compose the following:

Who can feel safe from al-Hajjaj? His punishment is severe,

But his covenant is unbreakable.

A hypocrite will harbor hatred for you, though outwardly friendly,

While a man of faith will love and comfort you.

2018. Asma’ said: “Forget these verses. What about the following:

You two who blame me, stop blaming me and be fair!

I have been too long in love, and you have been too long in censuring me.

I find you, my love, to be thus:

If you wish me to love you more, you will find me unable to offer you any greater love.

Jarir said: “It is all false, may God guide you! But I did compose the following verses:

Who barred the path of hypocrites?

Or who can overpower enemies like al-Hajjaj?

Or who protects the honor of women,

*When they cannot trust their own husbands' zeal?
Behold Ibn Yusuf [al-Hajjaj], so listen carefully and understand:
What is hidden he now makes manifest,
And there is no time for secret plotting.
How many a person I have passed by,
Who reneged on his two oaths of fealty [to `Abd al-Malik and al-Hajjaj],
The blood of whose veins dyed his beard like henna.*

Al-Hajjaj said: "Enemy of God! Are you rousing women against me?"

Jarir replied: "No, and I swear by God who honored you, I never grasped the real meaning of that verse until this moment, nor did I know you were sitting there. Please forgive me, and may God make me a ransom for you." Al-Hajjaj said: "I have done so." Hind ordered that he be given a rich reward and a luxury garment, and al-Hajjaj dispatched him to `Abd al-Malik.

2109. When Ibn al-Ash`ath was defeated at Dayr al-Jamajim, al-Hajjaj swore he would kill every prisoner brought before him. Many captives were brought to him, first among them being A`sha Hamdan*. He was the first to renounce his fealty to `Abd al-Malik and al-Hajjaj in the presence of Ibn al-Ash`ath in Sijistan, so al-Hajjaj said to him: "Let me see. Are you not the one who recited:

*Who will inform al-Hajjaj that I have declared war on him,
Placing my hands in the palm of a man of fortitude, when matters grow
perilous?*

*You [Ibn al-Ash`ath] are the chief and son of a chief, held in greatest
esteem.*

*So send `Atiyya with the cavalry to trample him down,
And rise up, God guide you; perhaps the All-Merciful will, through you,
Do away with our calamity.*

I was informed that the son of Yusuf has fallen

Down a slippery slope---may he perish!”

These verses are from a longer poem.

Al-Hajjaj continued: “Are you not the one who recited:

*Long is the distance now from his abode in the Iwan,
The Iwan of Kisra, with its cities and perfumed plants,
Long is the distance from a devotee who is now in Zabulistan,
Who believes that Thaqif has produced two liars:
An ancient liar and now another.*

*May my Lord give Hamdan power over the Thaqif,
One day, at night, making one forget the past.”*

Al-Hajjaj added: “Are you not also the one who recited:

*And when the two of you ask me: Where can glory be found?
I answer: Glory is found between Muhammad and Sa`id*,
While great glory is found between al-Ashajj and Qais*,
Hurrah! Hurrah! To father and son!”*

2110. Al-A`sha responded: “Oh no, but it was I who recited:

*God insisted on filling the earth with His light,
And on quenching the fires of criminals and putting them out;
On humbling Iraq and its people when they reneged on their solemn
covenant,
And when they introduced those heresies and false beliefs,
Which could in no way climb up to God.”*

Al-Hajjaj said: “There is nothing in these verses that deserves praise, for you recited them as an expression of regret that you had failed to win victory and as a means of rousing your friends against us. But let me ask you this. Tell me about that verse where you say:

May my Lord give Hamdan power over the Thaqif.

What would you say now that God has granted Thaqif power over Hamdan and not the other way round? And what about the verse where you say:

*While great glory is found between al-Ashajj and Qais,
Hurrah! Hurrah! To father and son!*

By God, you will never ‘hurrah’ anyone after this!” He then ordered him to be beheaded.

2111. One prisoner after another was brought forth for execution until a man from the `Amir tribe was led into the presence of al-Hajjaj. He had been fighting with Ibn al-Ash`ath as a cavalryman at Dayr al-Jamajim. Al-Hajjaj said to him: “I swear to God I shall kill you in the worst possible manner!” The man answered: “By God, this is not up to you.” “Why not?” said al-Hajjaj. He answered: “Because the Almighty says in his Book: {When you encounter the unbelievers, blows to necks it shall be until, once you have routed them, you are to tighten their fetters. Thereafter, it is either gracious bestowal of freedom or holding them to ransom until war has laid down its burdens}. You have killed, indeed slaughtered, and made many captives, and tightened their fetters. So you should either graciously set us free or else allow our clans to pay our ransom.” Al-Hajjaj said: “Have you been an unbeliever?” “Indeed, and changed and altered my religious beliefs.” Al-Hajjaj said: “Set him free.” Then a man from Thaqif was brought forward and al-Hajjaj asked him: “Are you an unbeliever?” He said: “Yes.” He said: “But that fellow behind you is not an unbeliever.” The man behind him was from the tribe of Sakun, who now said: “Are you trying to trick me as to my innermost thoughts? Yes, by God, and if there was anything worse than unbelief I would have embraced it.” So he set both of them free.

2112. These in outline are historical reports concerning `Abd al-Malik and al-Hajjaj. We have previously given a detailed account of these

reports, which are not mentioned in this work, in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, which followed it, and which, in turn, this present work follows. In later sections of this work, we will recount in brief some reports to do with al-Hajjaj, in conformity with the plan we have imposed upon ourselves earlier on in this work. Success comes from God.

Chapter 96

An account of the days of al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik

2113. Al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik received the oath of homage in Damascus the day his father, `Abd al-Malik, died. Al-Walid himself died in Damascus in the middle of Jumada II, 96 [February 25, 715], thus ruling for nine years, eight months and two nights. He expired* aged 44, and his patronymic was “Abu’l `Abbas”.

A brief mention of his history and conduct, and the actions of al-Hajjaj during his days

2114. Al-Walid was tyrannical, stubborn, unjust and iniquitous. He fathered fourteen male children, among them Yazid, `Umar, Bishr the scholar and al-`Abbas, the last of whom was called the “Knight of the Marwan clan” because of his chivalrous personality. Al-Walid decided to follow the testament of his father `Abd al-Malik as regards the order of succession, and thus excluded his children from succession. His ring was inscribed with the words: “O Walid, you must die one day.” Whenever he was about to appoint one of his children to succeed him, he would turn over the stone on his ring, read the above inscription and say: “By God, I will not disobey my father’s instructions, and will indeed die one day.”

2115. In the year 87 [706], al-Walid commenced the building of the great mosque in Damascus and the Prophet’s mosque in Medinah, spending huge sums on both buildings. The man in charge of expenditures was `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz*. `Uthman ibn Murra al-Khawlani said: “When

al-Walid commenced the building of the Damascus mosque, a stone tablet was found on the wall of the mosque inscribed with Greek letters. The tablet was shown to some of the People of the Book but they were unable to read the text. Al-Walid then sent the tablet to Wahb ibn Munabbih* who said: "This text was written in the days of Solomon son of David." He then read it and deciphered it as follows: "In the name of God, Merciful to all, Compassionate to each. Son of Adam, if you examine the short time remaining to you, you would grow ascetical as regards the length of your expectations, and would curtail your desires and your strength. You will indeed experience repentance when your foot slips, your family and courtiers surrender you to the grave, those you love turn away and those near to you bid you farewell. You will then be addressed but you cannot answer. You will not return to your family nor will you add anything to your deeds. So seize the opportunity while you are alive and before you die, and make use of your vigor before it is too late and before life is taken away from you by force, and you are no longer able to act. Written in the days of Solomon son of David."

2116. Al-Walid ordered the following text to be inscribed on lapis lazuli in gold letters and placed on the wall of the mosque: "Our Lord is God and we worship none but Him. The building of this mosque and the destruction of the church which had been on its site was ordered by the servant of God, al-Walid, the Commander of the Believers, in the month of Dhu'l Hijja, the year 87[Nov/Dec 706]." This text, in gold lettering, can still be seen in the mosque of Damascus until the present day, i.e. the year 332 [943-44].

2117. Al-Hajjaj came to see al-Walid and found him on one of his promenades. Al-Walid received him, and when al-Hajjaj saw him he dismounted, kissed his hand and began to walk alongside, dressed in armor and with a quiver and an Arabian bow. Al-Walid said: "Mount, O

Abu Muhammad.” Al-Hajjaj replied: “Let me go and pursue jihad, Commander of the Believers. Ibn al-Zubair and Ibn al-Ash`ath have diverted me from pursuing it.” Al-Walid insisted he should mount his horse again and he himself entered his palace, dressed in an undershirt, then gave permission to al-Hajjaj to enter. The latter came in, still in his earlier armored outfit, and sat for a long time talking to al-Walid.

2118. As he conversed with him, a slave girl came in and whispered some words to al-Walid, went out, then returned, whispered more words and departed. Al-Walid asked: “Do you know what this woman said to me, O Abu Muhammad?” “No, by God,” replied al-Hajjaj. Al-Walid said: “The woman was sent to me by my wife and cousin, Umm al-Banin, daughter of `Abd al-`Aziz, saying why are you in your undershirt talking to this nomad dressed in armor, and I told her it was al-Hajjaj. She was terrified and said she hated it that you, a bloodshedder who killed so many, should be closeted with me.” Al-Hajjaj said: “Commander of the Believers, leave off chatting frivolously with women. A woman is merely a sweet smelling plant and not one who can be trusted with any important responsibility. You should not reveal your secrets to them, nor how you propose to fight your enemies. Do not busy them with anything other than themselves, nor let them be occupied with anything other than beautifying themselves. Do not ever seek their counsel, for their advice will always be found deficient and their resolve weak. Restrict their vision by secluding them, and do not allow any of them to gain power over anything that transcends their own persons. Do not allow any of them to grow so bold as to intercede with you on behalf of another. Do not sit with them for too long or be long closeted in their company, for this will be better for your mind and a clear indication of your superiority to them.” Al-Hajjaj then rose and left. Al-Walid went to see Umm al-Banin and told her what al-Hajjaj had said. She said: “Commander of the

Believers, I would like you to order him to pass by me tomorrow and greet me.” “Done,” said al-Walid.

2119. When al-Hajjaj came to see al-Walid the following morning, al-Walid said to him: “O Abu Muhammad, go to Umm al-Banin and greet her.” He replied: “Please spare me from doing so, O Commander of the Believers.” He responded: “You must.” So he went to see her and was kept waiting for a long time before she admitted him. She greeted him while keeping him standing, and would not permit him to sit down, then said to him: “So, Hajjaj, you think you are doing the Commander of the Believers a favor by killing Ibn al-Zubair and Ibn al-Ash`ath? I swear to God, had not God known that you are the lowliest of His creatures, He would not have burdened you with the guilt of having bombarded the Ka`ba and killing the son of the ‘woman with the two girdles’ and the first child born in the era of Islam. As for Ibn al-Ash`ath, he defeated you so repeatedly that you sought in desperation the help of the Commander of the Believers `Abd al-Malik, who sent you contingents from al-Sham at a time when you were in a spot more tight than a tight rope. Their spears protected you and their valiant efforts saved you. Long did the women of the Commander of the Believers shake the musk from their braids to sell it in the market place in order to fund the military contingents sent to you. Were it not for all this, you would have been more despicable than a deformed Hijazi sheep. As for your advice to the Commander of the Believers to forsake his pleasures and not consummate his desires with his womenfolk, if these latter were to give birth to something that resembles what your mother brought forth, he would be right to accept your advice! But if they give birth to a child that resembles the Commander of the Believers, then he should not accept what you are telling him or listen to you. God damn that poet who, when he saw that

the spear of Ghazala the Kharijite was almost planted between your shoulders, recited:

*A lion you are when facing me, but in war an ostrich,
Grey-colored and shaking with fear [reading rabda 'u tajfilu] when
someone whistles;
If only you had come out to meet Ghazala in open battle,
But your heart was on the wings of a bird."*

Then she turned to her maids and said: "Get him out of my sight." He went at once to al-Walid who said: "What were you up to, Abu Muhammad?" He replied: "I swear, O Commander of the Believers, no sooner did she fall silent than the interior of the earth was preferable to me than its surface!" Al-Walid laughed so much he scraped the floor with his feet, then said: "O Abu Muhammad, after all, she is the daughter of `Abd al-Aziz!" Many reports exist concerning Umm al-Banin and her generous deeds which we have recounted elsewhere than in this work.

2120. In the year 95 [713-14], `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib departed this life in the reign of al-Walid and was buried in Baqi` al-Gharqad next to his uncle al-Hasan ibn `Ali. He was fifty-seven years old. Another account reports his death as occurring in the year 94 [712-13]. All later offspring of al-Husain descend from this `Ali ibn al-Husain. He is also called "the man often prostrating in prayer", "the man with calloused knees" [from prostration], and the "ornament of worshippers."

2121. Al-Mada'ini states: "Al-Walid once came to see his father `Abd al-Malik as he lay on his death bed. He cried and said: 'How does the Commander of the Believers feel this morning?' `Abd al-Malik replied with a line of verse:

*He is too busy to worry about us, and wishes us dead,
And there stand weeping women, tears pouring down from their eyes."*

He referred in the first hemistich to al-Walid, then turned his face to indicate his women folk, who are the “weeping women.”

2122. Al-`Utbi and other historians state that when al-Walid asked `Abd al-Malik on his deathbed how he was feeling, `Abd al-Malik replied with a line of verse:

*How many a man who visits a sick bed, but is really not a visitor,
And wishes merely to see whether he will witness his death.*

2123. It is also said that when `Abd al-Malik saw al-Walid crying where he lay his head, he said to him: “What is this? A pigeon cooing? When I die, roll up your sleeves, gird yourself, wear a leopard skin and hang your sword on your shoulder. Whoso reveals his real self to you, strike off his neck and whoso remains silent will die of his own sickness.” `Abd al-Malik proceeded to curse this world: “Whatever is long in you is found to be short, and whatever is much in you is found to be little. We were deceived by you.” He then turned to all his children and said: “I enjoin fear of God upon you for it is a lasting safeguard and a protective armor. Fear of God is the best provision and the best legacy for the afterlife, and is the most impregnable cave. Let the older among you show compassion to the younger, and let the younger respect what is owed to the older. Let your hearts be free of malice and put the best interpretation on all acts. Do not ever indulge in dissension and mutual jealousies, for it was this that destroyed kings of the past and men of secure power. My children, your brother Maslama* is like your canine tooth, which you expose to the outside world, and your shield behind which you should take shelter. Do nothing without consulting him. Honor al-Hajjaj for it was he who paved the way for you. Behave like dutiful sons. In war act nobly, and be exemplary in your good deeds. Peace be upon you.” Having finished that testament to his children, he was asked by some elders of the Umayyad clan: “How are you feeling, O Commander of the Believers?” He replied:

“This is stated in the words of the Almighty: { You have come to us singly, just as you were when we first created you } down to { you used to claim}.” These were the last words he uttered.

2124. When he expired, al-Walid shrouded him, then ascended the pulpit, thanked and praised God and said: “I have never experienced at once such a calamity and such a favor: the loss of the caliph and the assumption of the caliphate. We belong to God, and to Him we shall return. God is our help to surmount this calamity, and praise be to God, lord of the worlds, for the favor.” He then called on people to pay him homage and they did so, none dissenting.

2125. In the year 87 [706], in the days of al-Walid, occurred the death of `Ubaidullah ibn al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib. He was a munificent and generous man. It is recounted that a beggar once accosted him and said: “Give in charity from what God has bestowed upon you, for I have been told that `Ubaidullah ibn al-`Abbas once gave a beggar a thousand dirhams, and apologized to him.” He said: “But who am I compared to `Ubaidullah?” The beggar said: “Compared to him in pedigree or in wealth?” He answered: “In both.” The beggar said: “A noble pedigree in a man consists in his chivalry and good deeds. If you are such a person, you would indeed be noble.” So `Ubaidullah gave him a thousand dirhams and apologized to him. The beggar said: “If you are not `Ubaidullah, you are better than him, and if you are him, you are better off today than you were yesterday.” So he gave him another thousand. The beggar continued: “If you are `Ubaidullah you must be the most generous person of your generation, and I strongly suspect that you are related to the Prophet. In God’s name, are you `Ubaidullah?” He answered: “Yes.” The beggar added: “By God, I did not miss the mark except for some doubt that baffled my heart. But this beautiful visage

and luminous appearance cannot subsist except in a prophet or some member of his family.”

2126. It is related that Mu`awiya had once sent `Ubaidullah a gift of five hundred thousand dirhams, then sent someone to find out what he had done with the money. He returned to report that he had divided the money among his intimate companions and his brothers in equal shares, keeping to himself the same share as any of them. Mu`awiya said: “This pleases and displeases me at once. What pleases me is that `Abd Manaf is his ancestor. What displeases me is that he is related to Abu Turab [`Ali] but not to me.”

2127. Al-Mas`udi said: We reported above the killing of the two sons of `Ubaidullah, `Abd al-Rahman and Qutham, and also the elegies uttered by their mother, Umm Hakim Juwairiyya bint Qariz ibn Khalid al-Kinaniyya. `Ubaidullah had once entered upon Mu`awiya and found Busr ibn Artat al-`Amiri with him. Busr was the person who had killed `Ubaidullah’s two sons. `Ubaidullah asked him: “Are you the killer of my two boys?” Busr said: “Yes.” `Ubaidullah said: “By God I wish the ground that day had brought me forth near you.” Busr said: “It has brought you forth now.” `Ubaidullah said: “Is there a sword here I can use?” Busr said: “Here, take mine.” As `Ubaidullah bent down to grasp his sword, Mu`awiya and others present grabbed `Ubaidullah’s hand before he could reach the sword. Mu`awiya then turned to Busr and said: “Shame on an old man like you! You have grown old and your mind is unhinged. You hand your sword over to a man from Hashim who has not yet avenged the death of his sons? You clearly do not know the true feelings of the Hashim clan. I swear if he had gotten hold of that sword, he would have started with me before you!” `Ubaidullah said: “By God, this was indeed my intention.”

2128. When news of Busr's killing of the two sons of `Ubaidullah reached `Ali, he cursed Busr in the following words: "O God, deprive him of both his faith and his reason!" The old man became senile and his mind was confused. He would be seen with sword drawn at all times, so a wooden sword was crafted for him and a wine skin filled with air was placed near him which he could strike. When one skin was perforated, it would be replaced by another. He continued to strike that skin with his wooden sword until he died, his mind unhinged. He would play with his feces and would sometimes eat some of it, then turn to those observing him and say: "Look how these two boys are feeding me," meaning `Ubaidullah's two sons. His hands would then be tied behind his back to prevent him from doing so. One day, he voided his feces where he sat then fell upon it and began to eat it. When his attendants prevented him, he said: "You prevent me while Qutham and `Abd al-Rahman are feeding me?" Busr died in the year 86 [705], in the days of al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik.

2129. In that year too, i.e. 86, died `Abdullah ibn `Utba ibn Mas`ud al-Hudhali. `Utba was an Emigrant and brother of `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud ibn Ghafil ibn Habib ibn Shamkh ibn Far ibn Makhzum ibn Subaih ibn Kahil ibn al-Harith ibn Tamim ibn Sa`d ibn Hudhail ibn Mudrika ibn Ilyas ibn Mudar ibn Nizar. In pre-Islamic times, the chieftainship belonged to the clan of Subaih ibn Kahil ibn al-Harith. `Ubaidullah, son of `Abdullah ibn `Utaba was a celebrated scholar. Ibn Abi Khaithama>Ibn al-Isbahani>Sufian>al-Zuhri, who said: "I thought my stock of knowledge was ample until I attended the circle of `Ubaidullah ibn `Abdullah and found him to be like an ocean of knowledge." *

2130. In the year 94 [712-13], al-Hajjaj executed Sa`id ibn Jubair*. Sa`id had been led into his presence and he asked him what his name was. He answered: "Sa`id ibn Jubair." "Rather, Wretched son of Broken."* He

replied: “My father was more knowledgeable about my name than you.” Al-Hajjaj said: “You are a wretch damned in hell, son of a wretch damned in hell.” He answered: “The future is known only to God.” Al-Hajjaj said: “I will make you exchange this world for {a Fire that rages}.” He responded: “If I knew that this was in your power I would not have worshipped any other god but you.” Al-Hajjaj asked: “What is your opinion regarding the caliphs?” He replied: “I am not their overseer.” “Choose which kind of death you want me to kill you.” He answered: “Rather you choose, you wretch! For by God you will not kill me today without my killing you in the same manner in the afterlife!” Al-Hajjaj ordered him to be led out for execution. As he was leaving, Sa`id laughed, so al-Hajjaj summoned him back to ask about his laughter and he answered: “I was amazed at your bold defiance of God and at how God spared your life!” He then ordered his neck to be slit. As he bent his head down, he said: “I testify that there is no god but God alone and without partners, that Muhammad is His servant and prophet, and that al-Hajjaj is an unbeliever.” He added: “O God, give al-Hajjaj no power over killing anyone after me.” He was then beheaded. Al-Hajjaj lived only fifteen days after Sa`id’s execution when a devouring disease attacked his stomach and from which he was to die. It is recounted that, after killing Sa`id, al-Hajjaj used to say: “O people, what is it between me and Sa`id ibn Jubair? Every time I try to close my eyes in sleep, he grabs me by my throat.”

2131. Al-Walid once fell ill and heard that his brother Sulaiman wished him dead because he was next in line of succession. Al-Walid wrote to him, mildly reproving him, and appended the following verses to his letter:

*Some men wish me dead but if I die,
This is not a road that I alone shall traverse.*

*Perhaps the person who wishes me dead and proclaims it,
Before my death, might himself die.
The death of those who died before me does me no harm,
Nor will the life of those who live after me make me immortal.
Tell him who wished the past to have been otherwise:
Provision yourself for the life to come, for it is almost upon you.
His destiny runs according to a schedule,
While death shall befall him one day, unannounced.*

2132. Sulaiman answered: “I understood the meaning of the Commander of the Believers’ letter. By God, if I had truly wished him dead, I had no idea I would be the first to follow him in death and to be mourned by his family. Why should I hope to curtail an interval of time, and one that is hoped for, which lasts no more than the time taken by a caravan to strike camp only to leave it soon thereafter? The Commander of the Believers has heard what I never uttered nor even betrayed by a mere glance. If the Commander of the Believers lends his ear to gossip-mongers and men of no understanding, he will soon be in danger of corrupting hearts and severing ties of family and kinship.” He appended the following verses to his letter:

*He who does not avert his eyes from his friend and his minor faults,
Will die worthy of censure.
And he who actively scrutinizes every little fault,
Will never have a friend who lasts.*

2133. Al-Walid wrote back: “Your excuse was charming as also the verses you appended. You are truthful in what you say, and faultless in your actions. Nothing resembles you so much as the excuse you proffered, and nothing is more unlike you than the gossip spread about you. Peace be upon you.”

2134. Al-Walid was kindly disposed towards his brothers and conformed closely to the testament of his father `Abd al-Malik. He would often recite the verses of `Abd al-Malik when the latter wrote out and sent him his testament:

*Remove all malice from your hearts and from one another,
In secret or in public.*

*Good concord guarantees your lasting long,
Whether I live long or I do not.*

It was to face the evil accidents of time that he unified your hearts,

Through mutual support, forbearance and affection,

To the end that, both inwardly and outwardly,

You would submit and be gentle to those among you

Who are rulers and those who are not.

When arrows are gathered together and a person, in anger,

Seeks to break them with his hand,

They'll be too strong to break, but when scattered,

Will be found weak and fragile by whoever wishes to shatter them.

2135. `Abd al-Malik used to constantly urge his sons to perform good deeds and to encourage them to behave honorably, saying to them: "Sons, your noble pedigree consists in your acts of kindness; preserve this by spending from your wealth. Let no man among you take any notice of any praise addressed to him when compared to that line of verse by al-A`sha:

You go to sleep in your winter quarters, your bellies full,

While your hungry female neighbors go to sleep on empty stomachs.

Nor can any one be harmed by defamation when compared to that line of verse by Zuhair:

The wealthy among them acknowledge the rights of those who seek their aid,

And the not so weathy will be found bighearted and generous.

2136. `Abdullah ibn Ishaq ibn Sallam>Muhammad ibn Habib, who said:

“Al-Walid once mounted the pulpit and heard the sound of a handbell.

‘What is this sound?’ He asked. He was told it came from a church. So he ordered the church to be destroyed and himself took part in its

demolition. The “Slit-Nosed” [Justinian II], king of the Byzantines, wrote to al-Walid: “This church was left in place by rulers who came before

you. If they were right in doing so, then your action is wrong; and if you are right then they were wrong.” Al-Walid asked: “Who will answer

him?” Al-Farazdaq* said: “I will.” He then sent him the following

Qur’anic verse: {We instructed Solomon as to that judgment, and upon both bestowed right counsel and knowledge} to the end of that verse.

2137. Al-Hajjaj died in Wasit, in Iraq, in the year 95 [713-14], at the age of fifty-four. His tyranny over people lasted twenty years. The number of

those he killed in cold blood, apart from those killed in his wars, was

calculated at 120,000. At the time of his death, there were fifty thousand

men and thirty thousand women in his prisons, sixteen thousand of whom were naked. He used to lock up men and women in the same place, and

his prisons were without roofs to offer shade from the sun in summer or shelter from the rain and cold in winter. He practiced other modes of

torture which we recounted in our book *al-Awsat*. It is related that he was once riding to Friday prayers and heard a tumult. Upon inquiry, he was

told that it was the prisoners who were loudly complaining of their awful conditions. So he glanced at them and said: {Cower in it and speak not to

me}. It is said that he died during that week and never rode again.

2138. Al-Mas`udi said: I found in a book, entitled *`Uyun al-Balaghat*, a

selection of the discourse of al-Hajjaj, that he said: “A blessing is only withdrawn when disavowed, and is made complete only when proper

thanks are rendered for it.”

2139. Al-Hajjaj had married the daughter of `Abdullah ibn Ja`far ibn Abi Talib when `Abdullah had been reduced to poverty. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we related how this happened, and how Ibn al-Qirriyya congratulated al-Hajjaj on that marriage. `Abdullah ibn Ja`far was well known for his liberality. When his wealth diminished he was heard one day during Friday prayers to pray as follows: “O God, You have created in me a habit that I have followed, and I in turn have habituated Your worshippers to it. If You now withhold it from me, let me not live any longer.” He died that week, in the days of `Abd al-Malik, and Aban ibn `Uthman prayed over his body in Mecca, or in Medinah in some versions. That was the year of the destructive flash flood which reached all the way to the corner of the Ka`ba in which is placed the Black Stone, and in which many pilgrims drowned. In that year too, i.e. the year 80 [699-700], there occurred the plague which swept through Iraq, al-Sham, Egypt, al-Jazira and the Hijaz. `Abdullah ibn Ja`far was taken to God aged sixty-seven. He was born in Abyssinia when his father Ja`far emigrated there. It is also said that he was born in the year when the Prophet was taken to God, and other dates are also given.

2140. Al-Mubarrad, al-Mada`ini, al-`Utbi and other historians state that `Abdullah ibn Ja`far was criticized for his excessive liberality and answered: “God has made it His habit to bestow His favors upon me, and I in turn have accustomed Him to bestowing my favors upon His worshippers. I hate to abandon that habit for fear He might withhold that habit from me.”

2141. `Abdullah came once to see Mu`awiya in Damascus. When `Amr ibn al-`As heard this, and this was before `Abdullah’s arrival---he had heard this from one of his clients who was travelling with `Abdullah from Hijaz---he preceded him by two stages to Damascus, and entered into Mu`awiya’s presence. With Mu`awiya were a group of Quraish from the

Hashim and other clans, among them `Abdullah ibn al-Harith ibn `Abd al-Muttalib. `Amr said: "A man is about to arrive who often falsely pretends to be in religious retirement, and practices soothsaying instead of proper worship. In this he follows the example of his forefathers and pretends to be noble." `Abdullah ibn al-Harith was angry and said to `Amr: "You lie, and a habitual liar you are indeed! `Abdullah is unlike anything you describe. He is constantly mentioning God, is ever thankful even when God tests him, and ever averse to foul speech. He is a well-bred man, honorable, generous, a lord among men, and self-restrained. If he begins to speak he always hits the mark, and if questioned, will always answer. He is never at a loss for words, nor afraid, nor foul mouthed, nor one who curses. He is like a mighty lion, audacious and fearless, and like a sharp sword: a noble and generous lord. He is not like one [meaning `Amr] over whom the rabble of the Quraish quarreled, and who became known as an appendage of Quraish, becoming the vilest in lineage and the lowest in pedigree. He seeks refuge from Quraish with a lowly person and takes shelter in a mean habitation. I wonder, what pedigree do you think you are insulting? What noble lord are you disparaging? But you swagger in what is not your own strength, and speak with a tongue other than your own. It would have been more virtuous as a policy and manifestly more worthy if the son of Abu Sufyan [Mu`awiya] had stopped you from your tendency to insult the Quraish when in fact you are like a hyena in its den, showing no gratitude to its honorable pedigree nor are you the equal of its lineage. You have now met a vicious lion who devours heroes and seizes souls."

`Amr was about to speak but Mu`awiya stopped him. `Abdullah ibn al-Harith added: "A person will store good works for himself alone. By God, my tongue is very sharp, my response is ever ready, my judgment is sound and my supporters are witnesses of all this!" Mu`awiya then rose

and the assembly dispersed. Several delightful stories are told about the liberality, generosity and other virtues of `Abdullah ibn Ja`far which we have set forth in detail in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. Al-Hajjaj in fact married his daughter in order to humiliate the Abu Talib clan.

2142. Al-Hajjaj once wrote to `Abd al-Malik explaining the difficulties he was encountering while fighting the Kharijites, led by Qatari. `Abd al-Malik wrote back: "To proceed. I strongly recommend the use of the sword, and counsel you as al-Bakri counseled Zaid." Al-Hajjaj did not understand what was meant by that and announced that anyone who could explain what al-Bakri counseled Zaid would be rewarded with ten thousand dirhams. A man from Hijaz came to complain about a governor and was asked if he knew what al-Bakri had counseled Zaid. He answered: "Yes." He was told to go and tell al-Hajjaj, where a reward of ten thousand dirhams awaited him. When brought into his presence the man said: "He counseled him in the following verses:

I say to Zaid: 'Stop your prattling, for they regard death,

As the only obstacle to killing you or me.

If they stop the war, you too are to stop it,

But if they refuse, then light its fire with plenty of logs.

And if a devouring war bites with its fangs,

The edge of the sword will be directed at someone like you or me."

Al-Hajjaj said: "The Commander of the Believers has spoken the truth, as also al-Bakri."

2143. Al-Hajjaj then wrote to al-Muhallab: "The Commander of the Believers has counseled me as al-Bakri counseled Zaid, and I hereby give you the same advice, and add what al-Harith ibn Ka`b counseled his sons." Al-Muhallab investigated that particular testament and found it to be as follows: "My sons, be as one, and do not be scattered lest you

become divided, and despoil others before you are despoiled. A death in strength, honor and virtue is better than a life of humiliation and impotence.” Al-Muhallab said: “Al-Bakri and al-Harith have both spoken the truth.”

2144. `Abd al-Malik once wrote to al-Hajjaj: “Spare me the shedding of the blood of the Abu Talib clan for I see that the Almighty Ruler is aggrieved with the Harb clan [Umayyads] whenever they shed their blood.” So al-Hajjaj would avoid doing so, from fear that kingship would slip away from them but not from fear of the Almighty Creator.

2145. Laila al-Akhyaliyya once entered upon al-Hajjaj and said: “God guide the Emir, I have come because the stars have broken their promise*, the rain clouds are scarce, the cold has grown intense and life has become very hard.” “Tell me about the land,” he said. She replied: “The land is shivering with the cold, mountain roads are covered with dust, the miser has little to offer, the family man is in hiding, the wretched man is ill, and the people possess nothing and pray for God’s mercy.” “Which of my wives would you like to stay with?” “Name them for me.” Al-Hajjaj answered: “There is Hind bint al-Muhallab and Hind bint Asma’ ibn Kharija.” Laila chose the latter and went to stay with her. Hind was delighted that Laila had chosen her from all the others, and weighed her down with all the jewelry that she gifted her.

2146. Al-Minqari>al-`Utbi>his father, who said: “A cousin of al-Hajjaj, a nomad from the desert, came once to see him, and observed him as he governed the affairs of the people, so he said to him: ‘O Emir, why don’t you let me govern some quarter of this city?’ Al-Hajjaj replied: ‘These people know how to write and can do sums but you cannot do either.’ The nomad became angry and said: ‘Oh yes indeed! I am more adept at sums and better at writing with the hand than they!’ Al-Hajjaj said: ‘If you are what you claim to be, then let’s see you divide three dirhams

among four people.’ The nomad kept repeating: ‘Three dirhams among four...if each gets one...the fourth gets nothing...How many men did you say, O Emir?’ ‘They are four.’ Finally the nomad said: ‘I found the solution! Each gets a dirham and I will give the fourth a dirham from me.’ He then reached for the girdle of his trousers, took out a dirham and said: ‘Which one of you is the fourth man? I swear to God I never until today encountered a more fraudulent manner of doing sums than among these city men!’ Al-Hajjaj and those with him laughed till they could laugh no more, then added: ‘The people of Isbahan have failed to submit their land-tax for three years running. Every governor whom I send to them they manage to thwart. So I will hurl this man at them with his nomadic and self-important character, and it is more likely that he will deliver!’ He then wrote out the man’s letter of appointment as governor of Isbahan.

2147. When the man arrived in Isbahan, the people went out to greet him, thought he was a good omen, and began to kiss his hands and legs. They took him for a fool and thought: what can an Arabian nomad possibly do to us? As they grew more and more obsequious, he said: ‘Spare me your attentions and your kissing my limbs and stop this conduct towards me. Aren’t you worried as to why the Emir has appointed me?’ When he finally settled down in the governor’s mansion, he summoned the people of Isbahan and addressed them as follows: ‘Why do you defy your God and anger your Emir by withholding your taxes?’ Their spokesman answered: ‘It was the injustice and cruelty of the previous governor.’ He asked: ‘So what course of action do you consider to be in your best interests?’ They answered: ‘Postpone the tax collection for eight months and we will then collect it for you.’ He said: ‘Take ten months but get me ten guarantors who will guarantee this arrangement.’ They brought him ten guarantors. When he made sure the ten were in custody, he allowed

them the grace period they requested. But as the time drew near, and he saw them to be indifferent to the appointed moment, he would remind them of it but they took no notice. When this went on he summoned the guarantors and said: 'The monies'. They answered: 'We suffered from a pest which ravaged our crops and which voided our agreement.' When he heard this, he swore he would not break his fast---it was the month of Ramadan---until the monies were collected or else he would behead them. He then brought one of them forward, cut off his head and wrote on the severed head 'So-and-so has discharged his debt.' He placed the head in a skin and sealed it. Then he brought forward the second man, and did to him what he did to the first man. When the people saw these severed heads being placed in skins and consigned to sacks instead of skins, they said: 'O Emir, please stop while we get you the money.' He did so and they hastily brought him the money. When news of this incident reached al-Hajjaj he said: 'We, the clan of Muhammad---he was alluding to his grandfather---breed smart children. What do you think now of my perspicacity with regards to that nomad?' The man continued to govern Isbahan until the death of al-Hajjaj.

2148. Al-Hajjaj imprisoned Ibrahim al-Taymi in the city of Wasit. As Ibrahim entered the prison, he stood on an elevated place and called out as loudly as possible: "O you who suffer the calamity of God in good health and you who enjoy the good health of God in his calamity, be patient!" They all called back: "Here we are at your beck and call!" He was to die in the prison of al-Hajjaj. Al-Hajjaj had been pursuing Ibrahim al-Nakh`i, who managed to escape, but Ibrahim al-Taymi was caught. Al-A`mash said: "I asked Ibrahim al-Nakh`i where he was when al-Hajjaj was pursuing him and he replied: 'I was in a place described by the poet as follows:

The wolf howled and I felt at ease when I heard him,

But when I heard a human voice, my heart was ready to fly.

2149. Ahmad ibn Sa`id al-Dimashqi al-Umawi and others>al-Zubair ibn Bakkar>Muhammad ibn Sallam al-Jumahi>al-Fadl ibn al-Habbab, who said: “Al-Hajjaj asked ibn al-Qirriyya: ‘Which woman is the most praiseworthy?’ He answered: ‘She who carries a boy in her belly, cuddles a boy in her lap and has a boy running around with other boys.’ ‘Which woman is the worst?’ ‘She who does most harm, is always complaining, and objects to what you desire.’ ‘Which woman do you most fancy?’ ‘A woman white of skin, full in body, long necked, flirtatious, slow moving and neither too short nor too long.’ ‘Which woman do you fancy least?’ ‘Bad-tempered, short, scheming and evil.’ ‘Tell me about the best of women as commonly described and the most desirable in their extremities.’ ‘The best of women is one who has soft skin and flesh, who looks like a tree branch on top and a small sandy hill below, is dark-lipped and with invisible bones, who is not tall and bent nor short and squat, with large haunches, soft palms, whose fingers when you see them remind you of horns; who, when she stands, looks like the mast of a ship. Such a woman excites him who longs for her, and revives her lover by her embraces.’”

2150. Al-Mas`udi said: Interesting stories are told about al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik and the events and wars of his days, as also about al-Hajjaj. We recounted many of these stories in detail in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, and should add that what we related in this work was not included in the two previous works, just as what is included in *al-Awsat* is not found in *Akhbar al-Zaman*. Success is from God.

Mas`udi Vol 4

Chapter 97

An account of the days of Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik

2151. Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik received the oath of homage in Damascus the day al-Walid died. This was on Saturday, the middle of Jumada II, in the year 96 [February 25, 715]. Sulaiman died in Marj Dabiq, in the province of Qinnasrin, on Friday, ten days remaining from the month of Safar, in the year 99 [October 2, 717]. Thus his reign lasted two years, eight months and five nights. He died aged thirty-nine, having delegated succession to `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz. Another version holds that Sulaiman died on Friday, the tenth of Safar in the year 99, and that he reigned for two years, nine months and eighteen days. This is due to the discrepancies we found in books of history and biography. We will devote a separate chapter to the total days of the Umayyads later in this work. Sulaiman's age at death is also in dispute. Some mention that he died aged forty-five, others that he died aged fifty-three. Above, we preferred the version that he died aged thirty-nine, having found that most elders of the Marwanid clan among his children and grandchildren who live in Damascus and elsewhere hold that he died aged thirty-nine. But God knows best.

Highlights of his history and conduct

2152. When power passed to Sulaiman, he mounted the pulpit, thanked and praised God and called down blessings on his Prophet, then said: "God be thanked who does what He wishes, bestows what He wishes and withholds what He wishes, elevates whom He wishes and abases whom He wishes. O people, this world is the home of delusion, falsehood and adornment, and is ever changeable for its inhabitants. It causes those who weep to laugh, those who laugh to weep, those who feel secure to be

fearful, those who are fearful to feel secure. It enriches the poor and impoverishes the rich. O worshippers of God, take the Book of God as your highest example, accept it as judge, and adopt it as your guide and leader, for it cancels all previous scriptures and cannot be cancelled by whatever comes after it. Be confident, worshippers of God, that it casts out for you the machinations of Satan and his devious schemes, just like the light of the morning when it becomes visible and the vanishing of night after it had grown dark.”

2153. He then stepped down and permitted the public to enter into his presence. He confirmed the governors of the previous regime in their offices and confirmed Khalid ibn `Abdullah al-Qasri as governor of Mecca. Khalid had instituted a number of new customs in Mecca among which was to rearrange the ranks of those praying around the Ka`ba which had a different arrangement before. He had been told that a poet had recited:

What a joy to stand in the season of pilgrimage!

And what a joy it is to attend the Ka`ba!

How lovely are these women who jostle us,

When we come to touch the Black Stone!

Khalid said: “They will never jostle you again!” He then ordered men and women to be separated during circumambulation.

2154. Sulaiman was overly fond of food, and wore silken and embroidered garments. In his days, good quality embroidered cloth was manufactured in Yemen, Kufa and Alexandria. People as a whole then began to wear embroidered clothes as outer garments, robes, pants, turbans and headgear. No member of his family would ever come into his presence unless dressed in embroidered garments as also his intimates, officials and household. He was dressed like this while mounted or sitting on the pulpit, and none of his servants came to him except in embroidered

clothes, including his cook, who would come in with embroidery on his chest and wearing a tall and embroidered headgear. He also ordered that his shroud should be embroidered. His daily food intake came to one hundred Iraqi *ratl*. * It would sometimes happen that his cooks would bring him trays containing grilled chicken while he was wearing an embroidered outer garment heavily weighted with gold. So greedy was he and so eager to eat that he would insert his hand into his sleeve to grab the hot chicken and tear it to pieces.

2155. Al-Asma`i* said: "I once mentioned to [the caliph] al-Rashid how greedy Sulaiman was and how he used to insert his hand into his sleeve to grasp the chicken from the tray and he said: 'Damn you! How knowledgeable you are in their history! Let me tell you that the outer garments of the Umayyads were once spread out before me and I looked at Sulaiman's garments, and each garment had some stains in their sleeves, like grease. I had no idea what this meant until now when you told me this story.' He then ordered Sulaiman's robe to be brought out and when we examined it we saw these traces plainly on it, so he made me a present of one of these robes." Al-Asma`i would at times come dressed in it and say: "This is Sulaiman's robe, a gift from al-Rashid."

2156. It is mentioned that one day Sulaiman came out of the bath feeling very hungry and was in a hurry to begin eating. He had not finished eating when he ordered the grilled meat that was to follow to be served. Twenty sheep were served and he ate all their innards along with forty loaves. The regular meal was then brought in and he ate with his intimates as if he had eaten nothing beforehand. It is also mentioned that he used to keep baskets of sweetmeats around his bed so that when he woke up he would stretch his hand forth and find the basket from which he would eat.

2157. Al-Minqari>`Utbi>Ishaq ibn Ibrahim ibn al-Sabbah ibn Marwan, a client of the Umayyads, originally from al-Balqa' in the province of Damascus, and knowledgeable about Umayyad history, who said: "On a Friday during his reign Sulaiman wore a Tustari robe and perfumed himself. He then called for a chest containing turbans, and carried a mirror in his hand. He kept trying turbans on until he found one that he liked. He then let down its tassels, took up a rod, mounted the pulpit, examined his two sides, gathered his retinue and delivered the speech he had prepared. He grew vain and said: 'I am the youthful king, the lord who is obeyed, generous and bountiful.' A female slave whom he fancied appeared before him and he said to her: 'What do you think of the Commander of the Believers?' She replied: 'I see him as the object of the soul and a comfort to the eye, were it not for the verse of the poet.' 'And what did the poet say?' She replied:

*How excellent you are as a source of joy, if only you could last,
But there is no lasting life for a human being.*

*Nothing in you, God knows, causes us any unease,
Except that you are mortal.*

Sulaiman's eyes filled with tears and he appeared before the public weeping. When he finished his sermon and prayers, he called for that slave girl and asked: 'What made you say what you said to the Commander of the Believers?' She said: 'I swear to God, I never saw the Commander of the Believers today nor entered into his presence.' He was astonished and summoned the stewardess of his slaves who confirmed the girl's statement. Sulaiman was terrified and ceased to enjoy himself. He lasted only a short while afterwards before he died."

2158. Sulaiman used to say: "We have eaten the choicest of foods, worn the softest of garments, rode the most excellent of horses, and mounted

atop virgins, and the only pleasure remaining to me is a friend with whom I can converse without inhibition.”

2159. Yazid ibn Abi Muslim was led into his presence in iron chains. He had been the secretary of al-Hajjaj and a man who had great influence over him. When Sulaiman saw him, he despised him and said: “I never witnessed a day like this! God curse the man who lent you his reins of power and made you decide his affairs!” Yazid replied: “Please do not judge thus, O Commander of the Believers. You see me with all my power gone and with all power in your hands. Had you seen me in my days of glory you would have found imposing what you now belittle, and found worthy of admiration what you now despise.” Sulaiman said: “You are right, so sit down, motherless may you be!” When the assembly gathered, Sulaiman said to him: “I have decided that you should tell me your opinion of al-Hajjaj. Is he still plunging in the pit of hell or has he found his proper place in it?” He answered: “O Commander of the Believers, please do not say this about al-Hajjaj! He exerted himself to offer your dynasty his best counsel, and was ready to shed his blood in your defense. He provided security to your allies and terrified your enemies and on the Day of Resurrection he will be standing to the right of your father `Abd al-Malik and to the left of your brother al-Walid. So you can place him wherever you wish.” Sulaiman shouted: “Get out and may God curse you!” He then turned to those sitting near him and said: “Damn him, how well he has conducted himself and behaved towards his master! He has indeed shown true gratitude. Set him free.”

2160. One day, Abu Hazim al-A`raj* came to see him and Sulaiman asked him: “O Abu Hazim, why do we hate death?” He answered: “That is because you have made this life of yours prosperous and ruined your afterlife. So you hate to proceed from prosperity to ruin.” “So tell me, how does one go before God?” “For the virtuous person, it is like the

happy homecoming of an absent person. For the wicked, it is like a runaway slave returning in sorrow to his master.” “Which are the most virtuous acts?” “To perform religious duties and avoid sin.” “Which is the most just speech?” “A word of truth spoken to one whom you fear or hope for his favor.” “Who is the most rational of mankind?” He answered: “He who acts in obedience to God.” “Who is the most ignorant?” “He who sells his afterlife for the worldly gain of someone else.” Sulaiman said: “Admonish me, and be brief.” “O Commander of the Believers, exalt and magnify your Lord, and do not allow Him to see you doing something He forbade you to do, or not to see you doing what He ordered you to do.” Sulaiman wept bitterly. A person sitting next to Sulaiman said to Abu Hazim: “Woe to you! You have exceeded your bounds with the Commander of the Believers!” Abu Hazim replied: “Be silent! God the Almighty covenanted with scholars to explain His ways to people and not to hide them.” He then departed. When he reached his home Sulaiman sent him a sum of money which he refused to accept, telling the messenger: “Tell him this: O Commander of the Believers, I cannot accept this for you, so how can I accept it for myself?”

2161. Ishaq ibn Ibrahim al-Mawsili> al-Asma`i>an elder of the Muhallab family, who said: “A nomad once entered upon Sulaiman and said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, I would like to say some words to you, so make sure you understand me.’ Sulaiman said: ‘We are generous and very tolerant towards one whose counsel we do not seek and who we cannot be sure will not cheat us. We expect the counselor to be sincere of heart and trust him not to speak slander. So let us hear what you have to say.’ The nomad said: “If I can be sure you will not be angry with me, I shall let loose my tongue and speak of matters other tongues have kept silent about. This is in order to admonish you in performing what is owed to God and to your post as imam. O Commander of the Believers, you are

surrounded by people who have chosen badly for themselves by selling their religion in return for worldly gain and buying your approval by angering their Lord. They fear you instead of God but do not fear God instead of you. They wage war on the afterlife and live at peace with this life. Do not trust them in that which God has entrusted to you. They will not fail to betray trust and bring destruction and collapse upon the community. You are responsible for their crimes but they are not responsible for yours. Do not improve their life by corrupting your afterlife. The person most cheated is one who sells his afterlife for the life of someone else.” Sulaiman said: “O nomad, you have unsheathed your tongue upon us and it is more cutting than your sword.” He replied: “Yes indeed, O Commander of the Believers, but in order to defend you and not to attack you.” Sulaiman said: “I swear by your father, O nomad, the Arabs will continue to enjoy glory through our power, and the days of our state shall continue to bring about every sort of goodness. If others come to rule you, you will come to praise in us those qualities that you now disparage.” The nomad said: “Not if power passes to the progeny of al-`Abbas, uncle of the Prophet and his father’s brother, and heir to what God has made him worthy to inherit.” Sulaiman pretended not to have heard that last sentence and the nomad departed, and was heard of no more. This story was told to me by an elder of the Abbasid family in the City of Peace [Baghdad], the city of Abu Ja`far al-Mansur, in the year 300 [912-13]. His name was Ibn Diha al-Mansuri, who had it from `Ali ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad al-Nawfali, who had it from his father.

2162. Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufian was mentioned in the assembly of Sulaiman. He prayed for his soul and the soul of his ancestors and said: “By God, his jesting was in earnest, and his earnestness was wisdom. By God, there has never been anyone like him. His anger was self-restraint,

and his self-restraint was a policy.” It is said that these words were spoken by `Abd al-Malik.

2163. Sulaiman wrote to Khalid ibn `Abdullah al-Qasri, his governor of Hijaz, regarding a man from Quraish who had sought safe-conduct from Sulaiman after escaping from Khalid. Sulaiman ordered Khalid not to do him any harm. When the letter reached Khalid, he did not open it before he had the man whipped a hundred lashes. He then read the letter and said: “This is a punishment from God who intended revenge upon you for my failure to read the letter. Had I read it before, I would have carried out its instructions.” The Quraish man then left and returned to Sulaiman. Al-Farazdaq and others standing by the gate of Sulaiman asked the man what Khalid had done to him and he informed them. So al-Farazdaq recited the following verses:

Ask Khalid, and may God not bless Khalid:

When did Qasr [Khalid’s tribe] ever rule over Quraish or obtain its obedience?

Was this before the days of God’s Prophet or afterwards,

So that Quraish is now grown feeble when once it was mighty?

We had hoped Khalid would be rightly guided, but may God not guide him aright,

Nor is his mother one whose child can be expected to be rightly guided.*

When Sulaiman heard this he sent someone to whip Khalid a hundred lashes. Concerning this, al-Farazdaq recited:

Upon my life! Upon Khalid’s back was poured,

A torrent not of clouds or of rain.

Do you lash someone for rebelling when he’s not a rebel,

And disobey the Commander of the Believers, O man of Qasr?

*Were it not for Yazid ibn al-Muhallab,**

An eagle would have carried your hand away to its young in their nest.

*Upon my life, Ibn Shaiba carried out a punishment,
That revealed to you the stars of night running at noon.*

2164. One day, Sulaiman, proud of his royal authority, said to `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz: “What do you think of my present state of affairs?” “It is a state of joy were it not that it is a delusion; a state of loveliness were it not that it is nothing; of kingship were it not that it is perdition; of life were it not that it is death, and of paradise were it not that it is everlasting torment.” Sulaiman wept when he heard these words.

2165. Sulaiman was the opposite of al-Walid in his articulateness and eloquence. Al-Walid had damaged a piece of land belonging to `Abdullah ibn Yazid ibn Mu`awiya so his brother, Khalid ibn Yazid, complained to `Abd al-Malik who said to him: “{When kings enter a town, they corrupt it.} Khalid responded: “{If we wish to destroy a town we order those living in luxury to corrupt it, and our verdict comes to pass so that we destroy it utterly.}” `Abd al-Malik asked: “Are you talking about `Abdullah? Woe to you! He came to see me yesterday, mumbling his words and speaking inarticulately.” Khalid said: “So then you are relying on al-Walid for eloquence?” He answered: “Though al-Walid may speak incorrectly, yet Sulaiman is his brother.” Khalid responded: “And if `Abdullah speaks incorrectly, yet Khalid is his brother.” Al-Walid said: “Are you the one to talk when you are neither in the caravan nor in the war party?”* Khalid replied: “Haven’t you heard what the Commander of the Believers has said? By God I am in both the caravan and the war party! But had you spoken of small bunches of grapes and small sheep and al-Ta’if, and called down mercy on `Uthman’s soul, we would have said you were right.” He was alluding to the fact that the Prophet had exiled al-Hakam ibn Abi’l `As [ancestor of the Marwanid branch] to Ta’if, where he lived as a shepherd until `Uthman pardoned him and brought him back to Mecca.

2166. Sulaiman was angry with Khalid al-Qasri so when Khalid came to see him he said: “O Commander of the Believers, the power of revenge dispels anger and you are too exalted to punish. If you forgive me, you are worthy of doing so, and if you punish me I deserve it.” Sulaiman forgave him. A man in Sulaiman’s assembly once censured speech so Sulaiman said to him: “He who speaks well is capable of remaining silent and doing so fittingly, but not everyone who remains silent fittingly can speak well.”

2167. Sulaiman once stood over the grave of his son Ayyub, his own patronymic being “Abu Ayyub”, and said: “O God, I hope for Your grace upon him and fear for him from You, so fulfill my hope and still my fear.” Al-Mas`udi said: When Sulaiman was being buried, a secretary of his was heard to recite some verses which included:

*No man free from danger will ever be free for long,
No matter how many are his guards and troops.
And he who lives invincible within a mighty gate,
That gate will soon be abandoned by its guard.
Having once been secluded from people and isolated,
He becomes a hostage at a gate whose frames are not concealed.
Once he is buried, his guards and pageants pass to someone else.
Those who harbor him enmity will be pleased,
While those who love him and are near to him will give him up.
So strive to make your soul happy,
For each person is responsible for what he has earned.*

2168. Al-Mas`udi said: Charming stories are told about Sulaiman and the major events of his days, all of which we treated at length in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In this chapter we merely cited some highlights, seeking to be brief and concise. In God is success.

Chapter 98

An account of the caliphate* of `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Marwan ibn al-Hakam

2169. `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz assumed the caliphate on Friday, ten days remaining from the month of Safar in the year 99 [October 2, 717], the day Sulaiman died. He himself died in Dayr Sim`an, in the province of Homs, near the land of Qinnasrin, on Friday, five days remaining from the month of Rajab, in the year 101 [February 10, 720]. His caliphate thus lasted two years, five months and five days. He died aged thirty-nine and his tomb is well known and venerated in that vicinity until the present time, where it is visited by many city men and nomads and was not desecrated in the past as happened to the tombs of other Umayyads. His mother was Umm `Asim bint `Asim ibn `Umar ibn al-Khattab. It is also mentioned that he died aged forty or even forty-one. The duration of his caliphate is also a subject of dispute. We discuss what has been ascertained regarding this matter in an upcoming chapter of this work, devoted to the total number of years of Umayyad rule, God willing.

A brief account of his history, conduct and ascetic way of life

2170. The caliphate of `Umar did not issue from a previous delegation and the reason is that when death was about to overtake Sulaiman in Marj Dabiq, he summoned Raja' ibn Haywa, Muhammad ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, Makhul* and other scholars who were attached to his army while on a military expedition. He wrote out his will, made them witness it and said: "When I die, you are to call for congregational prayers then read this letter out to the people." When his burial was completed, congregational prayers were announced, the people congregated and the members of the Marwanid family were in attendance, ambitious and desirous to assume the caliphate. Al-Zuhri then rose and said: "If you agree to the person named in the will of the Commander of the Believers, I will read it out to you." They said: "Yes." Al-Zuhri read out the letter which named `Umar

ibn `Abd al-`Aziz as successor, to be followed by Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik. Makhul then rose and asked: "Where is `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz?" `Umar was sitting in the back rows of the people. When his name was announced he pronounced the formula "We belong to God and to God we shall return" two or three times. Then a group of people came to him, took him by the hand and upper arms, stood him up, and led him to the pulpit, which he ascended then sat on its second step, the pulpit having five steps. The first person to pay him homage was Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik. Sa`id and Hisham* then rose and left without paying homage but all the people did so, while these two paid him homage a couple of days later.

2172. When `Umar assumed the caliphate, Salim al-Suddi came to see him, Salim being an intimate of his. `Umar asked him: "Are you happy by my assuming the caliphate or are you not?" "I am happy for the sake of the people but unhappy for your sake." `Umar said: "I fear I have plunged my soul in evil." Salim said: "It is good that you should feel afraid. In fact, I had feared that you might not feel any fear." `Umar said: "Admonish me." He responded: "Our father Adam was driven out of paradise for committing one sin." Tawus* wrote to `Umar: "If you wish all your acts to be virtuous, employ people of virtue." `Umar said: "This suffices as admonishment."

2173. When `Umar assumed power, the first sermon he preached in public was as follows: "O people, we are descended from stems that have passed away and only branches remain, so how can a branch survive once the stem has gone? People in this world are accidentals, constantly subject to death, and in which they are like the spoils of calamities. Each gulp of water comes with a choking, each bite of food is accompanied by a retch. They never gain one blessing without losing another, and none of

you lives one day of his life without another day being subtracted from his lifespan.”

2174. `Umar wrote the following to his governor of Medinah: “Divide ten thousand dinars among the progeny of `Ali ibn Abi Talib.” The governor wrote back: “`Ali left behind a lot of progeny among several clans of Quraish, so which of his progeny do you mean?” `Umar wrote back: “If I had written to you about a sheep that you should slaughter, would you then write and ask me if it is a black or white sheep? When you receive this letter, divide that sum among the progeny of `Ali from Fatima, for you have for long failed to render to them what is theirs by right. Peace.”

2175. In one of his public appearances he delivered the following sermon, after having thanked and praised God: “O people, there is no book after the Qur’an and no prophet after Muhammad. I am not a judge but am myself subject to the law, and I am no innovator but one who follows the example of ancestors. A man who runs away from an unjust imam is not a rebel but rather it is the unjust imam who is the rebel. No obedience is due to a creature if he sins against the Creator.”

2176. `Umar once sent a delegation to the king of the Byzantines regarding a matter of interest to the Muslim community and an issue involving justice that he wanted to call the king’s attention to. When the delegation entered into the king’s presence, they found a translator with him. The king was seated upon his throne with the crown on his head and his military commanders ranged to left and right, and people lined up in ranks nearby. The delegation delivered their message and the king received them well and answered them in a most proper manner. The delegation then left. The following morning, the king’s messenger came to summon them. When they entered, they found he had descended from his throne and removed the crown from his head. His appearance had changed from what it was before, as if he had suffered some calamity. He

asked: “Do you know why I summoned you back?” They said “No.” He said: “The officer in charge of my armed frontier post nearest to the Arabs has just sent me a letter informing me that that virtuous man, the king of the Arabs, has died.” They could not hold back their tears. The king asked: “Are you crying for your sake, for the sake of your religion, or for his sake?” They replied: “For all three things.” The king said: “Do not weep for him but weep for yourselves as much as you want, for he has passed on to a place better than the one he left behind. He feared to abandon God’s obedience, so God would not have joined for him fear of this world and fear of the next. I had heard so many stories of his virtue, merit and truthfulness that, if anyone, after Jesus, could raise the dead, I imagined that he could. Reports of him would reach me of his actions both in secret and in the open, and I found his dealings with his Lord to be the same. Indeed, his secret acts in obedience to his Lord were more devout as he prayed in private to Him. What amazes me is not that a hermit would abandon the world and devote himself to the worship of His Lord on top of his cell. What truly amazes me is that a person who had the world at his feet would adopt an ascetic attitude to it so that he became like a hermit. In this world, the truly virtuous do not live long among the wicked.”

2177. `Umar wrote to Abu Hazim al-Madani al-A`raj: “Admonish me, and be brief.” He wrote back: “O Commander of the Believers, you must act as if you have not lived in this world and have always lived in the next. Peace.”

2178. To one of his officials he wrote: “Those who complain about you are many and those who are satisfied with you are few. So you either reform your ways or resign. Peace.”

2179. Al-Mada’ini stated: “Before he came to power, a garment worth a thousand dinars would be bought for him which, when he wore, he found

rough and unseemly. When he became a caliph, a shirt costing ten dirhams would be bought for him which, when he wore, he found soft.”

2180. One day he went out with a group of friends and passing by a cemetery he said to them: “Stay while I go to salute the graves of the beloved.” When in the middle of these graves he stopped, greeted them, said some words and went back to his friends. He asked them: “Will you not ask me what I said and what was said to me?” When they asked him that question he replied: “I passed by the graves of the beloved and greeted them but they did not respond. I called upon them but they did not answer my call. As I stood there, the soil itself called out to me: “O `Umar, do you recognize me? I am that which changed the beauty of their visage, tore off the shrouds from their skins, cut their hands and separated the fingers from their hands.” `Umar then wept until his soul was on the point of extinction. The narrator swears that a few days later, `Umar followed them into the grave.

2181. Al-Mada’ini reported: “Mutarrif wrote to `Umar: ‘To proceed. This world is one of punishment, for the sake of which those with no reason amass wealth, and those with no learning are deluded by it. So live in it like one who treats his wounds and be patient with the harsh medication for fear of the consequences of your sickness.’”

2182. A historian mentioned that when `Umar was in the bloom of youth, a black slave committed an offense against him, so `Umar threw him to the ground in order to beat him. The slave said: “Master, why are you beating me?” He answered: “Because you committed such and such an offense.” “Have you yourself committed an offense which angered your master?” `Umar said: “Yes.” “And were you speedily punished?” “No, by God.” The slave asked: “Then why are you quick to punish me when your master was not quick to punish you?” `Umar said: “Stand up, and I hereby free you for the sake of Almighty God.” This incident was the

cause of his repentance. In his prayers `Umar often used to repeat those words: “O Gentle One who is not quick to punish the disobedient!”

2183. A number of historians state that when `Umar assumed the caliphate, delegations of Arabs came to see him, including one from Hijaz. The delegation chose a youth from among them, and put him forward as the first to speak. When that youth, the youngest in age among them, began to speak `Umar said to him: “Take it easy, young fellow, and let an older person speak who is more fit to do so.” The youth replied: “Take it easy, O Commander of the Believers. A person is assessed by his two smallest body members: his tongue and his heart. If God grants a servant of His an eloquent tongue and a heart that can embrace knowledge, God has indeed granted him the best of qualities, O Commander of the Believers. If age is the issue, there are people in this community who are older than you.” `Umar said: “Speak, young man.” He replied: “Yes, O Commander of the Believers. We are here as a delegation that offers its congratulations and not one that consoles you. We have come from our country and offer thanks to God who graciously bestowed you upon us, and neither hope nor fear made us visit you. As regards hope, this came to our land from your side; as for fear, God has granted us security from your injustice through your justice.” `Umar said: “Admonish us, young man, and be brief.” He answered: “Yes, O Commander of the Believers. There are some people who are deluded by the fact that God has been patient with them, because of their excessive hopes and the praise they receive from people. Do not be deluded by God’s patience with you, by excessive hope or by the praise of people lest your foot should slip.” `Umar inquired about the age of that youth and found that he was in his early teens. So `Umar recited:

*Learn, for a person is not born learned,
Nor is a learned person the equal of one who is ignorant.*

*An old person who has no learning,
Will be a mere child if found in a public gathering.*

2184. A young man from Iraq came to Medinah seeking a slave girl who had been described to him as one who recited and sang very well. He asked around and found her to be in the household of the judge of the city. So he went to the judge and asked him if he could bring her out for him to see her. The judge, having heard the young man's excessive admiration for her, said: "Servant of God, you have come a long way in pursuit of this slave girl, so what exactly do you want from her?" The youth said: "She sings extremely well." The judge said: "I did not know this." The youth insisted that she be brought out, so she finally appeared with her master the judge present. The youth said: "Let's hear you." She sang:

*Towards Khalid [i.e. al-Qasri], until they halted near Khalid,
How wonderful that youth who is sought, and how much one can hope
from him!*

The judge was delighted by her and her singing, and he was so enthralled that he made her sit on his lap and said: "I beseech you, and may my father be your ransom, let us hear another verse!" So she sang:

*I go to hear popular preachers every evening,
Hoping for God's reward for the steps that carried me to them.*

The judge was even more entranced and became unaware of what he was doing. He took his sandal, hung it to his ear, knelt down on his knees, and kept pulling on his earlobe with the sandal hanging from it until he bloodied his ear, and saying: "Guide me to the Holy Sanctuary for I am a sacrificial animal!" When she stopped singing, he turned to the young man and said: "Dear boy, depart. We had been desirous of her before but now that we know that she sings so well, we are even more desirous of her." The young man departed. When `Umar heard this story he said:

“God damn him! Excess of delight has enslaved him!” So he ordered the judge dismissed from his post.

2185. When he was dismissed the judge said: “I will divorce all my wives if, when `Umar hears her singing, he will not say: ‘Ride me for I am a beast of burden!’” When `Umar heard this, he ordered both him and the slave girl summoned. When they entered into `Umar’s presence he said: “Repeat what you said.” He did so, and `Umar said to the girl: “Sing.” So she sang:

It was as if, between al-Hajun and al-Safa,

There never existed an amiable friend, and no one had ever spent the night in revelry in Mecca.

Yes, indeed, we were its inhabitants but we were devastated,

By the ever-changing nights and by misfortunes.

No sooner did she finish her song than `Umar was seen to be deeply agitated, and he made her repeat her singing three times, the tears pouring down his beard. He then turned to the judge and said: “The oath you took is not far from the truth. Resume your office and may God guide you.”

2186. Al-Tusi, al-Umawi al-Dimashqi and others >al-Zubair ibn

Bakkar>`Abdullah al-Muzani who said: “In Medinah there was a youth, an Umayyad from the progeny of `Uthman, a person of sophisticated manners, who frequented a slave woman belonging to a man from Quraish. The slave woman loved him without him knowing it and he loved her without her knowing it. That sort of love at that time was cause for neither suspicion nor scandal. One day, he wanted to test his love so asked a friend to accompany him on a visit to her. They set off and were joined by a group of Medinah notables from Quraish, the Ansar and others. None was as passionate in his love of her as that Umayyad youth. When the group settled down, the youth said to her: “Can you sing well the following verses:

I love you with a passion that consumes all my body and soul:

Have you any inkling as to what you mean to me?

Will you not return such ardent love?

It is an honorable person who returns love for love.

She replied: “Yes, and I sing well what are even better verses.” She then sang:

To him who returned our love, multiplied,

And the merit of him who started it cannot be rewarded:

If what we feel for you were to become apparent,

It would fill the earth, including both al-Sham and Hijaz.

The youth was amazed at her quick wit, charming response and excellent memory, so became even more enamored of her, and said:

A youth is justified if he tears away the curtain that hides you,

Even if he were as sinless as Joseph.”

2187. This story was relayed to `Umar, who bought the girl for ten orchards and gave her to the youth along with her upkeep. She lived with the youth for a year then died. He mourned her and died while mourning her so they were buried together. His verses of mourning included:

I had hoped to see eternal paradise,

And was made to enter it unprepared.

I was then driven out of it, having grown greedy for its blessings,

So death became the most praiseworthy condition.

Ash`ab al-Tami` al-Madani said: “This youth is the lord of all martyrs for love. Over his grave they slaughtered seventy camels.” Abu Hazim al-

A`raj al-Madani said: “If only love of God can reach such extreme levels!”

2188. Shawdhab the Kharijite had rebelled in the days of `Umar and his strength grew when joined by Kharijites from the tribe of Rabi`a and others. `Abbad ibn `Abbad al-Muhallabi > Muhammad ibn al-Zubair al-

Hanzali, who said: “Umar sent me to the rebels and sent with me `Awn ibn `Abdullah ibn `Utba ibn Mas`ud. Their rebellion was in al-Jazira. `Umar sent with us a letter to them. When we arrived, we delivered his letter and message to them, so they sent two men back with us, the first from the Shaiban tribe and the second, more severe in tongue and visage, was partly Abyssinian. We brought them to `Umar while he was at Khunasira, and climbed up to a room where we found him with his son `Abd al-Malik and his secretary Muzahim. We mentioned where he had left the two Kharijites and he said: ‘Search them to make sure they’re not carrying a dagger.’ We did so, and they came in to see him, greeted him with the greeting of peace, and sat down.”

2189. `Umar said to them: “Tell me the reason why you came out in rebellion and what is it you hold against us?” The man who was partly Abyssinian spoke up: “By God, we have nothing to complain about as regards your own conduct, for you run the affairs of state with justice and charity. But there is between you and us one matter which, if you grant, you and us will be of one party, but if you decline, then you and us have nothing in common.” `Umar said: “What is this matter?” He replied: “We see you have acted in a manner contrary to that of your royal family, calling their acts unjust, and adopted a policy different from theirs. If you claim that you are rightly guided and they are in error, then you must curse them and proclaim that you are quit of them. This is the issue that either joins us together or separates us.” `Umar said: “I know that you did not rebel for the sake of worldly gain but for the sake of the afterlife. But you have missed the path to that destination. I, in turn, will ask you a few questions, and hope by God you will answer me truthfully. Consider Abu Bakr and `Umar: were they not among those you consider to be your exemplary ancestors whose conduct you emulate and whom you attest to be among the saved?” They said: “Yes.” “Don’t you know that when the

Prophet was taken to God and the Arabs apostasized, Abu Bakr waged war against them, seized their wealth, shed their blood and enslaved their children?” “Yes,” they answered. “Don’t you know that when `Umar succeeded Abu Bakr he restored those enslaved to their owners?” “Yes,” they replied. “Did `Umar declare himself quit of Abu Bakr?” “No,” they replied. `Umar went on: “Consider the people of Nahrawan*: are they not among those you consider to be your exemplary ancestors, whose conduct you emulate and whom you attest to be among the saved?” “Yes,” they said. “Don’t you know that when they entered Kufa, they held back, did not shed any blood, did not frighten anyone living in safety and seized no wealth?” They said: “Yes.” “Don’t you know that when al-Shaibani, `Abdullah ibn Wahb al-Rasibi and his companions attacked Basra, they killed people indiscriminately? Did they not encounter `Abdullah ibn Khabbab ibn al-Aratt, a Companion of the Prophet, and kill him along with his slave woman? Did they not raid an Arab clan at dawn and killed men, women and children indiscriminately to the point where they threw children into boiling cauldrons of milk?” “Yes, this did happen,” they answered. “Did those who raided Kufa pronounce themselves quit of those who raided Basra, or vice versa?” “No,” they replied. “Do you yourselves declare yourselves quit of either group?” “No,” they replied. “Do you consider religion to be one thing or two?” “One thing,” they replied. “Does religion allow you to do something which it forbids me to do?” “No,” they replied. “So why is it permissible for you to follow the example of Abu Bakr and `Umar, the one having followed the example of the other, and why is it permissible for you to follow the example of the Basrans and Kufans, each group following the example of the other, when these people acted in a radically different fashion regarding the most momentous issues such as shedding blood, rape and seizure of wealth? And, why on the other hand, am I myself not

granted any option, as you claim, except to curse the members of my family and declare myself quit of them? Do you consider the cursing of sinners to be an obligatory and indispensable religious obligation? If so, tell me, you who are so eloquent, when was the last time you cursed Pharaoh?" "I cannot remember," he replied. "Woe to you! You permit yourself not to curse Pharaoh, the most wicked of mankind, yet I have no choice, as you claim, but to curse my family and be quit of them! Woe to you! You are an ignorant people who aimed for some end but missed it! You reject from people what the Prophet accepted from them; you provide safety to those who would have lived in fear in his days while some who live in fear of you would have lived in safety with him?" "We are not like that," they answered. "Oh yes, and you will be forced to admit it. Don't you know that the Prophet was sent to a people who were idol worshippers, and that he called on them to abandon idol worship and to testify that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His Prophet? Did he not say that whoever did so would save himself from slaughter, protect his property, obligate reverence to him and be the equal of other Muslims?" "Yes," they replied. "Is it not a fact that you encounter people who reject idol worship, testify that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is his Prophet, and then you consider it licit to shed their blood and seize their property? Then you encounter people who do not practice any of this, like Jews and Christians and other religious communities, and they feel safe with you and you declare it illicit to shed their blood?" The Abyssinian said: "Never until today have I heard a more convincing argument and easier to grasp than yours. I declare that you are right and am quit of those who declare themselves quit of you." `Umar then turned to the Shaibani and asked: "What do you say?" He replied: "You have spoken very well and explained matters with clarity, but I cannot speak for other Muslims until I set out your view to

them and hear their counter arguments.” `Umar said: “You know best.” The Shaibani then left while the Abyssinian stayed behind with `Umar, who ordered that his military salary be paid to him. He remained behind with `Umar for fifteen days then died. The Shaibani rejoined his companions and was killed with them after the death of `Umar.

2190. Many stories are narrated and also a lot of correspondence and debates exist concerning `Umar and the Kharijites. In our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, we mentioned these accounts and also the men whom the Kharijites called Commander of the Believers and addressed them as imams. These Kharijite groups include the Azariqa, Humriyya, Ibadiyya, Hamziyya, Khalafiyya, Sufriyya, Najdat and other sects of the Haruriyya. We also mentioned where at this point in time they may be found, for instance those among them who settled in the regions of Shahrazur, Sijistan and Istakhr in the land of Faris, and in Kirman, Adharbaijan, Makran, the mountains of Oman, Harat in Khurasan, al-Jazira, Lower Tahirt and other regions of the earth. In our work entitled *Kitab al-Intisar*, we refuted their views regarding the issue of arbitration and other topics. This work is devoted to the various sects of the Kharijites, as is also our other work, entitled *Kitab al-Istibsar*.

2191. We also mentioned some of their poets among their early leaders. For example, the following are verses composed by Masqala ibn `Itban al-Shaibani, who was a prominent Kharijite:

Convey this message to the Commander of the Believers,

And a counselor who does not fear you is sincere:

If you do not satisfy the tribe of Bakr ibn Wa'il,

A grievous day will await you in Iraq.

If Marwan and his son were of your party,

As also `Amr, Hashim and Habib,

Of our party are Suwaid, al-Batin and Qa'nab

And Shabib, the Commander of the Believers.

Ghazala, too, who made a vow, is praised by us:

She who had a share in the spoils of Muslims.

There can be no truce between us so long as our land's pulpits,

*Are occupied by orators from the Thaqif tribe.**

We also cited the history of Umm Shabib and how proficient she was in the legal theory of the Arbitration. Concerning her, a poet composed the following verse:

Umm Shabib begat Shabib:

Does the she-wolf give birth to anything but a wolf?

2192. We also recounted the history of Kharijite scholars such as al-Yaman, author of several works on their sects, `Abdullah ibn Yazid al-Ibadi, Abu Malik al-Hadrami, Qa`nab and other scholars of their sect. Al-Yaman ibn Ri`ab was a prominent Kharijite scholar while his brother, `Ali ibn Ri`ab, was a scholar of the Rafida*. Both were highly esteemed by their followers. Every year they would meet for three days of debates, then go their separate ways, neither greeting the other nor speaking to him. Similarly, Ja`far ibn al-Mubashshir was a skillful Mu`tazilite polemicist and ascetic whereas his brother Hanash ibn al-Mubashshir was a Hadith scholar and a prominent leader of the Hashwiyya*, and held exactly opposite views to those of his brother. Debates between them, mutual hostility and difference went on for a long time and each vowed not to speak to the other until the day they joined their Creator. Ja`far ibn al-Mubashshir and Ja`far ibn Harb are Mu`tazilite scholars of Baghdad.

2193. `Abdullah ibn Yazid al-Ibadi was once in Kufa where his followers gathered around him to be taught by him. He was a business partner of Hisham ibn al-Hakam*. Hisham was known for his anthropomorphic views and his advocacy of the theory of the imamate according to the Qat`iyya doctrine*. His followers too would frequent his company and be

taught by him. Both men were to be found sharing one shop, despite their contradictory views, the one a Kharijite, the other a Shi`ite. They never exchanged insults nor ever abandoned the dictates of reason, religious law, and the requirements of rational investigation and logical procedure. It is said that one day `Abdullah ibn Yazid al-Ibadi said to Hisham ibn al-Hakam: “You know the affection between us and how long our business partnership has lasted, so I would like you to give me your daughter Fatima in marriage.” Hisham responded: “She is a believer.” `Abdullah fell silent and never raised the subject again until death separated them. Hisham’s encounters with al-Rashid and Yahya ibn Barmak have been recounted in our earlier works.

2194. `Amr ibn `Ubaid* is quoted as having said: “`Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz assumed the caliphate unjustly and without deserving it, but then he deserved it through his just conduct when he did assume it.”

2195. When `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz died, al-Farazdaq recited the following verses as his eulogy:

*When those who brought me the sad news of `Umar’s death, I said:
You have brought the sad news of the death of a pillar of truth and
religion.*

Those who buried him today have buried,

At Dair Sim`an, the beam of all balances.

Throughout his life he was never diverted by some well to dig,

Nor by palm trees or by horse racing. [perceived Umayyad sins]

`Umar has sermons and praiseworthy stories other than those mentioned above as regards his ascetic life, all of which we recounted in our earlier works. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds!

Chapter 99

An account of the days of Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan

2196. Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik assumed kingship the day `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz died, that day being Friday, five days remaining from the month of Rajab in the year 101 [February 10, 720]. His patronymic was “Abu Khalid”. His mother was `Atika bint Yazid ibn Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufian. Yazid died in Irbid, in the land of al-Balqa’, in the province of Damascus, on Friday, five days remaining from the month of Sha`ban in the year 105 [January 27, 724], aged thirty-seven. So his rule lasted four years, one month and two days.

A brief account of his history and conduct and highlights of the events of his days

2197. Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik was totally dominated by the love of a slave girl called Sallama al-Qass. She had belonged to Suhail ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf al-Zuhri, and Yazid bought her from him for three thousand dinars. He fell in love with her and she came to dominate him. Regarding her, `Ubaidullah ibn Qais al-Ruqayyat recited:

Rayya and Sallama have bewitched the Qass [priest]

Leaving him without reason or spirit.

Umm Sa`id al-`Uthmaniyya, Yazid’s grandmother, contrived to buy a slave girl for him called Habbaba, who had once held some attraction for Yazid. Habbaba came to dominate him, so he renounced Sallama and gave her to Umm Sa`id.

2198. Maslama ibn `Abd al-Malik upbraided Yazid when injustice became widespread as he closeted himself and indulged in drinking and pleasures, saying to him: “It was only a little while ago that `Umar died and his justice was, as you know, renowned. You must spread justice among the people and stop your pursuit of pleasure since all your governors and officials have followed your example and conduct. Stop what you are doing.” Yazid pretended that he had ceased from his pleasures and feigned repentance, doing so for a short while. Habbaba

found this hard to bear, so sent word to al-Ahwas the poet, and Ma`bad the singer, asking them to do what is required.

2199. Al-Ahwas then composed an ode of which the following are some of verses:

Please do not blame him today if he is perplexed:

The sorrowful man is unable to bear his grief with patience.

If you have become indifferent to pleasures and dalliance,

Then turn into a boulder of hardest rock.

Life is nothing but delights and desires,

Even when this is censured and condemned by one who harbors malice.

Ma`bad then sang these verses and Habbaba learned them from him.

When Yazid went in to see her, she said: “O Commander of the Believers, just hear one single melody from me then you can do what you want.” She sang these verses and when she finished he kept repeating:

Life is nothing but delights and desires,

Even when this is censured and condemned by one who harbors malice.

He then resumed his life of pleasure and drinking and abandoned his earlier resolve.

2200. Ishaq ibn Ibrahim al-Mawsili>Ibn Sallam, who said: “Yazid once quoted the verses of the poet:

We forgave the tribe of Dhuhl,

And said: They are our brothers.

May the days to come restore these people

To what they had been before.

But when evil became clear,

And at night had become a naked reality,

We marched against them like a lion,

That prowls forth in anger.

We dealt blows that immobilize, that throw to the ground and pierce.

*We stabbed, causing wounds resembling the mouths of leather bags,
The bag itself being full.*

In evil one finds salvation,

When charity does not bring you deliverance.

This is an ancient ode said to have been recited in the War of Basus* by al-Find al-Zimani. So Yazid said to Habbaba: “By my life, sing it to me.” She replied: “O Commander of the Believers, I know no one who can sing this poem except al-Ahwal al-Makki.” He said: “Yes, I had heard Ibn `A`isha working on it then abandoning it.” She said: “He merely took it from So-and-So ibn Abi Lahab, who was a good singer.”

2201. Yazid sent a message to the governor of Mecca: “When you receive my letter, give So-and-So ibn Abi Lahab a thousand dinars as travel expenses and let him mount on a horse of his choosing in the postal service.” The governor complied, and when the man entered into Yazid’s presence he said to him: “Sing to me the poem of al-Find.” He did so very well and Yazid asked him to repeat it. He did so, equally well, and Yazid was overcome with merriment. He then asked him: “From whom did you learn that song?” He replied: “O Commander of the Believers, I learnt it from my father who learnt it from his father.” Yazid said: “If you had inherited only that song, Abu Lahab* would have bequeathed you much good.” The man replied: “O Commander of the Believers, Abu Lahab died as an unbeliever, having done much harm to the Prophet of God.” Yazid said: “I know, but I feel a certain tenderness towards him since he was a good singer.” So Yazid richly rewarded him, gave him fine garments and sent him back to Mecca covered with honors.

2202. The covenant of `Umar to Yazid included the following words: “If you become powerful through your royal dignity, remember the power of God over you.” It is also said that these words were written by `Umar to one of his governors. They include, according to al-Zubair ibn Bakkar,

the following addition: “If your power enables you to act unjustly towards God’s worshippers, remember God’s power over you when you deal with them. Remember that anything you do to them will not abide with them but with you; remember too that God takes revenge on the unjust on behalf of the unjustly treated. Whomever you treat unjustly, do not mistreat a person who has none to aid him against you except God.”

2203. Habbaba fell ill and Yazid remained for some days totally secluded from people. She then died and he was so stricken with grief that he refused to bury her until her body began to stink. He was told: “People are talking about your excessive grief and the caliphate is too dignified a station to permit this sort of behavior.” So he ordered her to be buried, stood at her grave and recited:

Though the soul may be diverted from remembering you, or forsakes your love,

Yet it was through despair that it was diverted, not through bearing with patience.

He lived a few more days after her death and then died.

2204. Abu `Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ibrahim >his father>Ishaq al-Mawsili>Abu’l Huwayrith al-Thaqafi, who said: “When Habbaba died, Yazid was devastated with grief and attached to himself a young servant girl who used to attend her, and she came to serve him. One day the girl quoted the following verse:

Sorrow enough it is for a passionate lover,

To see the habitations of his beloved abandoned and in ruin.

Hearing this, Yazid wept until he almost died. That servant girl continued to serve him and to remind him of Habbaba until he died.

2205. One day, Yazid sat in his assembly while Habbaba and Sallama sang to him. He was so enchanted that he said: “I want to fly!” Habbaba said: “Master, in whose charge will you leave the community and leave

us?” Whenever Abu Hamza the Kharijite used to speak disparagingly of the Marwanid dynasty, he would mention Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik and say: “He would seat Habbaba to his right and Sallama to his left and say ‘I want to fly!’ Go fly to God’s damnation and His painful punishment!”

2206. Al-Mas`udi said: Yazid ibn al-Muhallab ibn Abi Sufra had escaped from the prison of `Umar ibn `Abd al-Aziz when the latter fell ill in the year 101. He then headed to Basra where `Adiyy ibn Artat al-Fazari was governor. Yazid captured `Adiyy, put him in chains, then moved on to Kufa, rebelling against Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik. The Azd tribe and their allies joined his rebellion, as did his own family and followers, until his movement grew greatly in strength. Yazid sent against him his brother Maslama ibn `Abd al-Malik and his nephew al-`Abbas ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik at the head of a great army. When that army drew near, Yazid ibn al-Muhallab noticed that his troops became agitated and inquired as to the cause of it. He was told: “Maslama and al-`Abbas are here.” He said: “I swear to God, Maslama is simply a yellow locust* and al-`Abbas is merely Nastos son of Nastos*. The people of al-Sham are just a mean and stupid people, all lumped together and consisting of peasants, sowers, dyers and riffraff. Lend me the palms of your hands for one hour to strike their tusks, and it will be just a morning and evening battle until God judges between us and these tyrants. Bring me my horse!” A piebald horse was brought forward and he mounted upon it without his armor. The two armies then met and fought very hard. Yazid’s followers abandoned him and he was killed in battle. His brothers stood fast and were all killed. A poet composed the following verses about him:

All the tribes answered your call and obeyed you as they marched forward,

Until battle was joined when you made them targets of spears,

So they abandoned you and fled.

Their killing of you was no shame to you,

Though some killing is indeed a shame.

2207. When news of the victory reached Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik, he saw it as a good omen and ordered all poets to compose verses censuring the Muhallab family. They all did so except for Kuthayyir, who refused to follow suit. Yazid said to him: “O Abu Sakhr, your ties of kinship have biased you for they are Yemenites!” Concerning this incident, Jarir composed the following verses praising Yazid and defaming the Muhallabs:

Many there are who are envious of you,

But cannot be a substitute for you nor succeed you.

May God cut off the last of them!

They are now ashes, without stem or branch.

The Azd tribe gained nothing from that deceiver who called upon them,

Except severed wrists and necks.

The Azd made al-Mantuf [the man with torn hair] their commander,

And the troops of God killed them and they were torn to pieces.

These verses come from a long poem.

2208. Jarir also addressed Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik in the following verses:

When the Muhallabs disbelieved, you, and may we never lose you,

Left them no bones in their bodies that could be mended.

O Ibn al-Muhallab, people now realize,

That the caliphate belongs to the noble and the courageous.

2209. Yazid then sent Hilal ibn Ahwaz al-Mazini in pursuit of the Muhallab family and ordered Hilal to put to the sword every male member of that family who had reached the age of puberty. Hilal pursued them all the way to Qandabil, in Sind, where he was brought two young

Muhallab boys. To one Hilal said: “Have you reached puberty?” The boy said “Yes,” and stretched forth his neck. The other boy, in pity for the first and in order not to show fear, bit his lip, so his neck too was struck off. Hilal then killed so many of the Muhallab family that he almost exterminated them. It is said that the Muhallabs remained for twenty years after their massacre by Hilal producing only male children, none of whom died in infancy. In praise of Hilal and his actions, Jarir recited:

I say to that night whose length is not like that of other nights:

If only your dawn would shine forth!

I fear for the person of Hilal ibn Ahwaz,

For he has banished all cares from our hearts, and brought us light.

In revenge for the tombs of heroes like Khiyar, Malik and `Adiyy:

You entombed, for every one of their tombs, many tombs.

You left them no pennant that they might recognize,

And left the Muhallabs without any troops.

These verses come from a longer poem.

2210. Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik had appointed `Umar ibn Hubaira al-Fazari as governor of Iraq, and added Khurasan to his jurisdiction.

`Umar's power was now entrenched in these provinces. `Umar then summoned al-Hasan ibn Abi'l Hasan al-Basri*, `Amir ibn Shurahbil al-Sha`bi and Muhammad ibn Sirin. This was in the year 103 [721-2]. He said to them: “Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik is the caliph of God whom God deputized to rule over His worshippers and to obtain their oath to obey him as also our covenant to hear and submit to him. Yazid has placed me in charge of what you see, and writes to me ordering what he wishes, and I carry this out. I assume, as you can see, any responsibility that he entrusts to me.” Ibn Sirin and al-Sha`bi spoke some words that could be interpreted as pious dissimulation. `Umar turned to al-Hasan: “What have to say, Hasan?” Al-Hasan replied: “O Ibn Hubaira, fear God with regards

to Yazid but do not fear Yazid in anything concerning God. God can protect you from Yazid but Yazid cannot protect you from God. He may soon send you an angel who will strip you from your seat of power and remove you from the spacious palace to the narrow confines of your grave, where nothing but your good works will save you. O Ibn Hubaira, I warn you not to disobey God, since God has given you this power in order to support the religion of God and His worshippers. So do not ride roughshod over the religion of God and His worshippers by means of a God-given power, since no obedience is owed to any creature who disobeys the Creator.” Regarding that incident, it is said that Ibn Hubaira rewarded them all but doubled the reward of al-Hasan, and Sha`bi commented: “We did things by half where he was concerned and he responded in kind.”

2211. It is stated that Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik heard that his brother Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik was finding fault with him, hoping for him to die and censuring him for his consorting with singing girls, so Yazid wrote to him: “To proceed. I have heard that you find it hard to bear my life and find my death too slow in arriving. I assure you that after I am gone your wings will be weak and your hand will turn leprous. I did not expect you to say what I have heard.” Hisham responded: “To proceed. Once the Commander of the Believers gives ear to gossip mongers and enemies of our good fortune, this would lead to a deterioration of our relations and the severance of our ties of kinship. The Commander of the Believers, with his grace and the authority that God has made him fit to assume, is more worthy to forgive the sins of sinners. As for me, God forbid that I should find your life hard to bear or find your death too slow in arriving.”

2212. Yazid wrote back: “We shall forgive what you said and disbelieve what we heard about you. So uphold the testament of `Abd al-Malik to us

and his injunction to us not to indulge in enmities or let one another down, as also his commands to us and his urging us to mend all quarrels and be united. This is better and more fitting for you. I write to you knowing that you are as described in that verse:

*Though there are certain matters of old that make me suspect you,
Yet I am a forgiving and moderate man.*

If you cut me off, you will cut off your own right hand,

So consider with what hand you will replace it.

If you are dishonest in dealing with your brother,

You will find him, if he is rational, about to abandon you.

When this letter reached Hisham, he left his normal place of residence and went to live with Yazid, fearing the wicked and the slanderers, until Yazid died.

2213. Among personalities who died in the days of Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik was `Ata' ibn Yasar, client of Maimuna, wife of the Prophet. His patronymic was "Abu Muhammad". He died in the year 103 [721-2], aged eighty-four. In that same year Mujahid ibn Jabir, client of Qais ibn al-Sa'ib al-Makhzumi, died. His patronymic was "Abu'l Hajjaj". He was eighty-four years old. Others who died in that period include Jabir ibn Zaid, client of the Azd and a Basran, his patronymic being "Abu'l Sha`tha"; Yazid ibn al-Asamm, from Raqqa, who was the nephew of Maimuna, wife of the Prophet; Yahya ibn Waththab al-Asadi, client of the Kahil clan and a Kufan, and Abu Burda ibn Abi Musa al-Ash`ari, a Kufan, whose name was `Amir.

2214. In the year 104 [722-3], Wahb ibn Munabbih died, though he is also said to have died in the year 116 [734]. In the year 104, Tawus, whose full name is said to have been Tawus ibn Kaisan, died. His patronymic was "Abu `Abd al-Rahman." He was the client of Buhair al-Himyari. It is also said that he died in Mecca in the year 106 [724-5] and

Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik prayed over his body. In the year 107 [725-6], Sulaiman ibn Yasar, client of Maimuna, wife of the Prophet, died. He was the brother of `Ata' ibn Yasar, client of Maimuna. His patronymic was "Abu Ayyub" and he died in Medina aged seventy-three, though his death date is also given as 108 [726-7]. In the year 108, al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr al-Siddiq died. In the year 110 [728-9], al-Hasan ibn Abi'l Hasan al-Basri died, his patronymic being "Abu Sa'id". His father's name was Yasar who was a client of a woman of the Ansar. He died aged eighty-nine, or ninety in another version. He was older than Muhammad ibn Sirin who died one hundred nights after him in that same year, aged eighty-one or else eighty in another version. The sons of Sirin were five in number: Muhammad, Sa'id, Yahya, Khalid and Anas. Sirin was the client of Anas ibn Malik. All five brothers transmitted prophetic reports which, in turn, were transmitted on their authority.

2215. I have found that historians disagree regarding the death date of Wahb ibn Munabbih, whose patronymic was "Abu `Abdullah." Some cite his death date as mentioned above while others say he died in the year 116 in San`a, aged ninety. He was of mixed Arab-Persian parentage.

2216. In the year 115 [733], al-Hakam ibn `Utaiba al-Kindi died. It is said that in the same year there occurred the death of `Ata' ibn Abi Rabah. In the year 123 [740-41], Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Muslim ibn `Ubaidullah ibn `Abdullah ibn Shihab al-Zuhri died. Al-Waqidi states that he died in 124.

2217. Interesting stories are related about Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik and the major events of his days. We set forth all this in detail in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. We cited the deaths of the above named scholars, historians and transmitters of prophetic reports in order to increase the value of this present work, so that its profit can be widespread. For people have diverse purposes and different motives in

their acquisition of knowledge. Some seek to find out a particular story or to emulate a particular pious practice; others are men of research and rational investigation; still others are Hadith experts who study reasons for authentication and are concerned to know the death dates of the sort of people we mentioned above. Hence, we wanted each scholar to have a share in the present work's benefits. In God is success.

Chapter 100

An account of the days of Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan

2218. Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik received homage the day his brother Yazid died which was on Friday, five days remaining from the month of Sha`ban, in the year 105. Yazid had died aged thirty-eight, or forty in another version. Hisham died in al-Rusafa, in the land of Qinnasrin, on Wednesday the sixth of Rabi` II, in the year 125 [February 6,743], aged fifty-three. His reign lasted nineteen years, seven months and eleven nights.

A brief account of his history and conduct

2219. Hisham was cross-eyed, rude in manners, coarse, and churlish. He accumulated wealth, built agricultural schemes and was very fond of horses. The horse races he organized included some four thousand horses, his own and those of others, a thing unprecedented in either the Jahiliyya or in Islam. Poets have cited in their verses the horses he came to own. He also had a taste for clothes and furniture and for military equipment. He recruited men into his armies, fortified border posts and built water canals and pools on the road to Mecca and other monuments which Dawud ibn `Ali later destroyed in the early Abbasid period. In his days, striped silk was woven, and also silken outer garments. People as a whole then followed his example and hoarded their wealth, so acts of generosity and assistance to the poor decreased or stopped, and no days witnessed as much hardship as his days.

2220. In his days, and in the year 121[738-9], or 122 [739-40] in another account, there occurred the martyrdom of Zaid ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib. Zaid had consulted his brother Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain who advised him not to rely on the people of Kufa, being a treacherous and cunning lot. He said to Zaid: "In Kufa your grandfather `Ali was killed. In it your uncle al-Hasan was poisoned. In it your father al-Husain was killed and in this town and its environs we, members of the House of the Prophet, were openly cursed." He then informed him from his own stock of secret knowledge of the length of time remaining to the Marwanid dynasty and of the Abbasid state that would succeed them. Zaid however refused to give up his resolution to rise in rebellion and call for justice, so Abu Ja`far said to him: "Brother, I fear that you will soon be crucified at the Kunasa of Kufa." Abu Ja`far then bid him farewell and informed him that they will never meet again.

2221. Zaid had previously gone to see Hisham in al-Rusafa. When he entered into his presence he found no place for him to sit, so sat where he had reached in the assembly and said: "O Commander of the Believers, no one is too grand to dispense with the fear of God nor too humble not to fear God." Hisham replied: "Be silent, motherless may you be! Do you aspire to assume the caliphate when you are the son of a slave woman?" Zaid answered: "Commander of the Believers, there is an answer I can give you if you like, but if you wish I can remain silent and not answer you." Hisham said: "Go ahead and answer." Zaid said: "Mothers do not prevent their sons from attaining their ends. The mother of Isma`il was the slave of the mother of Ishaq, but this did not prevent him from being sent by God as a prophet or from making him the ancestor of the Arabs. From his loins he brought forth the best of mankind, Muhammad. You say this to me when my mother was Fatima and my father `Ali?" Zaid then rose reciting:

*Fear drove him into exile and brought him shame,
This is the case of one who hates the searing heat of the blows of swords.
His sandals are tattered, and he suffers from being bare-footed,
His feet gashed by sharp pointed stones.
Death would have been a relief to him,
And death is inevitable for all mankind.
If God were to change his fortune,
He would leave his enemy's traces like dust.*

2222. Zaid then headed to Kufa from where he rebelled, joined by Qur'an readers and aristocrats. Yusuf ibn `Umar al-Thaqafi marched against him but when battle was joined, Zaid's followers deserted him. A small band remained with him and he fought very hard, quoting the verses:

*A life of disgrace or glory in death:
Both, I see, have a bitter taste.
If only one has to be chosen,
Then march on to death, my soul, as is fitting.*

Night came to separate the combatants. Zaid retired, heavily wounded, an arrow having lodged itself in his forehead. They called for someone to remove the arrowhead and a village blood-letter was brought who was sworn to secrecy. When he pulled the arrowhead out, Zaid died instantly. They buried him in a water canal, heaped soil and grass on his grave and allowed the water to flow over it. The blood-letter had attended his burial and ascertained the exact spot. In the morning, he went to see Yusuf ibn `Umar, affecting sincerity, and revealed to him the site of Zaid's grave. Yusuf pulled out the body and sent the severed head to Hisham, who wrote ordering him to crucify the naked body, and this was done by Yusuf. Regarding this incident, a poet close to the Umayyads recited the following verses from a longer poem, addressing the Abu Talib family and their Shi'ites:

*We crucified Zaid for you on the stem of a palm tree,
And never have I seen a Messiah crucified on a palm stem.*

Yusuf then set up a wooden column below the stem. Hisham later ordered Yusuf to burn the body and strew its ashes to the winds.

2223. Al-Mas`udi said: Al-Haytham ibn `Adiyy al-Ta`i>`Umar ibn Hani` al-Ta`i, who said: “I went out with `Abdullah ibn `Ali* to dig up the graves of the Umayyads. This was in the days of Abu`l `Abbas al-Saffah. We reached the grave of Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik, pulled out the body and found it in good condition except the tip of his nose which had fallen off. `Abdullah lashed the body eighty times then burned it. We then pulled out the body of Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik in the region of Dabiq but found nothing but his torso, ribs and skull, all of which we burned. We did the same to the other Umayyads. Their graves were in Qinnasrin. We then reached Damascus, dug up the grave of al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik, but found neither much nor little of him. When we dug up the grave of `Abd al-Malik we found only the edges of his skull. We then dug up the grave of Yazid ibn Mu`awiya but found only one bone remaining and discovered a black line, as though of ashes, all along the length of his grave. We then pursued their graves in all regions and burned what we found of their remains.” We mention this report here because of what Hisham had done to Zaid ibn `Ali and the mutilation of Hisham’s body as revenge for his burning of Zaid’s body.

2224. Abu Bakr ibn `Ayyash and other historians state that Zaid’s body remained naked and crucified for five years but his private parts were invisible because God honored him by covering them. This was at al-Kunasa, in Kufa. When Zaid’s son, Yahya, rebelled in Khurasan in the days of al-Walid ibn Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik, al-Walid wrote to his governor of Kufa commanding him to burn Zaid’s body and the plank he

was on. The governor did so and the ashes were scattered to the winds on the banks of the Euphrates.

2225. In our book entitled *Al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat*, we discussed the reasons for which the Zaidiyya acquired that name and that this was because of their joining the rebellion of Zaid ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, mentioned above. But other reasons have also been suggested which we treated in our earlier works. We further discussed the differences between the Zaidiyya and the Imamiyya as well as other Shi`i groups. A number of authors of books on the sects and on the religious groups of the Shi`a and others, such as Abu `Isa Muhammad ibn Harun al-Warraq and others, state that the Zaidiyya of their days were split into eight groups: the first, al-Jarudiyya, are the followers of Abu'l Jarud Ziyad ibn al-Mundhir al-`Abdi. They hold that the imamate is restricted to the progeny of al-Hasan and al-Husain. The second group are the Marthadiyya; the third is the Abraqiyya; the fourth is the Ya`qubiyya, the followers of Ya`qub ibn `Ali al-Kufi; the fifth is al-Nu`aymiyya; the sixth is al-Abtariyya, the followers of Kathir al-Abtar and al-Hasan ibn Salih ibn Hayy; the seventh is the Jaririyya, followers of Sulaiman ibn Jarir, and the eighth is the Yamaniyya, followers of Muhammad ibn al-Yaman al-Kufi. These groups added certain points to the doctrine and derived further propositions from their fundamental principles.

2226. The same is true of the Imamiyya groups. These according to authors of books on the subject were divided into thirty-three groups. We mentioned the disputes among the Qat`iyya following the disappearance of al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, and the views of al-Kaysaniyya and how they differed from all other Shi`i groups. These latter are subdivided into seventy-three sects, not including their differences over derivative doctrines and over interpretation. The extreme

Shi`is are also divided into eight sects: four Muhammadiyya and four Mu` tazila, known also as `Alawiyya. Were it not that this present work is one of history we would have set forth their doctrines and views at length, both those views of the past and those that were formulated in our own days, including their views regarding the signs announcing the promised coming of the Expected One, and how each group argued from among those who believed in cycles, occultation [reading *sitr*] and *tashriq**, as also other Imamiyya groups.

2227. One day, Hisham reviewed his troops in Homs. A man from Homs passed by him on a nervous horse so Hisham said to him: “What made you mount on such a nervous horse?” The man answered: “No, O Commander of the Believers, I swear by the All-Merciful and Compassionate! He is not a nervous horse. It is just that he saw your cross eyes and imagined they were the eyes of Ghazwan the vet, so became nervous.” Hisham replied: “Depart! Damn you and your horse!” Ghazwan was a Christian vet of Homs who looked exactly like Hisham with his cross eyes and face.

2228. One day, as Hisham sat at leisure with al-Abrash al-Kalbi, a female attendant appeared wearing a pretty dress. Hisham said to al-Abrash: “Joke with her.” Al-Abrash said to her: “Give me your dress.” She replied: “You are more greedy than Ash`ab.” Hisham asked: “Who’s Ash`ab?” She replied: “He is a clown in Medina.” She proceeded to relate some of his stories. Hisham laughed and said: “Write to Ibrahim ibn Hisham ibn Isma`il---who was his governor of Medina---and let him send us the man.” When the letter was sealed, Hisham bowed his head for a long time then said: “O Abrash, is it proper that Hisham should send a letter to the city of the Prophet requesting the dispatch of a clown? No, by God!” He then quoted the verse:

If you give way to your caprice,

This will lead people to censure your character.

Hisham then tore up the letter.

2229. It is related that a man once presented Hisham with a gift of two birds which he admired. When the man asked for his reward, Hisham said: “Woe to you! What can a reward be for two birds?” The man said: “Whatever you like.” Hisham said: “Take one of them back.” The man went and took back the more beautiful of the two. Hisham said: “And you also get to choose?” The man replied: “Yes, by God, I get to choose.” So Hisham said: “Leave it alone,” and ordered a few dirhams to be paid to him.

2230. Hisham once entered one of his orchards with some of his boon companions. They wandered around it, it being full of all kinds of fruit trees, and as they picked the fruits and ate them they would say: “May God bless the Commander of the Believers.” Hisham said: “How can God bless me if you are eating from it?” He then summoned the overseer and said to him: “Pull out all the fruit trees and plant olive trees instead so that none can eat from this orchard.”

2231. His son Sulaiman once wrote to him complaining that his she-mule had grown old and feeble and asked if the Commander of the Believers might order a new one for him. Hisham wrote back: “The Commander of the Believers has understood your message concerning the feebleness of your she-mule. He believes that this is due to your neglecting to feed her and the subsequent waste of the fodder. So attend diligently and in person to the mule, and the Commander of the Believers might then consider what to do about your mount.”

2232. Hisham once saw a man riding on a Tukhari work horse and asked him: “Where did you obtain this horse?” He replied: “Al-Junaid ibn `Abd al-Rahman made me mount on it.” Hisham said: “So Tukhari horses are now so plentiful that even commoners ride upon them? When the

Commander of the Believers `Abd al-Malik died there was a single Tuhari horse in his stables which `Abd al-Malik's sons quarreled over to the point where it was thought that whoever loses out will lose out on the caliphate." The man said: "You are jealous of me for having it?"

2233. Hisham's brother, Maslama, once jokingly asked him before he had assumed power: "O Hisham, are you to assume the caliphate when you are a miser and a coward?" Hisham answered: "By God, {I am All-Forbearing, All-Knowing}."

2234. Al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy, al-Mada'ini and others mention that the real statesmen among the Umayyads were three: Mu`awiya, `Abd al-Malik and Hisham. With Hisham ended their sound policies and conduct. Al-Mansur in most of his affairs, policies and management, used to emulate the actions and examples of Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik because of his extensive study of Hisham's biography and conduct.

2235. In our two works, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, we recounted highlights of his history, biography and policies, and also his verses and sermons. We further cited a section taken from the work known as *al-Wahida* which deals with the virtues and vices of Arabs that no other nation shares with them, and the attributes of every Arab tribe, both of Qahtan and of Nizar. We also narrated what took place in the assemblies of Hisham at various times between al-Abrash al-Kalbi, al-`Abbas ibn al-Walid, Khalid ibn Salama al-Makhzumi, and al-Nadir ibn Abi Mariam al-Himyari. We further cited the virtues adduced by al-Himyari and attributed to his own people, the Himyar and the Kahlan, and what al-Makhzumi cited of the virtues of his people, the Nizar ibn Ma`add ibn `Adnan. We also included what vices each had named as belonging to a people or tribe other than his own. It is claimed that the above-mentioned work was composed by Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna*, client of the tribe of Taym ibn Murra ibn Ka`b ibn Lu'ayy, who put these words in

the mouths of the persons mentioned above, or in those of other spokesmen of the Shu`ubiyya* movement, but God knows best.

Chapter 101

An account of the days of al-Walid ibn Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik

2236. Al-Walid ibn Yazid received the oath of homage the day Hisham died which was Wednesday, the sixth of Rabi` II, in the year 125. He was killed in al-Bakhra' on Thursday, two nights remaining from the month of Jumada II, in the year 126 [April 17, 744]. So his tenure of power lasted one year, two months and twenty-two days. He was killed aged forty. The place he was killed in was also the spot where he was buried. This was a village of Damascus called al-Bakhra', as mentioned above. We described his death in our book, *al-Awsat*.

A brief account of his history and conduct

2237. In the days of al-Walid ibn Yazid, Yahya ibn Zaid ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib rose up in rebellion in al-Juzajan in the region of Khurasan, protesting against injustice and widespread tyranny. Nasr ibn Sayyar [governor of Khurasan] sent against him Salm ibn Ahwaz al-Mazini and Yahya was killed in battle in a village called Arghuna, where he was buried. His tomb is well known and is visited to the present day. Yahya fought several engagements and was killed by an arrow which struck his temple. His followers then fled and his head was cut off and sent to al-Walid. His body was hung on a cross in Juzajan and remained thus until Abu Muslim, champion of the Abbasid state, appeared. He killed Salm ibn Ahwaz and brought down the body of Yahya, prayed upon it with some of his followers and buried it in that place. Throughout Khurasan, its people mourned for Yahya for seven days when they felt themselves safe from Umayyad power. That year, every new born was named either Yahya or Zaid, for their grief over the deaths of these two figures was excessive. Yahya rose in rebellion in late

125 [743] or alternatively in early 126 [744]. In our book *al-Awsat*, and in other works, we narrated his history and wars, making it unnecessary to repeat this here. The day he died, Yahya often quoted the verses of al-Khansa’*:

*We hold our souls to be of little account,
And on the day of battle, holding them of little account is even more fitting.*

2238. Al-Walid ibn Yazid was fond of wine, entertainment, music and songs. He was the first ruler to whom singers were sent from all regions. His drinking, entertainments and music were all done openly. In his days were found Ibn Surayj, the singer, together with Ma`bad, al-Gharid, Ibn `A`isha, Ibn Muhriz, Tuways and Dahman, and the craving for songs spread among both elite and commoners. He also bought singing slave women, and was dissolute, shameless and depraved. Two nights after his rule began he became so enchanted that he could not sleep, so composed the following verses:

*My night had grown long, and I was being given wine to drink,
When news reached me of the death of the man in al-Rusafa [Hisham].
A messenger brought me the burda* and the rod,
Along with the seal of the caliphate.*

2239. As an example of his dissolute character, are the following verses he composed when the messenger brought him news of Hisham’s death:

*My two boon companions, I heard sounds coming from al-Rusafa.
I dragged my robe and asked: What is the matter with those females?
It was Hisham’s daughters, mourning their father.
They were crying and wailing that calamity had befallen them.
I will truly be effeminate if I do not fuck them.*

2240. Al-Walid was once asked: “What pleasure remains to you?” He answered: “Conversing with friends on moonlit nights atop sandy hills.”

Al-Walid was told of the charm of Shura`a ibn al-Zandabud and his delightful company so he ordered him summoned. When he was brought before him, al-Walid said: "I did not order you to come here to be asked about the Qur'an or Prophetic reports." The man replied: "Nor am I the right person for this subject." He said: "I will ask you about wine." He replied: "Ask what you like, Commander of the Believers." "What do you say about drink in general?" "Which drink in particular?" "What do you say about water?" "The mule and the ass share it with me." "What about raisin wine?" "Hang-over and harm." "What of date wine?" "Causes nothing but farting." "Grape wine?" "This is my soul mate and my intimate." "What do you say about music?" "When slow, it reminds one of past sorrows. It diverts the mind from the occasions of sorrow. It comforts the lonely person, delights the solitary lover and cools the burning heart. It arouses from among the hidden thoughts of the heart a thought that no other entertainment can arouse. This thought or idea then quickly ascends through the parts of the body, exciting the spirit and intensifying the senses." "Which kind of gathering is the one most pleasing to you?" "The one where I can see the sky but without harm coming to me." "What have you to say about food?" "A man drinking has no choice: whatever he finds, he eats." So al-Walid made him a boon companion.

2241. Among the more charming verses that al-Walid composed about wine are:

It is yellow in the cup, like saffron,

*Captured for us from `Asqalan by the man from Tajib.**

It reveals to you the drinking cup,

While the width of the vessel veils it, to protect it from the touch of fingers.

It has bubbles which, when agitated, you would see like the flash of a Yemeni lightning.

Among his dissolute wine verses are the ones addressed to his steward:

O Yazid, give me to drink from a large vessel:

We are now enchanted, and tender is the sound of the flute.

Give me to drink, give me to drink: my sins surround me,

And there's no penance for them.

2242. Abu Khalifa al-Fadl ibn al-Hubab al-Jumahi, the judge>Muhammad ibn Sallam al-Jumahi> an elder from al-Sham> his father, who said: "I was in charge of the curtain that hid al-Walid ibn Yazid and saw the singer Ibn `A'isha with him. He said to him: 'Sing to me' and he sang:

The morning of the Feast of Sacrifice I saw some beautiful maidens,

Who make one forget any resolve to endure in patience.

Like stars they were when they rise at night,

And surround the full moon.

I left, seeking God's reward,

But came back, laden heavily with sin.

Al-Walid said: 'Bravo, my master! I beseech you, by `Abd Shams*, repeat the song!' He repeated it. Al-Walid said: 'I beseech you, by Umayya! Repeat' He did so. Meanwhile al-Walid would beseech him by one Umayyad ancestor after another to repeat it until he arrived at himself and said: 'By my life, repeat it!' He did so. Al-Walid rose, fell on Ibn `A'isha and kissed every member of his body, then came to his penis and was about to kiss it when Ibn `A'isha squeezed his penis between his thighs. Al-Walid said: 'I swear I will not cease until I have kissed it.' Ibn `A'isha pulled it out [reading *abrazahu*] and al-Walid kissed its tip and said: 'How enchanting! How enchanting!' He then took off his own clothes and threw them at Ibn `A'isha and remained naked until they

brought him other garments. He ordered that one thousand dinars be paid to him, which was done, then had him mounted on a she-mule and said: ‘Ride it on my carpet and depart, for you have left me hotter than the live coals of the *ghada*.*’”

2243. Al-Mas`udi said: Ibn `A`isha had sung that same poem to Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik, al-Walid’s father, who also was enchanted and is said to have uttered some blasphemous words while thus enchanted. Among other things he is said to have told his wine steward: “Give me to drink, by the fourth heaven!*” So al-Walid ibn Yazid appears to have inherited the enchantment with these verses from his father. The verses themselves were composed by a man from Quraish while the melody was that of Ibn Surayj or else of Malik, according to the dispute about this to be found in the books of songs, as mentioned by Ishaq ibn Ibrahim al-Mawsili in his book of songs and by Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi, known as Ibn Shakla, also in his book of songs, in addition to others who wrote on this subject.

2244. Al-Walid is also known as the “Deposed Marwanid”. One day, he was reading the following verses in the Qur’an: {So they prayed for victory, and every obstinate tyrant came to grief---beyond him lies hell, where he will be given pus to drink.} So he set up the Qur’an as a target, and began to shoot arrows at it, composing the following verses:

Do you threaten every obstinate tyrant?

Here I am, an obstinate tyrant.

When you go to meet your Lord on Resurrection Day,

Tell him: ‘Lord, al-Walid shot me to pieces.’

2245. Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Mubarrad, the grammarian, mentioned that al-Walid had blasphemed in a poem he composed where he mentioned the Prophet and stated that his inspiration did not come from God. That poem included the following verses:

A man from the Hashim clan toyed with being God’s deputy,

Without receiving any divine inspiration or holy book.

So go tell God to prevent me from eating,

And go tell God to prevent me from drinking wine.

He was granted only a few more days after this before he was killed.

2246. The mother of al-Walid ibn Yazid was Umm al-Hajjaj bint Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafiyya. Al-Walid's patronymic was "Abu'l `Abbas."

2247. He was once presented with a goblet made of crystal, or in another version, one made of *jamast*, a well-known stone. Some philosophers claim that whoever drinks from a cup made of this stone cannot be intoxicated. We mentioned the properties of this stone in our book entitled *al-Qadaya wa'l Tajarib*, and that whoever places a piece of it under his head or as a stone in his ring would only have good dreams. Al-Walid ordered the goblet filled with wine and the moon rose on him and his companions as they were drinking. He asked: "Where is the moon tonight?" and someone said in such and such a constellation, while another said it is in the cup. The moon was reflected in the glow of that crystal and its image in the wine, so al-Walid said: "By God, you have expressed exactly what is in my mind." He then became very intoxicated and said: "I shall drink a morning draught *haft hafteh*." This last is a Persian word meaning seven weeks. A chamberlain then entered and announced: "O Commander of the Believers, there are Arab and Quraish delegations at the door, and the caliphate is too dignified a station to be seen in such a condition." He said: "Give him to drink!" The chamberlain refused, so they inserted a bottle with a narrow mouth into his mouth and kept pouring wine into it until he collapsed, totally inebriated.

2248. His father, Yazid, had wanted to delegate power to him but thinking him too young, delegated succession to his own brother Hisham, then to be succeeded by al-Walid. Al-Walid was overly fond of horses, of

collecting them and of horse racing. His horse, called al-Sindi, was the fastest horse of his days and he used to race it in the days of Hisham. It was not as fast as Hisham's horse, known as al-Dha'id, but would sometimes come head to head with it or else come second.

2249. These are the rankings in a horse race: the winner is called *al-sabiq*. The second is called *al-musalli* because his head reached the forehead [*sala*] of the winner. Then comes the third, fourth and on to the ninth and the tenth, called *al-sukkayt*, or *al-sukayt*. Whichever horse comes after this is of no consequence. The last in a race is called *al-fiskil*.

2250. Al-Walid held horse races in al-Rusafa and laid out the track. On that occasion there were a thousand five-year olds. He stood aside waiting for al-Dha'id, and with him stood Sa'id ibn `Amr ibn Sa'id ibn al-`Asiyy. Sa'id was running one of his horses called al-Misbah. When the horses appeared al-Walid recited:

*My horses, by the Lord of the Holy Sanctuary,
Have outstripped the horses of powerful men.
Just as we outstripped them and won the honors,
So were we in ancient times,
Men of glory and distinguished status.*

A horse belonging to al-Walid, called al-Waddah, was in front and as it drew near, its rider fell off. Sa'id's horse, al-Misbah, came next with its rider, and Sa'id considered it to have won. So Sa'id recited the following verses in al-Walid's hearing:

*Today we outstripped the horses of powerful men,
And God singled us out for honor.
Thus were we in ancient times,
Men of glory and distinguished status.*

Al-Walid laughed when he heard these verses and, fearing that Sa'id's horse would win, rode off until he came alongside al-Waddah, then threw

himself upon it and won the race. Al-Walid was the first to do so in a race, establishing it as a custom. He was followed in this practice by al-Mahdi in the days of al-Mansur and by al-Hadi in the days of al-Mahdi. In the second race, the horses were passed in review before al-Walid and a horse belonging to Sa`id passed by and al-Walid said: “We shall not race against you, O Abu `Anbasa. Did you not recite:

Today we outstripped the horses of powerful men?”

Sa`id replied: “This is not what I said, Commander of the Believers. I said:

Today we outstripped powerful horses.”

Al-Walid laughed, hugged him and said: “May Quraish never lack brothers like you!”

2251. Attractive stories are told about al-Walid ibn Yazid and his collection of race horses. At one race, a thousand five-year old horses were present. He brought together the horse known as al-Dha`id and the other known as al-Sindi, these two having outstripped all the other horses of their time. This was mentioned by historians such as Ibn `Ufair, al-Asma`i, Abu `Ubaida and Ja`far ibn Sulaiman. In our book, *al-Awsat*, we dealt with highlights of his stories with horses and horse racing and the tales associated with the horses called al-Dha`id, al-Sindi, Ashqar Marwan and other such tales involving earlier and later rulers of the Umayyad dynasty. The purpose of the present work is simply to mention in brief their histories and historical reports along with their conduct. In addition, and in our earlier works, we dealt with what needs to be known regarding the character of horses, their attributes, their bodily members, defects, nature, young and old horses, their colors and spots, and what are considered commendable among these, together with their ages and spans of life, the disputes among people concerning their spots, both good and bad, and how some people consider that these spots should be eighteen in

number or more or less, as established by custom and experience. We further described winners among horses and what people said about them and how to distinguish them.

2252. In the days of al-Walid ibn Yazid there occurred the death of Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib. His date of death is disputed. Some say he died in the days of Hisham in the year 117 [735], others that he died in the days of Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik, aged fifty-seven, in Medina. He was buried in the cemetery of al-Baqi` alongside his father `Ali ibn al-Husain and his other ancestors, whom we shall mention in later sections of this work, God willing.

Chapter 102

An account of the days of Yazid ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik and his brother Ibrahim, and a brief account of the events of their times

2253. Yazid ibn al-Walid led a rebellion in Damascus the night of Friday, seven days remaining from the month of Jumada II and received public homage after the murder of al-Walid ibn Yazid. Yazid ibn al-Walid died in Damascus on Sunday, at the appearance of the moon of the month of Dhu'l Hijja in the year 126 [October 4, 744]. His rule thus lasted five months and two nights. His brother Ibrahim assumed power after him and received homage in Damascus. His rule lasted four months, or only two in another version, and then was deposed. His days were extraordinary because of their tumult, disunity and lack of the dignity of office.

Regarding him, a poet of those days recited:

We pay homage to Ibrahim every Friday

But any authority you possess will end in failure.

Yazid ibn al-Walid was buried in Damascus between the two gates of al-Jabiya and al-Saghir. He was thirty-seven years old, or forty-six in another contradictory version.

A brief account of the events of their times

2254. Yazid ibn al-Walid was cross-eyed, and was called “Yazid the Deficient” but he was not deficient in body or mind. He had merely reduced the pay of some troops so was called the “deficient”. He adopted the doctrine of the Mu`tazilites and their five principles, i.e. God’s unity and justice, the promise of paradise and threat of hell, the divine attributes and their ethical views which consist of their theory of the intermediate stage and their doctrine of commanding the good and forbidding wrong.

2255. In explanation of their first doctrine, God’s unity, it may be said that this is a principle agreed upon by both Baghdadi and Basran Mu`tazilites, as well as others, even if they differ in other subsidiary topics. This principle states that Almighty God is unlike all other beings, that He is neither a body nor an accident, nor an element, nor a part nor a substance. Rather, He is the creator of body and accident and the other things we mentioned such as part and substance. They hold that no sense can attain to Him either in this world or the next; that He is not confined by place or restricted by any space; that He is everlasting without time or place or end or limit; that He created all things from nothing; that He is from eternity and that everything else is created. The second doctrine or principle is justice. This holds that God does not love corruption and does not create the actions of His servants. Instead, they perform what they have been commanded to do and avoid what they have been forbidden through a capacity that God created for them and instilled in them; that God commands only what He likes and forbids only what He dislikes; that He is the author of every good deed He commands and is innocent of every bad deed He forbids; that He does not charge people with what they cannot bear, nor wants them to do what they are incapable of doing; that no one is able to withhold anything or give anything except through a capacity that is given to him by God; that God owns that capacity and not

them; that He can make it disappear if He wishes or last if He wishes; that had He wished He could have forced His creatures to obey Him and forbade them by necessity from disobeying Him, and that He is capable of doing so but does not do so because this would mean an end to testing them and of putting them through a trial. The third principle, the promise of paradise and threat of hell, holds that God does not forgive those who commit major sins unless they repent, and that He is truthful in His promise and threat and does not alter His verdicts.

2256. The fourth principle, the intermediate stage, holds that a sinner who commits a major sin is neither a believer nor an unbeliever but is called a transgressor by convention and whom the body of the faithful have all agreed to call a transgressor. Al-Mas`udi said: It is because of this that the Mu` tazila acquired their name, which are the doctrines described above together with the threat of eternal punishment in hell fire for sinners. Finally, the fifth principle, the necessity of commanding the good and forbidding wrong is in their view a duty imposed on all the faithful according to their abilities, using the sword and everything less than this in that endeavor; that this obligation is like jihad; that there is no difference between the struggle against unbelievers and that against sinners. These are the principles on which all Mu` tazilites agree.

Whoever holds these five principles is a Mu` tazilite but if he believes more or less than these, he does not deserve the name Mu` tazilite, which he deserves only if he holds these five principles. Apart from these basic principles, subdivisions of them are points of dispute. In our work entitled *al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat*, we discussed at length their principles, subdivisions, and views as well as the views of other sects of the Muslim community such as the Kharijites, Murji`a, Rafida, Zaidiyya, Hashwiyya and others. We devoted our work entitled *al-Ibana `an Usul al-Diyana* to what we ourselves chose from among these views and in which we

mentioned the differences between the Mu`tazilites and the Imamiyya and how each group differed from the other.

2257. This is because the Mu`tazilites and other groups hold that the imamate is a result of the community's choice since they hold that Almighty God and His Prophet did not designate a particular person as leader or ruler (*imam*), nor did the Muslims unanimously agree on a single individual. They hold that this choice is left up to the community to choose from among their number a person who can execute God's commands, whether he be from Quraish or from any other tribe of the community of Muslims, and is distinguished by his justice and piety. They attached no importance in this matter to descent or genealogy. This choice, they argue, is obligatory upon the people of every age. Those who hold that the imamate can be held by Quraish or by anyone else is the view of all the Mu`tazilites as well as a group of Zaidiyya, like al-Hasan ibn Salih ibn Hayy and those who followed him in this opinion, as already explained above in the history of Hisham.

2258. This view of the imamate [i.e. through choice] is accepted by all Kharijites, Ibadiyya and otherwise, except for the Najdat who claim that the imamate is not an obligatory institution. Some Mu`tazilites, both early and late, concur with this view, and argue that if the community is just and lacks transgressors, an imam is not needed. Those who hold this view cite as proof the saying of `Umar ibn al-Khattab: "Had Salim been alive, I would not have had any doubts about him [i.e. as caliph]." He said this at the time when he delegated the choice to a consultative council. Salim was the client of a woman of the Ansar, so had `Umar not known that the imamate can legitimately be held by any Muslim, he would not have said this, nor would he have regretted the death of Salim, client of Abu Hudhaifa. They further argue that many authentic reports from the Prophet confirm their view such as his saying: "Hear and obey even a

slit-nosed slave.” The Qur’an itself states: {The noblest among you in God’s sight are the most pious.}

2259. Abu Hanifa* and most of the Murji’a, as also most of the Zaidiyya of the Jarudiyya branch and others, as well as all sects of the Shi`a, Rafida and Rawandiyya, hold that the imamate can only be held by a man from Quraish, and cite the Prophet’s words: “The imamate belongs to Quraish,” and also “Put Quraish ahead of you and do not precede it.” They also cite the argument advanced by the Emigrants against the Ansar on the Day of the Covered Patio of the clan of Sa`ida, namely, that the imamate belongs to Quraish because when they rule they are just, and that many Ansar accepted that argument. What the Imamis held in particular was that the imamate can only be the result of a designation from God and his Prophet of a specific imam who is specifically named as such. This is a well-known fact throughout the ages since mankind can never lack a sign from God, whether open or concealed, according to whether the imam, fearing for his person, might practice pious dissimulation. They cited many proofs for the imamate from both rational arguments as well as religious texts all of which confirm its necessity, specific designation, and the imam’s infallibility. Among these proofs are the words addressed by God to Abraham {I shall appoint you an imam to mankind} and Abraham’s question {And from my progeny?} and God’s answer to him that {Evildoers shall not enjoy my covenant}.

2260. The Imamis add: The proofs we cited demonstrate that the imamate is a designation from God. Had God left it up to people, Abraham’s question to God would be meaningless. God had informed him that he had chosen him, and the phrase {Evildoers shall not enjoy my covenant} proves that his covenant cannot be enjoyed by an evildoer. They describe the imam as follows: the essential attribute of the imam is that he should be sinless because if he is not sinless, there is no guarantee he might not

lead other people to sin, thus making him liable to punishment just as he administers punishments to others, thus necessitating an endless series of imams. Nor is there any guarantee that he might not in secret be a transgressor or unbeliever. Again, the imam must be the most knowledgeable of mankind because if he is not, there is no guarantee he might not undermine the laws and regulations of God and whip someone who deserves the full punishment or vice versa, and pass verdicts contrary to those established by God. Furthermore, he must be the most courageous of mankind for he is the person they resort to in times of war. If he is cowardly and runs away, he will deserve the wrath of God. He must be the most self-restrained of mankind because he is the trustworthy treasurer of the Muslims. If he is not, he might be tempted to seize their wealth, and greed might impel him to appropriate their possessions, all of which carries with it the severe threat of hellfire. They add many other qualities of character by means of which he attains the highest degree of virtue that is shared by no one else.

2261. They say that all these qualities were found in `Ali ibn Abi Talib and his descendants such as their precedence in embracing the faith, emigration to Medina, kinship to the Prophet, passing just judgments, fighting in the cause of God, their piety and their ascetic way of life. They argue that God in the Qur'an informed us of their secret thoughts and how these accord with their outward behavior, and how God describes them as feeding the poor, the orphan and the prisoner, and that they do so purely for the sake of God. They assert that God informed us of how they will behave when they go to God and their noble station on the Day of Final Gathering, and how he banished all impurity from them and cleansed them, together with other proofs that they adduce. They state that `Ali designated his two sons, al-Hasan then al-Husain, and that al-Husain designated `Ali ibn al-Husain, and so on until the line reaches

the Master of Time, the twelfth imam, as set forth by us in another section of this work. At this present time, i.e. the year 332, the Imami Shi`a have much to say about occultation and the use of pious dissimulation. But in this book, which is a work of history, it is not appropriate for us to mention in detail all that they assert regarding the various topics related to the imams and their plenipotentiaries [*awsiya*']. It is just that our discussion led us into a brief review of these sects and their opinions. We might add here what groups other than the Imamis hold as regards circular time and occultation [reading *sitr*] and their close observations of the signs of the appearance of the Mahdi. But we have treated all these views in our earlier works, including such topics as the apparent and the hidden, the straight, the circular and the static as well as their other opinions and secrets.

2262. Al-Mas`udi said: Yazid ibn al-Walid rose in rebellion in Damascus against al-Walid ibn Yazid along with the Mu`tazilites who followed him and others including the inhabitants of Darayya and al-Mizza, in the Ghuta of Damascus. This was because of al-Walid's flagrant sins and widespread injustice. In our earlier works, we related the murder of al-Walid in detail though in brief in this work. Yazid ibn al-Walid was the first of that dynasty to assume power who had a freed slave as his mother. Her name was Shahfirand, daughter of Fairuz son of Chosroes. Because of this genealogy he used to recite:

*I am the son of Chosroes, and my father is Marwan,
Caesar is my ancestor as also Khaqan.*

His patronymic was "Abu Khalid". The mother of his brother Ibrahim was also a freed slave called Budaira. Where religious belief is concerned, the Mu`tazilites prefer Yazid to `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz because of what we mentioned regarding his Mu`tazilite views.

2263. In the year 127 [744-5], Marwan ibn Muhammad marched from al-Jazira and entered Damascus, and Ibrahim fled the city. Marwan then captured, killed and crucified him, and killed all his supporters. He also killed `Abd al-`Aziz ibn al-Hajjaj and Yazid ibn Khalid al-Qasri, and the power of the Umayyads now began to decline.

2264. Al-Yahsubi>al-Khalil ibn Ibrahim al-Sabi`i>Ibn al-Jumahi>Al-`Ala' ibn bint Dhi'l Kila', who said: "I was a close friend of Sulaiman ibn Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik, and hardly ever left his company. The rebellion of those who wore black* in Khurasan and the east was coming ever nearer, approaching al-Jibal and the vicinity of Iraq. The people were terrified while the enemy cursed the Umayyad family and their supporters openly and at will."

2265. Al-`Ala' continued: "I was with Sulaiman as he was drinking wine near al-Rusafa, his father's seat. This was in the last days of Yazid the Deficient. With Sulaiman was Hakam al-Wadi who was singing to him the verses composed by al-`Arji:

The camels of the beloved have departed in the evening,

And your tears keep flowing down.

Be ashamed of yourself, for you have wept loudly and bitterly:

If only such weeping were any use to him who weeps!

How delightful were they who mounted on those camels,

And how wonderful that person and all who are like him!

He sang very well and we meanwhile drank wine by the jar with him until our heads came to rest on our arms. I only woke up when Sulaiman shook me and I went at once to him and said: 'What's the matter with the Emir?' He said: 'Take it easy! I saw a dream in which I was in the mosque of Damascus. A man carrying a dagger and wearing a crown whose jewels were glittering was reciting in a loud voice:

O Umayyads, your dispersal is at hand,

*And your kingship is ended and will not return.
An enemy will win the choicest portion of your kingship,
And act tyrannically towards those who were kind to you,
And, after death, will cause distress by denying any decent mention of
you.*

Woe to him! How horribly that enemy will act!

I said: ‘No, this will not come to pass.’ But I was surprised at how well he had remembered these verses because he was not normally accomplished in such matters. He bowed his head for a while then said: ‘O man of Himyar, time will bring near what now seems far.’ We never met afterwards at a drinking session. Then the year 132 [749-50] arrived and brought with it the events that took place between the men in black and Marwan ibn Muhammad al-Ja`di.*”

2266. Al-Minqari said: “An elder of the Umayyad family and a man of prudence was asked, following the passing of their power to the Abbasids: ‘What caused you to lose your kingship?’ He replied: ‘We were diverted by our pursuit of pleasure from investigating the affairs of state, as was necessary, so we were unjust to our subjects. They in turn abandoned all hope of fair dealing from us and wished to be rid of us. Those subject to our land-tax were overburdened, so they abandoned us. Our agricultural estates were ruined and our treasuries became empty. We placed excessive confidence in our senior officials who then preferred their own interests to ours, and put in place certain policies of which we knew nothing. Payments to our troops were delayed, so they threw off their allegiance to us. Our enemies were able to attract them so they joined them in the war against us. We tried to fight our enemies but failed to do so because our supporters were few in number. One of the primary causes for the loss of our kingship was that the news was kept hidden from us.’” In God is success.

Chapter 103

An account of the reason for partisanship between the Yemenis and the Nizaris

2267. Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Sulaiman al-Nawfali>his father, who said: "When al-Kumait ibn Zaid al-Asadi---from the clan of Asad Mudar ibn Nizar--- recited his poems in praise of the Hashim clan, he went to Basra to see al-Farazdaq and said to him: 'O Abu Firas, I am your nephew.' Al-Farazdaq asked him to identify himself and al-Kumait named his ancestry, so al-Farazdaq said: 'You are right. Now what is it that you need?' He replied: 'My tongue has received poetic inspiration and you are the elder of Mudar and its poet, so I want to recite to you the poetry I have composed. If it is good, you might allow me to make it public. If otherwise, then you can order me to keep it to myself, and you should also keep it a secret.' Al-Farazdaq said: 'Nephew, your poetry is proportionate to your mind, so let me hear it, and may you be well guided.' So he recited:

*I was overcome with the joy of longing, but not for beautiful women,
Nor out of playfulness, though a man of grey hairs can be playful.*

Al-Farazdaq said: 'Yes, go ahead and be playful.'

Al-Kumait went on:

*No habitation of the beloved and no ruined encampment ever distracted
me,*

Nor was I ever enchanted by hands dyed in henna.

Al-Farazdaq asked: 'So what is it that enchants you?'

Al-Kumait went on:

*Nor am I one to whom the flight of birds cause any worries,
Or whether a raven croaks or a fox passes by.*

Al-Farazdaq said: 'Damn it! What are you, and to what do you aspire?'

Al-Kumait continued:

*Nor do I care for auspicious or inauspicious gazelles,
And whether their horns are whole or broken.*

Al-Farazdaq said: 'This last line is well said.'

Al-Kumait continued:

*Rather do I long for people of virtue and nobility,
The best of Eve's progeny, and the best is always to be sought.*

Al-Farazdaq said: 'Damn it, who are these people?'

Al-Kumait went on:

*Those beautiful people through whose love,
I draw close to God when in misfortune.*

Al-Farazdaq said: 'Relieve me, dammit! Who are they?'

Al-Kumait concluded:

*They are the Hashim clan, the Prophet's family,
For their sake I am often soothed or else angry.*

Al-Farazdaq said: 'Very well done, my son. You have hit the mark and composed some wonderful verses by turning away from praising the low and the riff-raff. In this way, your arrow will not miss its mark and your words cannot be gainsaid.' Al-Kumait then finished reciting his poem.

Al-Farazdaq said to him: 'You must indeed bring your poetry out into the open and infuriate the enemy, for you are by God the most talented of past poets and of those who remain.'"

2268. Al-Kumait then headed to Medina to see Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali. Admitted into his presence by night, al-Kumait recited to him his poem ending in the letter *mim*. When he reached the following verse:

*And another murdered in al-Taff, dying as a martyr,
Among a nation made up of rabble and the ignoble,*

Abu Ja`far wept then said to him: "O Kumait, had we had any money we would have given it to you, but to you belongs the blessing addressed by

the Prophet to Hassan ibn Thabit: ‘May you be strengthened by the Holy Spirit as long as you defend us, the members of this family.’” Kumait left and went to see `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali and recited the poem to him. `Abdullah said to him: ‘I have an estate, O Abu’l Mustahall, for which I was offered four thousand dinars. Here is its title deed and I have arranged for witnesses to testify to this transfer of ownership’. He then handed him the title deed. Al-Kumait said: “May my father and mother be your ransom! I used to recite poetry in praise of people other than you, seeking thereby earthly fame and wealth. No by God! I never recited anything about you except to gain God’s reward. I cannot accept money or gifts for anything that I have devoted to God.” `Abdullah insisted and refused to accept his excuse, so al-Kumait took the title deed and left. Some days later, he came back to see `Abdullah and said to him: “May my father and mother be your ransom! Son of the Prophet, I need something.” “What is it, when any request from you is granted?” Kumait said: “Whatever it may be?” “Yes,” replied `Abdullah. “You take back this title deed and your estate.” He then placed the title deed in his hands and `Abdullah accepted it.

2269. `Abdullah ibn Mu`awiya ibn `Abdullah ibn Ja`far ibn Abi Talib then rose, took a leather robe, gave it to four of his pages, then toured the houses of the Hashim clan saying to each: “O Hashimites, here is al-Kumait composing poetry in praise of you when all were silent about your virtues, endangering thereby his own life at the hands of the Umayyads. Reward him according to your ability.” A man would then toss into the robe whatever he could afford of dirhams and dinars. When the women of the family heard of this, a woman would send whatever she could afford to the point where she would divest herself of the jewelry on her body. Thus a sum of one hundred thousand dirhams was eventually collected and `Abdullah brought this to al-Kumait and said: ‘O Abu’l

Mustahall, we bring you the minimum that our efforts were able to gather, for we are living under the rule of our enemy. We have collected all this wealth which, as you can see, includes women's jewelry. So use this sum to help you in these days." Al-Kumait replied: "May my father and mother be your ransom! You have been more than generous and kind, but in praising you I did so only for the sake of God and his Prophet and I cannot accept any worldly reward for this. So return all this money to its possessors." `Abdullah tried his best, using every possible argument to get him to accept but al-Kumait refused. So `Abdullah said: "If you insist on refusing to take the money then perhaps you might compose some verses which sow anger and dissension among people, and civil strife might ensue, leading to some end that you would like to take place."

2270. Al-Kumait began by composing the ode where he lists the virtues of his own people, the Mudar ibn Nizar ibn Ma`add, Rabi`a ibn Nizar and Iyad and Anmar, the sons of Nizar. He exaggerated their excellence and lauded their virtues, depicting them as superior to Qahtan. He thus caused anger to erupt between the Yemenites and the Nizaris, as mentioned above. This is the ode that begins:

*Our greetings to you, O Madina,
And is there anything wrong in greeting you?*

The poem proceeds to explicitly defame the Yemenites as regards the incident of the Abyssinians* then continues:

*To us belongs the moon in the sky and every star,
To which point the hands of those wishing guidance on their travels.
I believe that when God chose Nizar,
And made them settle in Mecca,
He endowed us with all noble qualities:
To us the forehead, to all others the back.*

*The beautiful white she-camels of Nizar,
Were never mounted by foreign studs.
Nor did Nizar ever get asses to mount on noble and fast mares,
Ending in misfortune.*

*Nor were the girls of Nizar ever wedded,
To black [Abyssinians] or red [Persians].*

2271. Di`bil ibn `Ali al-Khuza`i wrote a rebuttal of this and other odes by al-Kumait, and cited the virtues of the Yemenites and the merits of their kings and others, naming names and defaming them as al-Kumait had done. This was in an ode that begins:

*Stop blaming us, O woman mounted upon her camel,
The passing of forty days has made blame unnecessary.
Have the events of the nights not saddened you,
Events that turn forelocks and temples grey?
I salute the noble and exalted figures of my tribe,
And, O Madina, let us not greet you [reading wa la].
If the Israelites are of your number,
And you boast of your kinship with foreigners,
You must not forget those who were disfigured
By being turned into wretched pigs and monkeys.
These, at Ayla and the Gulf, have left traces behind them,
And ancient remains that have not been effaced.
Al-Kumait's purpose was not one of revenge:
We were defamed because we supported our own people.
Nizar knows full well that it was my people
Who were the first to come to the aid of Prophecy.*

This is a long ode.

2272. Al-Kumait's poem on Nizaris and Yemenites became well known, and both sides began to boast of their virtues as against the other side, and

each began to cite their own merits. The community became divided and partisanship erupted among both nomads and city men. As a result, the cause of Marwan ibn Muhammad al-Ja`di began to weaken as he showed partiality to Nizar as against the Yemen, with the result that the Yemen turned away from him and supported the Abbasid call. This in turn led to the transfer of power from the Umayyads to the Hashimites and what followed thereafter, i.e. how Ma`n ibn Za`ida slaughtered the people of the Yemen out of partisanship for his people, the Rabi`a, and others from Nizar, thus severing the ancient alliance between the Yemen and Rabi`a. Also noteworthy is how `Uqba ibn Muslim slaughtered the `Abd Qais and others from Rabi`a and Nizar who lived in al-Bahrain and Oman as revenge for what Ma`n had done and out of partiality to his people, the Qahtan. There were other similar acts, early and late, committed by Nizar and Qahtan.

Chapter 104

An account of the days of Marwan ibn Muhammad ibn Marwan ibn al-Hakam, known as al-Ja`di

2273. Marwan ibn Muhammad ibn Marwan received the oath of homage in Damascus on Monday the fourteenth day of Safar in the year 127 [November 25,744]. It is also mentioned that he invited homage to himself in the city of Harran, in the territory of Diyar Mudar, and that he received homage in that city. His mother was a former slave called Rayya, or Taruba in another version, who once belonged to Mus`ab ibn al-Zubair and passed to Muhammad ibn Marwan, Marwan's father, after Mus`ab was killed. Marwan's patronymic was "Abu `Abd al-Malik." The people of al-Sham all agreed to pay him homage except for Sulaiman ibn Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik and some others from the Umayyad family. His days, from the Damascus homage until he was killed, lasted five years and ten days, or five years and three months in another version. He

was killed in early 132 [749]: some say in the month of Muharram, others say in Safar. But other versions are also given, in accordance with the differing versions to be found among historians and biographers.

Controversy also surrounds the length of his days. Some assert that his days lasted five years and three months, others that they lasted five years, two months and ten days and yet others say five years and ten days. He was killed in Busir, one of the villages of al-Fayyum, in the Sa'id of Egypt.

2274. There are also differing versions of his age. Some say he was killed aged seventy, others say sixty-nine, others say sixty-two, and yet others fifty-eight. We mention all this so that no one can claim that we omitted what others have stated or left out any information reported, in accordance with our purpose in this book, although we recounted at length all these versions in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In what follows in this work we shall mention in brief how he was killed, his history and wars, and the subsequent passing away of one state, the Umayyad, and the coming of another, the Abbasid. We shall also devote a separate chapter where we list the sum total of the reigns of the Umayyads, a chapter which we have entitled the span of time in years during which the Umayyads ruled. We follow this up, God willing, with highlights of the history of the Abbasid state, the history of Abu Muslim, the caliphate of Abu'l `Abbas al-Saffah and the Abbasid caliphs who followed him until the year 332, during the caliphate of Abu Ishaq al-Muttaqi Bi'llah, Ibrahim ibn al-Muqtadir. Success comes from God.

Chapter 105

An account of the length of time and the years during which the Umayyad family ruled

2275. The period of time occupied by the reigns of the Umayyads right until homage was paid to Abu'l `Abbas al-Saffah comes to exactly one

thousand months. This is because they reigned for ninety years, eleven months and thirteen days... [lacuna] Al-Mas`udi said: People differ as to the dating of their days in power, but what we cite here is the most authoritative version according to researchers and others who concern themselves with world history.

2276. The details are as follows: Mu`awiya ruled for twenty years; Yazid ibn Mu`awiya for three years, eight months and fourteen days; Mu`awiya ibn Yazid for one month and eleven days; Marwan ibn al-Hakam for eight months and five days; `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan for twenty-one years, one month and twenty days; al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik for nine years, eight months and two days; Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik for two years, six months and fifteen days; `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz for two years, five months and five days; Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik for four years and thirteen days; Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik for nineteen years, nine months and nine days; al-Walid ibn Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik for one year and three months; Yazid ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik for two months and ten days. We dropped the days of Ibrahim ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik and did not count him among the Umayyads just as we will drop the days of Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi and do not count him among the Abbasid caliphs. Finally, we have Marwan ibn Muhammad ibn Marwan who reigned for five years, two months and ten days until homage was paid to al-Saffah. This comes to a grand total of ninety years, eleven months and thirteen days to which one might add the eight months during which Marwan was fighting the Abbasids until he was killed. This makes the total of their reigns ninety-one years, seven months and thirteen days. If one subtracts the days of al-Hasan ibn `Ali, which were five months and ten days, and also the days of `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair until the moment he was killed, which came to seven years, ten months and three

days, the remainder is eighty-three years and four months, which come to exactly one thousand months.

2277. Some people claim that the true interpretation of the Qur'anic verse {The Night of Power is better than a thousand months} refers to what we cited above regarding the length of their days. It is reported from Ibn `Abbas that he said: "By God the Abbasids shall last twice as long as the Umayyads: two days for their one, two months for their one, two years for their one and two caliphs for their one." Al-Mas`udi said: The Abbasids assumed power in the year 132, and the Umayyad kingdom came to an end. From the moment they gained power until the present day, which is the year 332, two hundred years have elapsed. This is so because Abu'l `Abbas al-Saffah received the oath of homage as caliph in the month of Rabi` II, in the year 132 and we reached this point in composing this book in the month of Rabi` I, in the year 332 [November, 943], during the caliphate of al-Muttaqi Bi'llah. God knows best what will befall them in future days that are to follow this moment in time.

2278. In our two earlier books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, and God be thanked, we narrated highlights of Umayyad history, their curious names, the interesting events of their days, their covenants, instructions, and correspondence, as also the major events of their times and the activities of the Kharijites of their days, such as the Azariqa, the Ibadiyya and others. We further narrated the history of those Talibids who rose in rebellion calling for justice, commanding the good and forbidding evil, and were then killed in their days. We carried the narrative on to their successors, the Abbasids, taking the story down to the caliphate of al-Muttaqi Bi'llah and bringing the account to this very year, which is the year 332. What we have included in this chapter as to the totality of their history and dates might differ from what we had earlier set forth in detail by one day, by ten days or by a month when mentioning the state and

number of days of each of them, but this is what is reliably known about the dating of their years and the total span of their rule. God knows best.

Chapter 106

An account of the Abbasid state, with a brief account of the history of Marwan and his death, and highlights of his wars and conduct

2279. In our book *al-Awsat* we described the views of the Rawandiyya--- these are the party of the progeny of al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib in Khurasan and elsewhere---who argue that when the Prophet's soul was taken to God, the most worthy successor to the imamate was his uncle al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib since he was his paternal uncle, his heir and his kinsman. They cite the words of the Qur'an: {Blood relatives are more closely obligated one to another in the Book of God.} They further claim that people usurped the rights of al-`Abbas and were unjust to him until God eventually restored this right to his descendants. They called themselves quit of Abu Bakr and `Umar, but accepted the caliphate of `Ali ibn Abi Talib since al-`Abbas himself had accepted it when he said to `Ali: "Son of my brother, come so that I can pay you homage, and no two people will differ over the matter." They also cite the words of Dawud ibn `Ali which he delivered from the pulpit of Kufa the day homage was paid to Abu'l `Abbas: "People of Kufa, no legitimate imam ever came to rule over you after God's Prophet except for `Ali ibn Abi Talib and this man standing here among you," by which he meant Abu'l `Abbas al-Saffah.

2280. The Rawandiyya composed several works in support of their claims, works that circulate among this group and its followers. There is, for instance, a book composed by `Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz*, entitled *Imamat Wuld al-`Abbas*, where he defends this sect and cites the action taken by Abu Bakr as regards the oasis of Fadak and other matters, his encounter with Fatima and how she demanded her inheritance from her

father, the Prophet, and how she called upon her husband, her two sons and Umm Ayman as witnesses. Al-Jahiz then describes the argument between Fatima and Abu Bakr and the resultant quarrel, and what she said and was said to her, and how Abu Bakr quoted her father's statement to the effect that "We prophets do not inherit or bequeath" and how she countered by quoting the Quran: {And Solomon inherited David.} Hence, if prophecy itself cannot be inherited, this means that their property can be inherited. Other arguments back and forth were also quoted. But al-Jahiz did not compose that work nor adduced all these arguments in favor of the Rawandiyya, that is, the group who believed in the progeny of al-`Abbas, out of conviction because this was not what he truly believed. He did so merely out of jesting and for fun.

2281. Al-Jahiz composed another work called *Kitab al-`Uthmaniyya*, where he adduced arguments convincing to himself and supported by proofs he imagined to be rational and where, to his own satisfaction, he divests `Ali from his virtues and merits and argues for the merits and superiority of others, and all of this in order to suppress the truth and counter those who uphold it. However: {But God shall perfect his light, even though the unbelievers detest it.} Not content with that book, al-Jahiz went on to compose yet another book on the imamate of the Marwanids and the views of their followers. I saw this book, which is entitled *Imamat Amir al-Mu`minin Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufian*. In this work al-Jahiz defends Mu`awiya against `Ali ibn Abi Talib and his followers, the Rafida, and where he mentions the members of the Marwanid dynasty and defends their imamate. He then composed yet another work entitled *Masa'il al-`Uthmaniyya*, where he mentions what he had failed to mention previously and contradicts himself by listing the virtues and merits of the Commander of the Believers `Ali.

2282. I myself wrote a refutation of his works such as *Kitab al-Uthmaniyya* and others. A number of Shi`ite theologians also wrote refutations like Abu `Isa al-Warraq, al-Hasan ibn Musa al-Nawbakhti and others who make mention of this subject in their works on the imamate, whether devoted entirely to the subject or treating it in passing. Another work which refuted al-Jahiz was written by a prominent Baghdad Mu`tazilite, Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn `Abdullah al-Iskafi, an ascetic and pious man who argued for the superiority of `Ali and against the imamate of the second best man.* Al-Iskafi died in the year 240 [854-5], the same year in which Ahmad ibn Hanbal died. We shall mention the death of al-Jahiz in a later section of this work and also the death of other Mu`tazilites, although we have covered this topic in our earlier works.

2283. The later Rawandiyya, those who moved away from the Kaysaniyya, i.e. those who adhere to the imamate of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya who are called Jiryaniyya, the followers of Abu Muslim `Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad, the champion of the Abbasid cause, whose nickname was Jiryan---these later Rawandiyya hold that Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya was the imam after `Ali ibn Abi Talib. They argue that Muhammad designated his son Abu Hashim; that Abu Hashim designated `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib; that `Ali ibn `Abdullah designated his son Muhammad ibn `Ali; that Muhammad designated his son Ibrahim the imam who was murdered in Harran; and that Ibrahim designated the imamate to his brother Abu'l `Abbas `Abdullah son of al-Harithiyya.

2284. Abu Muslim is also a subject of dispute. Some people hold that he was an Arab, others that he was a manumitted slave from the people of al-Birs and al-Jam`in, from a village called Khartina. Garments known as Birsdiyya and Khartiniyya are named after that village which is situated in the hinterland of Kufa. These people claim that he acted as an overseer of

Idris ibn Ma`qil al-`Ijli. Then fate intervened and propelled him upwards to the point where he came in contact with Muhammad ibn `Ali and then with Ibrahim ibn Muhammad, the imam. Ibrahim sent him to Khurasan and ordered his followers to obey him and abide by his commands and views. So he grew in strength, his power expanded, and he displayed black colors which became like an ornament in dress and in pennants and standards. The first to display black colors among the people of Khurasan were the inhabitants of Nishapur, where Usayyid ibn `Abdullah began that custom which then spread throughout the cities and regions of Khurasan.

2285. As the power of Abu Muslim increased so the power of Nasr ibn Sayyar, an official of Marwan ibn Muhammad and governor of Khurasan, declined. There were many battles between Nasr and Abu Muslim where the latter resorted to trickery and propaganda by dividing those who supported Nasr from among the Yemenites and Nizaris in Khurasan, and by using other stratagems to deceive his enemy. Nasr had fought numerous battles against al-Kirmani until the latter was killed. These battles we recounted in detail in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, where we mentioned how the affair of the Kirmani, Juday` ibn `Ali, began and what transpired between him and Salm ibn Ahwaz, the commander of Nasr ibn Sayyar. We further recounted the activities of Khalid ibn Barmak, Qahtaba ibn Shabib and other missionaries of the Abbasid cause resident in Khurasan such as Sulaiman ibn Kathir and Abu Dawud Khalid ibn Ibrahim and their colleagues. We also discussed their slogans when their call began and their war cry: “Muhammad the Victorious!” We further explained the reason for their adopting the color black rather than another color.

2286. The correspondence between Nasr ibn Sayyar and Marwan grew long. Nasr kept informing him of the situation and how the Abbasid call

was growing ever stronger. Among the matters Nasr wrote to him about were the circumstances surrounding Abu Muslim and his followers. Nasr had investigated and then discovered that Abu Muslim was calling for the imamate of Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas. In his correspondence, Nasr included the following verses:

*In between the ashes I can see live coals,
And flames about to rise.
A fire might be started by rubbing two dry sticks,
And a war begins with an exchange of words.
If you do not put out that fire we will reap a war,
So evil that it will turn the hair of a youth grey.
In amazement I say: I wonder,
Are the Umayyads awake or asleep?
If our people are sleeping
Tell them: Arise for it is time to do so!
Or else pack up your baggage and say:
Farewell to Islam and the Arabs!*

2287. When that letter reached Marwan, it found him preoccupied with fighting the Kharijites in the Jazira and elsewhere. Marwan had been fighting al-Dahhak ibn Qais al-Haruri until, after many battles, he killed him between Kafar Tuta and Ra's al-`Ayn. Al-Dahhak had first risen in rebellion in the territory of Shahrazur. When al-Dahhak was killed, the Kharijites elected al-Khaibari as leader, and when he in turn was killed, they appointed Abu'l Dalfa' Shaiban al-Shaibani. Marwan had also been fighting Nu`aym ibn Thabit al-Judhami who had rebelled against him in the land of Tiberias and al-Urdunn in al-Sham, and he too was killed by Marwan in the year 128 [745-6]. So Marwan had no idea what to do about Nasr and Khurasan nor how to aid him, given the wars and civil strife he had to deal with. Hence, in answer to Nasr's message Marwan

wrote back: “The person on the scene sees more than one who is absent, so lance the boil in your land.” When that letter reached Nasr, he said to his intimates: “Your master has informed you not to expect any aid from him.”

2288. For most of his days and until he was killed, Marwan did not come near women. One day, a slave woman appeared before him in a tempting pose and he said to her: “By God I shall not come anywhere near you nor shall I untie any of your straps as long as Khurasan is in turmoil and aflame under Nasr ibn Sayyar and while Abu Mujrim* has him in a stranglehold.” Yet, despite his circumstances, he would often read the biographies and wars of Persian kings and others. Some of his intimates once reproached him for forsaking women, perfume and other delights and Marwan answered: “What prevents me from doing so is what prevented the Commander of the Believers `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan.” When asked what that was, Marwan replied: “The governor of North Africa once sent `Abd al-Malik a slave girl of surpassing beauty and perfect form, a joy to behold. When she stood before him, he contemplated her beauty while holding in his hand a letter he had just received from al-Hajjaj at Dayr al-Jamajim, who was then lining up for battle against Ibn al-Ash`ath. He threw the letter to one side and said to her: ‘By God, you are all that the soul might desire.’ The slave woman asked: ‘What then prevents you from coming to me, O Commander of the Believers, if I am truly as you describe me?’ He replied: ‘What prevents me is a line of verse by al-Akhtal:

They are a people who, when they go to war,

They firmly tie their waist belts and forsake women, even when pure.

How can I enjoy myself when Ibn al-Ash`ath is lined up in battle against Abu Muhammad, with Arab notables fallen in battle? No, by God!’ He

then ordered her to be well taken care of, and when Ibn al-Ash`ath was finally killed, she was the first slave woman with whom he was closeted.”

2289. When Nasr ibn Sayyar despaired of any aid coming to him from Marwan, he wrote to Yazid ibn `Umar ibn Hubaira al-Fazari, Marwan’s governor of Iraq, asking for reinforcements and aid against his enemies and included the following verses in his letter:

*Tell Yazid, and speech is best when true,
Having found that no good ever comes from lying,
That I see in the land of Khurasan,
Eggs which when hatched can produce wonders.
They are chicks two years old, but have grown big,
Not yet ready to fly though covered in soft feathers.
If they fly and no means are found to prevent them,
They will ignite the flames of war---and what flames!*

Yazid ibn `Umar did not answer his letter, being fully occupied with putting down civil strife in Iraq.

2290. The Kharijites of Yemen then entered Mecca and Medina. They were led by Abu Hamza al-Mukhtar ibn `Awf al-Azdi and Balj ibn `Uqba al-Azdi. These two and those who followed them were calling for `Abdullah ibn Yahya al-Kindi as leader of the community. He called himself the “Champion of Justice” and was addressed as Commander of the Believers. He was an Ibadi by conviction and a prominent Kharijite. This was in the year 129 [746-7]. In the year 130, Marwan equipped and dispatched an army led by `Abd al-Malik ibn Muhammad ibn `Atiyya al-Sa`di who met the Kharijites at Wadi al-Qura. Balj was killed while Abu Hamza led the remainder of the army to Mecca. `Abd al-Malik pursued him and a battle took place where Abu Hamza and most Kharijites were killed. `Abd al-Malik then led Marwan’s army, made up of people from al-Sham, to the Yemen while `Abdullah ibn Yahya al-Kindi the Kharijite

led an army out of San`a. The two armies met near al-Ta'if and the territory of Jurash where a major battle took place in which `Abdullah ibn Yahya and most of the Ibadis with him were killed, while the remainder of the Kharijites fled to Hadramawt. Most of that land remains Ibadi to the present day, i.e. the year 332, there being no doctrinal differences between them and the Kharijites of Oman.

2291. `Abd al-Malik then marched on with Marwan's army and entered San`a. Meanwhile, Sulaiman ibn Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik, fearing Marwan, had contacted the Kharijites of the Jazira, and `Abdullah ibn Mu`awiya ibn `Abdullah ibn Ja`far took over Istakhr and other territories in the land of Faris until he was expelled from them. He then headed to Khurasan where he was arrested by Abu Muslim. We mentioned those who believe in Abu Muslim's imamate and follow his call in our book entitled *Al-Maqalat fi Usul a-Diyanat*, when discussing the break-up of the Shi`a and their diverse sects. Abu Muslim's power increased further and he came to dominate most of Khurasan whereas Nasr grew ever weaker as he received no reinforcements. So Nasr left Khurasan and went to Rayy then left Rayy and settled in Sawa, between Hamadan and Rayy, where he died of grief.

2292. When Nasr had arrived somewhere between Khurasan and Rayy he wrote a letter to Marwan, informing him that he had left Khurasan and that the rebellion which had driven him out was about to engulf the entire realm. He included the following verses in his letter:

*We and what we seek to hide of our circumstances,
Are like a bull led to the butcher,
Or like a girl whose family imagines is a virgin,
But is in fact nine months pregnant;
Or else like a robe, torn and shabby,
That cannot be mended by a skillful tailor.*

*We used to patch that robe but now it is in tatters,
And the tears are too wide for the mender to mend.*

2293. Marwan had barely finished reading that letter when his officials in charge of the roads brought him a messenger who was carrying a letter from Abu Muslim in Khurasan to Ibrahim ibn Muhammad, the imam, where he informed him of his news and the general state of affairs. When Marwan examined the letter of Abu Muslim, he said to the messenger: “Do not be afraid. How much did your master pay you?” The man mentioned a certain sum. Marwan said: “Here are ten thousand dirhams. What you were paid was a paltry sum. Take the letter to Ibrahim, tell him nothing about what took place, obtain his answer and bring it to me.” The messenger did so. Marwan then contemplated Ibrahim’s answer to Abu Muslim, written in his own hand, in which he commanded him to exert his best efforts and trick his enemy, in addition to other dos and don’ts. Marwan detained the messenger, then wrote to al-Walid ibn Mu`awiya ibn Marwan, his governor of Damascus, ordering him to write to the governor of al-Balqa’ to proceed to the village called Kirar al-Humayma, arrest Ibrahim ibn Muhammad, put him in heavy chains and send him to Marwan with a strong cavalry escort. Al-Walid sent that message to the governor of al-Balqa’ who came to that village and found Ibrahim sitting in the mosque. Ibrahim was arrested, his hands were tied behind his shoulders [reading *kattafahu*] and he was conveyed to al-Walid who sent him on to Marwan. The latter imprisoned him in Harran.

2294. A lengthy conversation ensued when Ibrahim was led into Marwan’s presence. Ibrahim spoke harshly to Marwan and denied all that Marwan had mentioned with regards to the correspondence with Abu Muslim. So Marwan said: “You hypocrite! Is this not the letter you wrote in answer to Abu Muslim’s letter to you?” He then brought out the messenger and asked him: “Do you know this man?” When Ibrahim was

faced with all this he fell silent, realizing that he had been betrayed by someone he had trusted. Meanwhile, Abu Muslim's power increased even further. In prison with Ibrahim were a group from the Hashim and Umayyad families, including `Abdullah ibn `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Marwan and al-`Abbas ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. Marwan feared they might rebel against him. Among the Hashim clan were `Isa ibn `Ali, `Abdullah ibn `Ali and `Isa ibn Musa. Abu `Ubaida al-Tha`labi, who was with them in prison, stated that a number of non-Arab clients and others attacked them in prison. They entered the cell where Ibrahim, al-`Abbas and `Abdullah were being held, stayed for about an hour, then left, closing the door behind them. The following morning, said Abu `Ubaida, we entered to find that they had been murdered. With them were two young pages serving them who seemed on the point of death. When the pages saw us, they calmed down, so we asked them what had happened. They replied: "Pillows were placed over the faces of al-`Abbas and `Abdullah and they sat on them. They flailed for a while then were still. As for Ibrahim, they placed his head inside a bag they had which contained powdered lime. He thrashed for a while then was still."

2295. The letter from Ibrahim to Abu Muslim, intercepted by Marwan, contained, after a long text, the following verses in the *rajaz* meter:

*Ahead of you lies an event whose signs have already become manifest,
A road with a clear direction.*

Nothing remains but to unsheathe the sword.

2296. Other versions of the murder of Ibrahim the imam that differ from the one cited above also exist. These were all treated at length in our book *al-Awsat*. In that work we also described the battle between Qahtaba and Ibn Hubaira on the Euphrates, and how Qahtaba drowned in that river, and the entry of Qahtaba's son, al-Hasan, into Kufa. Marwan then marched until he reached the Lesser Zab river and a bridge was built

upon it. Advancing against him was `Abdullah ibn `Ali with the army and commanders of Khurasan. This was in the year 132, two nights remaining from the month of Jumada II [February 11, 750]. The two armies then met in battle. Marwan had arranged his cavalry in battle squares of one or two thousand knights. Marwan lost the battle and a large number of his men were killed or drowned. Three hundred members of the Umayyad family alone drowned in that river, apart from other men. Among the Umayyads who drowned was Ibrahim ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik, the “Deposed”, who was a brother of Yazid the “Deficient.” Another version states that Marwan had already killed Ibrahim ibn al-Walid and crucified him before that battle. Marwan was defeated on the Zab river on Saturday, the eleventh night of Jumada II, in the year 132 [January 25, 750].

2297. Marwan in defeat headed to Mosul but its inhabitants prevented him from entering it and displayed black colors when they saw that his cause was lost. He went on to Harran, his seat of power and normal residence. The people of Harran, when the cursing of `Ali ibn Abi Talib was stopped on Friday pulpits, had refused to stop the practice saying: “There can be no prayers without cursing Abu Turab.” They persisted in this custom until the events in the east and the emergence of the black banners. Marwan had forbidden the practice of cursing which turned people against him. So he led his family and the other Umayyads out of Harran and crossed the Euphrates. `Abdullah ibn `Ali meanwhile camped at the gate of Harran, destroyed Marwan’s palace on which he had spent ten million dirhams, and seized all his treasuries and monies. Marwan with his family and close followers marched on until they reached the Abi Futrus river in Palestine and al-Urdunn, and camped there.

2298. `Abdullah ibn `Ali then marched to Damascus which he besieged. At that time Damascus had fifty thousand fighting men with al-Walid ibn

Mu`awiya ibn Marwan and `Abd al-Jabbar ibn Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. Partisanship broke out amongst them as to the merits of the Yemenites over the Nizaris and vice versa, so `Abdullah ibn `Ali was able to capture both al-Walid and `Abd al-Jabbar and sent them to Abu'l `Abbas al-Saffah who executed and crucified them in al-Hira. In Damascus itself, `Abdullah ibn `Ali killed a large number of people. Marwan meanwhile headed to Egypt. `Abdullah ibn `Ali then reached the Abi Futrus river and killed some eighty members of the Umayyad family. This occurred on Wednesday, the middle of the month of Dhu'l Qa`da in the year 132 [June 25, 750]. In al-Balqa', Sulaiman ibn Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik was killed and his head was sent to `Abdullah ibn `Ali. Salih ibn `Ali, accompanied by Abu `Awn `Abd al-Malik ibn Yazid and `Amir ibn Isma`il al-Madhhiji, then set off in pursuit of Marwan, and caught up with him in Egypt. He had camped in Busir, so they attacked him at night, assaulted his camp, beat their drums, shouted "God is great" and called out "Revenge for Ibrahim!" Marwan's troops imagined that they had been surrounded by the entire black-cladded army, and Marwan was killed. His manner of death in that night's battle is disputed. He was killed on the night of Sunday, three days remaining from the month of Dhu'l Hijja, in the year 132 [August 6, 750].

2299. When `Amir ibn Isma`il killed Marwan and was heading towards the church in which Marwan's daughters and womenfolk were staying, a servant of Marwan's, sword in hand, tried to enter the church. The man was seized and asked what he was about to do. He replied: "Marwan ordered me that if he is killed, I am to execute his daughters and womenfolk." They were about to kill him when he said: "Do not kill me for if you do so you will lose the bequest of the Prophet of God." When told to be careful what he was saying he replied: "If I am lying, then kill me! Come along and follow me." They did so and he led them out of the

village to a mound of sand and said: “Dig this up.” When they did so, they found the *burda*, rod and scepter which Marwan had buried in order not to pass them on to the Hashim family. `Amir ibn Isma`il sent these to Salih ibn `Ali who sent them on to his brother `Abdullah ibn `Ali who in turn sent them to Abu'l `Abbas al-Saffah. These objects were then handed down from one Abbasid caliph to the next until the days of al-Muqtadir, and it is said that he was wearing the *burda* the day he was murdered. I do not know whether these objects still remain with al-Muttaqi Li'llah until the present time, i.e. the year 332, when he settled in al-Raqqah, or whether they have been lost.

2300. `Amir ibn Isma`il then sent Marwan's daughters, his slaves and the prisoners to Salih ibn `Ali. When they entered into his presence, Marwan's eldest daughter spoke: “O uncle of the Commander of the Believers, may God maintain your power as long as He wishes to maintain it, may He bring you joy in all your affairs and bestow His unique blessings upon you and bring you prosperity in this world and the next. We are your daughters and the daughters of your brother and your cousin. May your forgiveness of us equal our earlier tyranny towards you.” He said: “If so, then we would not leave a single one of you alive, neither male nor female. Did not your father only recently kill Ibrahim the imam in his prison in Harran? Did not Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik kill Zaid ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali and crucify him in the Kunasa of Kufa, and kill his wife in al-Hira at the hands of Yusuf ibn `Umar al-Thaqafi? Did not al-Walid ibn Yazid kill Yahya ibn Zaid and crucify him in Khurasan? Did not `Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad, of doubtful parentage [reading *al-da`iyy*], kill Muslim ibn `Aqil ibn Abi Talib in Kufa? Did not Yazid ibn Mu`awiya kill al-Husain ibn `Ali at the hands of `Umar ibn Sa`d, together with the members of his family who died in his presence? Did he not lead out the womenfolk of the Prophet of God as war captives

until he brought them to Yazid ibn Mu`awiya? And did he not, before the arrival of those women, send Yazid the head of al-Husain ibn `Ali, the head pierced by a spear, which was paraded throughout the towns and countryside of al-Sham before reaching Yazid in Damascus, as if it was the head of some idol worshipper? Did he not make the womenfolk of the Prophet stand in line like war captives, to be ogled by the troops of al-Sham, those coarse and wicked men, who then asked that the womenfolk of the Prophet be granted to them, out of contempt for what they owed to the Prophet, in defiance of the Almighty, and in denial of His grace? So what have you left undone to us, the members of the Prophet's house, or acted justly towards us?" She replied: "O uncle of the Commander of the Believers, then let your forgiveness encompass us." He replied: "Yes, forgiveness has encompassed you. If you wish, I can marry you to al-Fadl ibn Salih ibn `Ali and marry your sister to his brother `Abdullah ibn Salih." She said: "O uncle of the Commander of the Believers, is this an appropriate time for weddings? Rather, send us back to Harran." He said: "I shall do so, God willing." He then sent them off to Harran. As they entered that city, they wept loudly for Marwan, tore the front of their dresses and wailed so loudly that the military camp echoed with their cries of sorrow.

2301. Marwan's reign until homage was paid to Abu'l `Abbas al-Saffah lasted five years, two months and ten days, as mentioned above in this work and the dispute regarding the length of his days. Between the homage of Abu'l `Abbas and Marwan's own death in Busir was a period of eight months, so his total reign until he was killed was five years, ten months and ten days. We mentioned above the dispute regarding his age and other events of his days and recounted all his history at length in our earlier works.

2302. Marwan's state secretary was `Abd al-Hamid ibn Yahya ibn Sa`d, author of epistles and official proclamations. He was the first to make epistles long and to use formulas of thanks in the chapter headings of books, and later authors followed his example. It is mentioned that when Marwan felt certain that his kingship was about to end, he said to `Abd al-Hamid: "It is necessary now for you to join the side of my enemy and to show that you have betrayed me. Their admiration for your literary accomplishments will cause them to think well of you. If you can be of use to me while I live, well and good. If not, you will not fail to show your respect for me after I die." `Abd al-Hamid replied: "What you advise me to do is the most profitable of two choices to you and the uglier of two choices to me. I have nothing to offer but patience until God either sends you victory or else I am killed with you." He then recited:

Am I to be loyal in secret and show enmity in the open?

What excuse can I then offer that people would accept on trust?

2303. In our book *al-Awsat* we recounted the story of Abu'l Ward and his murder as also that of Bishr ibn `Abdullah al-Wahidi and his murder, making it unnecessary to repeat these accounts here.

2304. Isma`il ibn `Abdullah al-Qasri stated: "Marwan summoned me after he had fled in defeat to Harran and said to me: 'O Abu Hashim---he had never addressed me by my patronymic before then---you have seen how events have turned out. You are a trustworthy man and, as the proverb goes, no perfume can be kept after `Arus is gone.* So what do you advise?' I answered, 'What have you decided upon, O Commander of the Believers?' He said: 'I have decided to depart with my clients and with whoever wishes to follow me, follow the road across the frontier, settle in a Byzantine city, write to the Byzantine king and get him to grant me safe-conduct. Several Persian kings have done this in the past, and this is no disgrace to kings. While there, I would be joined by a constant

stream of people friendly to me, either in fear, or escaping from the enemy, or in hope of gain, so my followers will increase. I will remain there until God reveals His plan to me and supports me against my enemy.’ When I grasped what he intended, which was in fact the wise course of action, and remembered his earlier savagery against my Qahtani people, I said: ‘I beseech God to protect you, O Commander of the Believers, from such a course of action, which would make the polytheists gain power over your daughters and womenfolk. The Byzantines cannot ever be trusted, and you do not know what the future might bring. If anything should happen to you while you are in the land of the Byzantines, and may nothing but good happen to you, your successors will be lost. Instead, cross the Euphrates and call upon the people of al-Sham, province by province, for you enjoy prestige and power there, and in each province you have followers who will march behind you until you reach Egypt. That land, of all God’s earth, is the one most possessed of wealth, horses and men. There, you will have al-Sham right before you and North Africa behind you. If you meet with what you like, you can move into al-Sham but if otherwise, you can retire to North Africa.’ Marwan said: ‘You are right and I shall seek God’s verdict.’ He then crossed the Euphrates and, by God, only two men from Qais crossed with him. One was Ibn Hamza al-Sulami, who was his foster brother, and the other was al-Kawthar ibn al-Aswad al-Ghanawi.

2305. Marwan’s partisanship in favor of the Nizaris did him little good. In fact, they betrayed him and let him down. Crossing the land of Qinnasrin and Khunasira, the Tanukh tribe, which was settled in Qinnasrin, attacked the rear of his army and the inhabitants of Homs rebelled against him. Proceeding to Damascus, al-Harith ibn `Abd al-Rahman al-Jurashi rebelled against him. In al-Urdunn, Hashim ibn `Amr al-Qaisi did the same and so did al-Hakam ibn Dab`an ibn Rawh ibn

Zinba` in Palestine when they all saw that his cause was lost. Marwan then realized that Isma`il ibn `Abdullah al-Qasri had deceived him and was not sincere in his advice. He felt that he had made the wrong move by soliciting the advice of a Qahtani man who was seeking revenge for his Qahtan group from their opposite number, the Nizaris. He came to believe that the right course of action would have been for him to cross the frontier, stay at some Byzantine fortress, write to the Byzantine king and then consider his next move.

2306. Al-Mada'ini, al-`Utbi and others state that when Marwan camped at the Zab river he singled out a troop chosen from his army, made up of men of al-Sham and Jazira, a troop consisting of a hundred thousand cavalymen on a hundred thousand five-year old horses. On the day of battle, and as `Abdullah ibn `Ali approached with his black-clad troops, preceded by men carrying black standards who were mounted on Bactrian camels, their saddles made of willow and *gharb* tree, Marwan turned to those standing near and said: "Do you see their spears as thick as palm tree trunks? Do you observe their standards fluttering over their camels like flocks of black ravens?" As he was speaking, a flock of ravens flew through an opening and settled on the first standards carried by `Abdullah ibn `Ali, their black colors complementing the blackness of the pennants and standards, while Marwan looked on. He felt this to be an evil omen and said: "Do you see how blackness has been joined to blackness?" The ravens were like black clouds. Marwan then looked at his chosen troops and found them overcome with fear, terror and a feeling of failure, so he said: "It is the period of waiting [*`idda*] but what use is waiting when time [*mudda*] has passed?*"

2307. Other stories are told of Marwan on the Zab river which we recounted in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, making it unnecessary to repeat them here. In God is success.

Chapter 107

An account of the caliphate of Abu'l `Abbas `Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Saffah (“the bloodshedder”)

2308. Abu'l `Abbas al-Saffah, whose full name was `Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn `Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib, received the oath of homage in Kufa on the night of Friday, the thirteenth of Rabi` II, in the year 132 [November 29, 749]. Another version has it that this occurred on Wednesday the eleventh of Rabi` II of the year 132. Yet another version places that event in the middle of Jumada II of that same year. His mother was Rayta bint `Ubaidullah ibn `Abdullah ibn `Abd al-Madan al-Harithiyya. He rode to the congregational mosque on Friday and delivered his sermon while standing, whereas the Umayyads used to deliver their sermons while seated. The people were loud in their praise, saying: “You have restored the Prophet’s practice, O cousin of the Prophet!” His caliphate lasted four years, nine months and twenty days and he died in al-Anbar, a city he had built, on Sunday, the twelfth of Dhu’l Hijja, in the year 136 [June 8, 754], aged thirty-three years, or twenty-nine in another version. His mother had been married to `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, from whom she begat al-Hajjaj ibn `Abd al-Malik. When `Abd al-Malik died, Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas married her from whom she begat `Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Saffah, `Ubaidullah, Dawud and Maimuna.

A summary narrative of his history and conduct together with a brief account of his days

2309. When Ibrahim the imam was imprisoned in Harran and realized that there was no escape for him from Marwan, he settled his will and made it in favor of his brother Abu'l `Abbas `Abdullah ibn Muhammad, whom he entrusted with running the future state and enjoined upon him to act decisively. He further instructed him not to stay any longer in al-

Humaima but to proceed directly to Kufa since power will inevitably pass to the Abbasid family as revealed to them through inspiration. He also revealed to him the names of the missionaries and prefects**[nuqaba ']* in Khurasan, and outlined a plan to him that he instructed him to follow to the letter. Ibrahim then handed that will to Sabiq al-Khwarizmi, his client, and ordered him, if anything happened to him by day or night at the hands of Marwan, to proceed at once to al-Humaima and hand over the will to his brother Abu'l `Abbas.

2310. When Ibrahim met his death, Sabiq hastened to Humaima and handed the will over to `Abu'l `Abbas, announcing to him the death of Ibrahim. Abu'l `Abbas ordered him to keep the will a secret and confine himself to announcing Ibrahim's death. Abu'l `Abbas then informed his family about the will, and called upon his brother Abu Ja`far `Abdullah ibn Muhammad, his nephew `Isa ibn Musa ibn Muhammad, and his uncle `Abdullah ibn `Ali, to stand by him and support him. Abu'l `Abbas then hurried to Kufa, accompanied by the above named relatives and other family members who were able to depart in haste with him. On the road to Kufa and at some Arab wells they met a nomad woman. Abu'l `Abbas, his brother Abu Ja`far and his uncle `Abdullah ibn `Ali had reached the well ahead of the others. The woman said: "I swear I never saw faces like these! A caliph, a caliph and a rebel!" Abu Ja`far said to her: "Slave of God, what did you say?" She answered: "By God, this one will assume the caliphate---she pointed to al-Saffah---then you will succeed, and then this one will rebel against you---and she pointed to `Abdullah ibn `Ali."

2311. When they reached Dumat al-Jandal, they were met by Dawud ibn `Ali and Musa ibn Dawud, his son. They were on their way to Humaima, in the land of the Sharat, from Iraq. Dawud asked Abu'l `Abbas where he was heading and the latter told him the reason for his journey and informed him of the revolt in Khurasan in their favor, led by Abu

Muslim, and that he intended to declare a revolt in Kufa. Dawud said to him: “O Abu’l `Abbas, do you really intend to declare a revolt in Kufa when Marwan, chief of the Umayyads with his army of al-Sham and Jazira, is hovering over Iraq, and when Ibn Hubaira, chief of the Arabs, is in Iraq with most of the Arabs?” Abu’l `Abbas replied: “Uncle, he who loves life will be humiliated.” He then quoted the verse of al-A`sha:

A death you suffer when you’re not a weakling

Is no shame, when destruction comes upon a soul.

2312. Dawud turned to his son Musa and said: “Son, your cousin is right. Let us turn back with them and either live in honor or die in honor.” So they turned their mounts around and joined him. Abu’l `Abbas then proceeded to Kufa. He had already met Abu Muslim. When Abu Salama Hafs ibn Sulaiman heard about the death of Ibrahim the imam, he secretly decided to forsake the cause of the Abbasids and pay his allegiance to the family of Abu Talib. Thus, when Abu’l `Abbas arrived secretly in Kufa with his family, the men in black were with Abu Salama in Kufa. The latter housed them all in a house belonging to al-Walid ibn Sa`d and among the Awd, a clan from the Yemen. In an earlier section of this work, we listed the virtues and good deeds* of the Awd clan when narrating the history of al-Hajjaj and how the Awd declared themselves quit of `Ali and his pure progeny. Throughout my travels across the face of the earth and through diverse kingdoms and right until the present time, which is the year 332, I have found every single man from the Awd whom I have ever met and interrogated to be hostile to `Ali, and to be a supporter of the Marwanids. Abu Salama kept the arrival of Abu’l `Abbas and those with him a secret, and assigned a person to keep watch over them. Abu’l `Abbas arrived in Kufa in the month of Safar in the year 132 [Sept/Oct 749]. In that same year, letters were sent through the postal service calling for power to pass to the progeny of al-`Abbas.

2313. When Ibrahim the imam was murdered, Abu Salama feared that the Abbasid cause would collapse and him with it, so he sent Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn Aslam---Aslam having been a client of the Prophet-- and gave him two identical letters, one addressed to Abu `Abdullah Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, the other to Abu Muhammad `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib. Each letter invited the addressee to come to him in order to hand over the call to him, and to obtain the oath of homage of the people of Khurasan on his behalf. Abu Salama instructed his messenger to make all possible haste, and not to be a messenger who engages in any argument. Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Rahman arrived in Medinah and met Abu `Abdullah Ja`far ibn Muhammad by night. When he went in to see him he informed him that he was a messenger of Abu Salama, and handed him the letter. Abu `Abdullah said to him: “What have I to do with Abu Salama? He is a follower of a cause other than mine.” Muhammad said: “I am only a messenger, so read the letter and answer him as you see fit.” Abu `Abdullah called for a lantern, took Abu Salama’s letter, placed it over the lantern until it was burnt and said to the messenger: “Go tell your master what you have witnessed.” He then quoted the verses of al-Kumait ibn Zaid:

*O you who lights a fire for others to see by,
And you who cuts wood for someone’s else benefit.*

2314. The messenger then left him, went to see `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan and gave him the letter. `Abdullah accepted the letter, read it and was overjoyed. The following morning, `Abdullah rode on a donkey and went to the house of Abu `Abdullah Ja`far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq. When the latter saw him he was surprised since `Abdullah was older than Ja`far, so he said to him: “O Abu Muhammad, some important matter must have brought you here.” He answered: “Yes, a matter too important to describe

properly.” “What is it, Abu Muhammad?” “A letter from Abu Salama inviting me to take over what he has built up, and our Shi`a from Khurasan have now come to him.” Ja`far said: “Since when have the people of Khurasan been your followers? Was it you who sent Abu Muslim to Khurasan? Did you order him to wear black? And as for those who have arrived in Iraq, was it for your sake that they came? Did you ever send them orders to do so? Do you know any of them?” `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan began to argue with him, then said: “These people want my son Muhammad because he is the Mahdi of this community.” Ja`far said: “By God he is not the Mahdi of the community! And should he draw his sword he will be killed!” `Abdullah kept arguing until he said: “By God, it is only jealousy that prevents you from accepting this!” Ja`far replied: “I swear that I am offering you sincere advice. Abu Salama wrote exactly the same letter to me, but his messenger did not meet with the same reception. I burned his letter before I read it.” `Abdullah then left Ja`far in anger and Abu Salama’s messenger returned only when al-Saffah received homage as caliph.

2315. One day, Abu Humaid al-Tusi left the camp and entered Kufa where he met Sabiq al-Khwarizmi in the market of Kunasa and asked him about Ibrahim, the imam. When told that Marwan had killed him in prison, Marwan being then in Harran, Abu Humaid asked: “To whom belongs the bequest?” He replied: “To his brother Abu’l `Abbas.” “Where is he?” “He is here with you in Kufa along with his brother and a group of his uncles and other family members.” “How long have they been here?” “Two months.” “Take us to them.” “We will meet here tomorrow.” Sabiq wanted to obtain the permission of Abu’l `Abbas first, so went to see him and informed him. The latter blamed him for not bringing Abu Humaid to him directly.

2316. Abu Humaid then went off and told a number of Khurasani military commanders who were with Abu Salama, among whom was Abu'l Jahm and Musa ibn Ka`b, this latter being their leader. The following day, Sabiq came to the agreed spot, met Abu Humaid and the two proceeded to see Abu'l `Abbas and those with him. When they entered, Abu Humaid asked: "Which one of you is the imam?" Dawud ibn `Ali pointed to Abu'l `Abbas and said: "This is your caliph." Abu Humaid bent forward, kissing the hems of his garment and greeted him with the caliphal greeting. Meanwhile Abu Salama knew nothing of all this. Then the most prominent commanders went forth and paid their homage. When Abu Salama heard of this, he too paid homage. The army then entered Kufa in full dress uniform, lined up and brought the cavalry forward, so Abu'l `Abbas and those with him rode out and reached the governor's palace. This took place on Friday, the twelfth of Rabi` II, in 132 [November 28, 749]. In an earlier section of this work we mentioned the dispute over the month in which he received homage. He then entered the congregational mosque from the governor's palace, thanked and praised God, mentioned God's might and grace and the merit of the Prophet, listed those who had held that bequest until it reached him, promised the people he would rule them well, then fell silent.

2317. Then his uncle Dawud ibn `Ali, standing below him on the pulpit, resumed speaking on his behalf and said: "By God, there was no legitimate caliph between you and the Prophet except `Ali ibn Abi Talib and the Commander of the Believers standing behind me now." Both then descended and Abu'l `Abbas proceeded to Abu Salama's camp where he stayed in his tent, leaving his uncle Dawud ibn `Ali in charge of Kufa and its hinterland. He then dispatched his uncle `Abdullah ibn `Ali to Abu'l `Awn `Abd al-Malik ibn Yazid, and the two of them marched against Marwan. The battle on the Zab and the defeat of Marwan have already

been described above. Abu'l `Abbas later heard about the killing of Marwan in Busir at the hands of `Amir ibn Isma`il.

2318. It is also said that a cousin of `Amir called Nafi` ibn `Abd al-Malik was in fact the person who killed Marwan in that night's battle without recognizing him, and that when `Amir cut off Marwan's head and seized his camp, he entered the church where Marwan had been staying, sat on his mattress and helped himself to his food. Marwan's eldest daughter, known as Umm Marwan, then came out and said: "O `Amir, the fate that brought Marwan down from his mattresses and made you sit on them, and made you eat Marwan's food, seize his power and lord it over his kingdom is capable also of overturning your joyous state." Al-Saffah heard about that act of `Amir and the words addressed to him by Marwan's daughter so became angry and wrote as follows to `Amir: "Woe to you! Could you not have found in the manners taught you by God what would have prevented you from eating Marwan's food and sitting on his mattress and bed and taking over his cushions? By God, had it not been the case that the Commander of the Believers construed your action as being done heedlessly and not out of greed, you would have felt his anger and painful chastisement to make you desist and act as a warning to others. When you receive the Commander of the Believers' letter, you are to offer a gift in charity to Almighty God in order to still His anger, and to pray in such a way as to show your humble penitence. You shall also fast for three days and order all your followers to do the same."

2319. When the head of Marwan was brought to Abu'l `Abbas and placed before him, he bowed long in prayer then raised his head and said: "I offer thanks to God that He did not delay my revenge against you and your people. I offer thanks to God who made me capture and overpower you." He added: "I care not when death might befall me. In revenge for

al-Husain and his family I have slaughtered two hundred Umayyads, burnt the remains of Hisham in revenge for my cousin Zaid ibn `Ali and killed Marwan in revenge for my brother Ibrahim.” He then quoted a line of verse:

*If they drink my blood, this will not suffice him who drinks it,
Nor will my fury be stilled if I drink their blood.*

He then turned his face in the direction of the *qibla**, prostrated for a long time with his face uncovered, and quoted the verses of al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib:

*Our people refused to treat us justly,
So justice was won by sharp swords in our hands, dripping blood.
These swords were inherited from pious ancestors,
Who carried them forward into battle and won the day.
These are swords that if they fall on the heads of men,
Leave them like ostrich eggs strewn on the battle field.*

Poets have composed a lot of poetry about Marwan and his days.

2320. Abu'l Khattab recounts the following story about Abu Ja`da ibn Hubaira al-Makhzumi. Abu Ja`da had been one of Marwan's viziers and boon companions. When Abu'l `Abbas attained power, Abu Ja`da joined him and became a close intimate of his. One day, he was attending an assembly of Abu'l `Abbas when Marwan's head was brought in and placed before him. Abu'l `Abbas was then in al-Hira. He turned to his companions and said: "Which of you knows this man?" Abu Ja`da said: "I know him. This is the head of Abu `Abd al-Malik Marwan ibn Muhammad, our erstwhile caliph, and may God be pleased with him." Abu Ja`da added: "The Shi`ites stared at me so hard they almost killed me with their looks." Abu'l `Abbas asked: "What year was he born?" I said: "In the year 76." Abu'l `Abbas then rose, his anger with me changing his color, and the rest of the assembly dispersed, and I too left,

regretting my words. That incident was widely talked about and I reflected that this was an error which could not be made good or ever be forgotten by people. When I reached home, I spent the rest of that day drawing up my will and covenant, and when night came I washed and prepared myself for prayers. It was the custom of Abu'l `Abbas, if he wished to act, to do so at night. So I spent the entire night awake until the morning.

2321. "In the morning, I rode my she-mule and reviewed in my mind those whom I could consult but found that none was more suitable than Sulaiman ibn Khalid, client of the Zuhra tribe. He was a man who enjoyed the highest esteem of Abu'l `Abbas so I went to see him and said: 'Did the Commander of the Believers mention my name yesterday?' He said: 'Yes, your name was mentioned. He said: 'The man is our nephew and he was simply being loyal to his master. If we treat him well he will be even more grateful to us.' I thanked him profusely and prayed God would reward him, then departed. I continued to frequent the assemblies of Abu'l `Abbas as usual and met with nothing but good. The words I uttered in the assembly of Abu'l `Abbas when Marwan's head was brought in then reached Abu Ja`far and `Abdullah ibn `Ali. The latter wrote to Abu'l `Abbas informing him of what he had heard of my words and saying that this cannot be tolerated. Abu Ja`far also wrote to Abu'l `Abbas informing him of what he had heard and added: 'He is our nephew and it is more appropriate for us to draw him close to us and treat him well.' I was told what the two of them had said, so I held my peace and time with its vagaries passed on.

2322. Abu Ja`da continued: "One day I was sitting in the assembly of Abu'l `Abbas, my standing with him having greatly increased, and he had shown me many favors. The people rose to leave and I also rose but Abu'l `Abbas said: 'Stay where you are, Ibn Hubaira.' So I sat. He rose to

go inside so I also rose but, once again, he ordered me to be seated. He raised the curtain, went in and I remained seated. He was absent for a while then the curtain was raised and he returned dressed in embroidered garments, an outer robe and an inner. I never saw anything so handsome as him or his dress. When the curtain was raised, I stood up but he again commanded me to sit, so I sat. He then said: ‘O Ibn Hubaira, I shall mention something to you which will not leave your head to enter into that of any other person.’ He then added: ‘You know how we arranged this question of succession and delegated power to whomever succeeds in killing Marwan. My uncle `Abdullah ibn `Ali was responsible for this because it was his army and troops that killed him. Yet here is my brother Abu Ja`far, a man of merit, wisdom, age and obedience to God’s commands. So how can one justify excluding him from the succession?’ He went on to praise Abu Ja`far at great length.

2323. ‘I said: May God guide the Commander of the Believers. I shall not offer any advice but will simply relate a story that you might wish to consider.’ He said: ‘Let’s hear it.’ I said: ‘We were once on a campaign in the Gulf of Constantinople with Maslama ibn `Abd al-Malik when a letter arrived from `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz, announcing the death of Sulaiman and his own accession to power. Maslama sent for me and tossed the letter to me to read, which I did. He then began to weep and I said: ‘God guide the Emir, cry not for the passing of your brother but for the passing of the caliphate from your father’s house to that of your cousins.’ He wept until his beard was drenched.’ When I finished that story, Abu’l `Abbas said: ‘Enough! I understand your meaning.’ He then said: ‘If you wish.’ I rose to leave but had not advanced far before he called after me and I turned back. He said: ‘Be on your way. You have rewarded one of them and exacted your revenge on the other.’ I was not sure what to admire more, his quick perception or his reference to that

earlier incident.” Abu Ja`da ibn Hubaira is a son of Ja`da ibn Hubaira al-Makhzumi whose mother was Fakhita Umm Hani’ bint Abu Talib, so that `Ali, Ja`far and `Aqil are his maternal uncles. We recounted his history in an earlier section of this work.

2324. In the history of al-Mada’ini, I found a report transmitted from Muhammad ibn al-Aswad, who said: “As `Abdullah ibn `Ali was conversing with his brother Dawud ibn `Ali, and accompanied by `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan, Dawud said to `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan: ‘Why don’t you order your two sons to make their appearance as the Mahdi?’ He answered: ‘I wish! But their time is not yet come.’

`Abdullah ibn `Ali turned to him and said: ‘Do you imagine your two sons will be the ones who will kill Marwan?’ He answered: ‘Yes, that is so.’ `Abdullah said: ‘Far from it, indeed!’ He then quoted a line of verse:

You will be convinced by one ready to die in battle,

Thin in the flesh, and from the sons of Ham.

He added: ‘By God, it is I who shall kill him.’” Someone once said to `Abdullah ibn `Ali: “`Abdullah ibn `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz mentions that he read in a book that the killer of Marwan is a person whose name begins with the letter `ayn, who is the son of a `ayn, and the son of a `ayn. He hoped it would be him.’ `Abdullah ibn `Ali said: “I am the one, by God, and I exceed him by three `ayns: I am `Abdullah ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn `Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim, whose name was `Amr ibn `Abd Manaf.”

2325. When Marwan lined up his troops for battle against `Abdullah ibn `Ali, he turned to someone standing near and said: “Who was that man who debated in your presence `Abdullah ibn Mu`awiya ibn `Abdullah ibn Ja`far, a man with a noble nose, sharp eyesight and handsome visage?” I the narrator said*: “The Almighty grants eloquence to whomsoever He wishes.” “He said: “It is him, not so?” I said: “Yes.” Marwan said: “So he

is from the progeny of al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib?” “Yes,” I replied. Marwan said: “We belong to God and to Him we shall return! Woe to you! I thought I was fighting someone from the progeny of Abu Talib, while this fellow is from the progeny of al-`Abbas and his name is `Abdullah! Do you know why I named as my successor my son `Ubaidullah after `Abdullah even though Muhammad is older than `Abdullah?” I said: “Why?” He replied: “Because we were informed that after me power will pass to `Abdullah and `Ubaidullah. So, I considered that `Ubaidullah was closer to `Abdullah than Muhammad and named him instead of Muhammad.” The narrator continues: “Having related this to his companion, Marwan then sent a secret message to `Abdullah ibn `Ali: ‘Power, my cousin, will pass to you, so fear God when dealing with our womenfolk.’ `Abdullah sent back the following answer: ‘We have every right to shed your blood but abide by what is right and just when dealing with your womenfolk.’”

2326. Mus`ab al-Zubairi* >his father, who said: “Umm Salama bint Ya`qub ibn Salama ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Walid ibn al-Walid ibn al-Mughira al-Makhzumi was the wife of `Abd al-`Aziz ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik. When he died, Hisham married her but he also died. One day, as she sat, Abu`l `Abbas al-Saffah walked past. He was handsome and attractive. She asked about him and his pedigree was narrated to her, so she sent him a female client of hers offering him marriage and told the female messenger to tell him: ‘Here are seven hundred dinars that I send to you.’ She was a woman of great wealth, much jewelry and many retainers. When the messenger came with her offer, Abu`l `Abbas told her: ‘I am poor and have no money.’ So the messenger gave him the money and he rewarded her, went to see Umm Salama’s brother, asked him for her hand in marriage and her brother agreed. Abu`l `Abbas gave her a wedding gift of five hundred dinars and distributed two hundred as

alms. That very night he entered upon her and found her seated on a platform, so he climbed up to her and found every single part of her body decked with jewelry so he could not consummate the marriage. She then called her female attendants, came down, changed her apparel, wore dyed garments, and laid out a mattress on the floor instead of where she was before, but he still could not consummate the marriage, so she said to him: 'Don't worry! Other men were also stricken like you.' He kept trying until he was finally able to consummate the marriage that night. She became his favorite and he swore he would not marry another wife or have any concubines, and she begat from him Muhammad and Raita. She then came to dominate him completely and he would not decide any issue before consulting her and obeying her commands. This lasted until he assumed the caliphate. He would not approach any other woman, free or slave, and fulfilled his oath to her.

2327. "Then, one day during his caliphate, Khalid ibn Safwan was closeted with him and said to him: 'O Commander of the Believers, I have been thinking of you and the wide extent of your realm. One single woman has captured your love and you have been content with her alone. If she falls ill, you fall ill, and if she is absent, you are absent. You have denied yourself the pleasure of dalliance with slave women, hearing their tales and enjoying whomever among them you wish to enjoy. Among them, O Commander of the Believers, there is the tall and delicate, the soft and white, the comely and black, the dark and graceful, the Berber women with large bottoms, born of mixed parentage in Medinah, whose charming conversation and private company you would find delightful. Then again, where is the Commander of the Believers when it comes to free women, to contemplating them and conversing joyously with them? If only the Commander of the Believers can see the tall and white, the dark and black-lipped, the blondes with large bottoms, the women of

mixed parentage, Kufan and Basran, with their charming speech, slender and slim waists, their hair in ringlets, their eyes daubed in *kohl*, their perfectly formed breasts, their handsome garments, their adornments and their shapes you would indeed behold objects of beauty.” Khalid proceeded to describe these women with great eloquence and to praise them to the skies by his charming choice of words and exquisite description.

2328. “When he finished speaking, Abu’l `Abbas said: ‘Woe to you, Khalid! By God, I have never heard more pleasurable words than what I have just heard from you, so repeat all this to me for they have truly hit their mark.’ Khalid repeated his speech even more eloquently then left. Abu’l `Abbas pondered long what he had heard from Khalid. When Umm Salama entered to see him, she found him pensive and worried and said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, I do not recognize you in this state! Has something happened to incense you, or have you heard some fearful piece of news?’ ‘Nothing of the sort,’ he answered. ‘So what’s the problem?’ she asked. He kept putting her off but she persisted until finally he told her what Khalid had been saying to him. ‘So what did you say to that son of a whore?’ she asked. He replied: ‘God be praised! He counsels me and you curse him?’ She left in anger and dispatched a gang of men from Bukhara armed with heavy sticks and ordered them to leave no bone in Khalid’s body unbroken.

2329. Meanwhile, Khalid said: “I went home pleased with myself after having observed how much the Commander of the Believers had enjoyed my words. I had no doubt that a royal gift would soon be on its way. Shortly thereafter, the Bukhari gang arrived while I sat at the door of my house. When I saw them coming, I was sure that they were bearing the royal gift and reward. They stood and asked about me and I said: ‘I am Khalid.’ One of them quickly struck me with his club so I leapt up,

rushed into my house, secured the door behind me and went into hiding. I did not leave my house for days on end and I imagined that Umm Salama was responsible for that beating. Abu'l `Abbas meanwhile kept sending me one summons after another until one day some men barged in and said: 'Answer the summons of the Commander of the Believers'. I was now certain that I would be killed, and rode forth having neither flesh nor blood! There were many messengers on my way to the palace. I entered into his presence and found him all alone so I calmed down a little. I greeted him and he nodded to me to sit down. I looked and saw a door behind me covered in curtains and noticed a movement behind the curtains.

2330. He said: "O Khalid, I have not seen you for three days." I replied: "I have been ill, O Commander of the Believers." He said: "Woe to you! The last time you were here, you described to me women and slave girls in terms more delightful than I have ever heard before. So repeat that description to me." I replied: "Yes, O Commander of the Believers. I would like you to know that the Arabs derived the term for a second wife, *al-darra*, from *darr* [harm], and that none of them who had more than one wife escaped from hardship." He said: "Damn you! This is not what you told me before." I replied: "Oh yes, O Commander of the Believers. I also told you that three women are like the tripod on which a boiling cauldron rests!" He said: "May I be quit of my kinship to the Prophet if I heard these words from you before!" I said: "And I also told you that having four wives was like a swarm of evil for their husband. They turn his hair grey, they age him and they make him sick." He said: "Woe to you! I never heard this before, from you or anyone else!" "Yes, by God," said Khalid. He said: "Woe to you! You call me a liar?" Khalid said: "And you want to have me killed, O Commander of the Believers?" He said: "Go on and finish what you have to say." Khalid added: "And I also

told you that virgin slave women were like men but without testicles.” Khalid added: “I heard tittering from behind the curtain so I continued: “I also told you that the Makhzum clan [Umm Salama’s clan] was the splendor of Quraish and that you are married to a splendid member of that clan and nevertheless cast your eye at other women.” I then heard a voice from behind the curtain saying: “Well and truthfully spoken, uncle! This is how you spoke to the Commander of the Believers the first time, but he changed and distorted your words and attributed them to you.” Abu’l `Abbas said to him: “What is the matter with you? May God punish and shame you, and do this and that to you!” So I left him and went home, certain that I was now safe. Soon thereafter messengers arrived from Umm Salama bearing with them ten thousand dirhams, a wardrobe, a riding horse and a page boy.”

2331. No caliph ever liked to converse with men as much as Abu’l `Abbas al-Saffah. He often used to say: “I am amazed at one who forsakes the chance of increasing his knowledge and instead chooses to increase his ignorance.” Abu Bakr al-Hudhali asked him: “How is one to understand your words, O Commander of the Believers?” He replied: “To forsake the company of someone like you or your colleagues and instead seek the company of a woman or a slave girl where you hear nothing but trivialities and see nothing but defects.” Al-Hudhali said: “This is why God preferred your family to all mankind and made one of you the Seal of the Prophets.”

2332. One day, Abu Nukhaila the poet entered, greeted Abu’l `Abbas, mentioned his pedigree and said: “Your servant, O Commander of the Believers, and your poet! Will you permit me to recite some verses to you?” He replied: “May God curse you! Did you not recite the following verses in praise of Maslama ibn `Abd al-Malik:

O Maslama, son of caliphs,

*Knight of war, a mountain on this earth!
I come to thank you, and to offer thanks is part of piety,
For not everyone you bestow your blessings upon is duly grateful.
You revived my reputation, though not obscure or forgotten,
Yet one reputation is more noteworthy than another.”*

He answered: “Rather, O Commander of the Believers, it is I who says:
*When we saw that your power was well established,
And we were people who feared kings,
Exposing ourselves to every abasement and sin,
All except polytheism,
Then all that I have recited about anyone but you,
Was a lie, and this poem is a penance for that one.
We had awaited your father before you,
Then later awaited your brother,
Then finally we awaited you,
And you fulfilled all our hopes.”*

The narrator adds that Abu'l `Abbas forgave him and gave him a handsome reward.

2333. Abu'l `Abbas was at his most relaxed and amiable when food was being served to him. Whenever Ibrahim ibn Makhrama al-Kindi needed to ask him for a favor he would delay doing so until food was being served and then ask him. One day, Abu'l `Abbas said to him: “O Ibrahim, what made you distract me from my meal by your requests?” He replied: “My hope for the success of my request.” Abu'l `Abbas said: “You deserve your high rank because of your perspicacity.” Whenever two men among his retinue quarreled, he would not accept the word of one against the other even when the person concerned was in his view a trustworthy witness. When the two men made up he did not accept the witness of one for or against the other, and would say that ancient rancor can breed a

grievous hatred which on the surface might appear like reconciliation but beneath it lies a serpent that, when grown strong, leaves nothing in its wake.

2334. In the early days of his caliphate, he used to appear openly before his boon companions, but later on he screened himself from them. This was about a year into his reign and occurred for a reason mentioned in our earlier works. His sitting behind a screen was in line with what we mentioned earlier on in this book, when treating the biography and history of Ardashir ibn Babik. He would become enchanted with singing as recorded above and call out loudly to singers who entranced him:

“Well done, by God! Repeat that melody!” None of his companions or singers would ever leave without obtaining a present, whether of money or of rich garments. He would say: “Why should our joy be immediate and our reward to one who enchanted us and filled us with joy be delayed?” In this habit he was preceded by the Persian king Bahram Jur.

2335. One day, Abu Bakr al-Hudhali was narrating to Abu'l `Abbas, who was listening intently, a story about Anushirwan during one of his wars in the east against some nation, when a strong gust of wind caused some dirt and pieces of brick to fall from the roof down onto the assembly.

Everyone in that assembly was scared and panicked except al-Hudhali who kept gazing steadily at Abu'l `Abbas and did not change his posture like all the others. So Abu'l `Abbas said to him: “What a man you are, Abu Bakr! I never saw anything like today! Were you not terrified like us or did you not feel what came down upon us?” He answered: “O Commander of the Believers, the Qur'an says: {God did not place two hearts inside a man's chest}. Man has but a single heart. When my heart was overcome by joy while conversing with the Commander of the Believers, there was no room in it for anything else. If the Almighty wishes to single out an individual human being for His honor, and wishes

that honor to be remembered by that person, He places that honor on the tongue of His Prophet or of His caliph. This is an honor I have been singled out to receive, so I was totally preoccupied with it, and it filled my mind completely. Were the sky to fall upon the earth I would not have felt it, nor would I have been struck dumb with fear except in so far as my duty compels me towards the Commander of the Believers, may God exalt him.” Al-Saffah said: “As long as I live, I shall raise you up on a high mound which wild beasts cannot approach nor eagles perch upon.”

2336. In an earlier section of this work, we recounted the advice given to al-Sha`bi regarding the merit of listening closely to kings. `Abdullah ibn `Ayyash al-Mantuf is quoted as saying: “Commoners can never draw near to kings except through obedience, nor servants except through good service, nor the royal retinue except through listening attentively.”

2337. Rawh ibn Zinba`* was quoted as having said: “If you want a king to lend you his ear, make your ear ready to listen to his discourse. In my view, a man need not be blamed, provided he is listening intently to what I am saying to him. Nor is my heart affected by the bad things they say about him since he had already listened closely to my discourse.”

2338. Mu`awiya is quoted as having said: “A king can be won over when faced with two things: self-restraint when a king is furious, and attentiveness when he speaks.”

2339. I found the following story in a book on the history of Persian kings. One day, king Shirawayh ibn Abrawiz was out on a stroll in Iraq. No one was allowed to begin a conversation with him. People of high station lined up behind him in their proper ranks. If he turned to his right, his army commander would approach him; if he turned left, the high priest would come near. He would then order either of them to bring forward any person he wished to converse with. On that particular stroll, he turned right and the army commander approached. The king asked:

“Where is Bandar ibn Khurshid?” The commander brought him up and he began to converse with him. He said: “Do you remember the speech of our ancestor, Ardashir ibn Babik, when he was fighting the king of the Khazar? If you do, relate it to me.” Bandar had in fact heard that speech from Anushirwan. He knew about the stratagem employed by Ardashir against the Khazar king but pretended ignorance and made him understand that he did not know it. So Shirawayh related the story to him and Bandar listened with rapt attention. They were riding along the banks of a river and Bandar was paying no attention to where his mount was stepping. Then one of its legs slipped and the animal tilted him towards the river and he fell in the water, while his mount bolted. The royal retinue and pages hurried to the rescue, disentangled the man, pulled him out, carried him on their hands and saved him. The king was upset and dismounted, carpets were laid out at that spot and he had his meal there. He then ordered clothes to be brought from the royal wardrobe which were bestowed on Bandar, who now shared the king’s meal. The king said: “You were not paying attention to where your mount’s hooves were stepping.” He replied: “O king, when God confers a blessing upon one of His servants He couples it with a severe trial and offsets it with a misfortune. Blessings are proportionate to trials. God conferred two great blessings upon me. The first was the way in which the king favored me to the exclusion of this vast crowd by speaking to me face to face, and the second is the very valuable war stratagem which he related to me from Ardashir. Indeed, were I to visit the place where the sun rises or sets I would still consider myself a winner. Since two great blessings were granted at a single moment of time, this misfortune occurred to counter the blessings, and were it not for the king’s knights and his good fortune, I would have died. But even if I had drowned in the river and departed from the face of this earth, the king would have preserved my memory

for ever, as long as night and day shall last and as long as the south and east winds blow.” The king was pleased at what he heard and said: “I never imagined you were so talented.” He then stuffed his mouth with jewels and precious pearls and made him an intimate companion, and the man ended by gaining power over him in most of his affairs.

2340. We recorded that story from the history of ancient Persian kings only to point out that Abu Bakr al-Hudhali was not the first person to act in that manner nor was his behavior unparalleled.

2341. The best attitude to adopt with kings is to listen to them and learn from them. The Greek sages used to maintain that it was the duty of anyone, whom a king or a ruler addressed directly, to devote his entire mind and heart to his discourse, even if he is familiar with that discourse, and to pretend that he had never heard it before. He should show pleasure at having benefited from the king’s words and joy at what he’d heard from him. Two things result from this attitude: first, he displays his good manners by doing full justice to the king in listening politely to his words and pretending ignorance of what he’d heard from him; secondly, by expressing his joy at having benefited from what he’d heard from him. The soul of a human being is more eager and more keen to benefit from the discourse of kings and to transmit that discourse, than it is to benefit from the speech of commoners and such like.

2342. Some historians, like Ibn Da’b and others, mention certain similar reports that concern Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufian and Yazid ibn Shajara al-Rahawi. The story goes that Ibn Shajara was once conversing with Mu`awiya, who enjoyed his company and conversation. Mu`awiya was deep in conversation with him, telling him about the major battle between the tribe of Khuza`a and the clan of Makhzum and other Quraish clans in which many people were killed. This took place in the pre-Islamic period, or else before the Hijra in some versions. During that battle, Abu Sufian

won great honor and prestige as a leader. This was when the two sides were about to exterminate each other. Abu Sufian stood on elevated ground then shouted at the two sides and signaled with his sleeve. In obedience to him, the two sides retired. Mu`awiya much admired that incident. As he was narrating it and Yazid was listening intently to him, with both speaker and listener thoroughly enjoying the talk, a flying stone struck Yazid's forehead, causing it to bleed. The blood then poured down his face, beard and clothes but he did not change his posture of a rapt listener. Mu`awiya said: "By God, what a man you are, Ibn Shajara! Do you not see what has happened to you?" "What's that, O Commander of the Believers?" "There's blood all over your clothes." He said: "I will free all my slaves if the discourse of the Commander of the Believers has not distracted me so completely as to envelop my heart and mind! I felt nothing until the Commander of the Believers alerted me to what has happened!" Mu`awiya said: "Whoever set your military pension at one thousand [dirhams] has done you an injustice and excluded you from the ranks of the children of the Emigrants and the crowds who fought with us at the battle of Siffin." As they walked Mu`awiya ordered five hundred thousand dirhams to be paid to him, increased his pay by one thousand dirhams and made him an intimate companion.

2343. Some men of scholarship and literary attainments who wrote books on this and similar topics, i.e. like the story we reported above about Mu`awiya and Ibn Shajara, argue as follows: If Ibn Shajara was deceiving Mu`awiya or playing a trick on him, Mu`awiya being a person whom one could not deceive, then this is comparable to the proverb: "He who fucks a ram has fucked a mighty fucker." On the other hand, if Ibn Shajara was the kind of dolt and insensitive person he describes himself as being, then he surely did not deserve a gift of five hundred thousand

dirhams and an increase of a thousand in his pay. But I doubt whether this had escaped Mu`awiya's attention.

2344. Al-Mas`udi said: Wise men have spoken much about this topic, enjoining the need to listen well and be silent. They say: "Conversation can only proceed well if accompanied by sharp understanding." They also say: "Learn how to listen well just as you learn how to speak well."

Listening well means allowing the speaker to finish what he has to say. Good manners and a prerequisite in any conversation is that a speaker should not be abruptly interrupted nor attacked, and that a conversation be conducted by focusing on a particular topic and that the best arguments in that regard are advanced so that the exchange of views is mutually relevant or, as the proverb says: "Speech may be understood in several ways." By this last is meant that a conversation can lead to many byways and branch off from one stem to lead one into many meanings. In fact, the whole of life consists in a delightful companion. A man once said: "By God, I am never bored by a conversation [*hadith*]!" A man listening to him said: "It is only the old that is boring, not the new [*hadith*]."

2345. Poets have composed a great deal of verse on this topic, e.g. the verses of `Ali ibn al-`Abbas al-Rumi:

*I have grown sick of all my desires,
The sweetest of which is trivial,
All except for conversation [hadith], for it is like its name,
Forever new [hadith].*

The best verses on this subject are those of Ibrahim ibn al-`Abbas:

*The ravages of time and what you [feminine] see on my temples,
Has set aside all temptations, and I left them behind, honorably.
Everything bores me except meeting one who converses well,
And who increases me in knowledge.*

2346. Some modern literary men argue that it is good manners not to converse too long with a boon companion, and that conversation with him is more pleasurable and more respectful of him if long stories with complex meanings and vulgar phrasing are avoided. These kinds of stories are favorites with boon companions in an assembly and the hearts of people are drawn to them and cups of wine are drunk when they end. This is more typical of the assemblies of vulgar popular preachers than of those of the elite. This idea is very well expressed in the lines composed by `Abdullah ibn al-Mu`azz*, where he describes a group of men given to much drinking:

*Between one cup and another, a short conversation,
Magical, while all the rest is just talk.
The wine stewards among that company of friends,
Stand like the letter aliph in a line of text.*

This expresses the view of those who argue in this manner regarding listening to pithy and delightful conversations.

2347. The first person to be called a vizier in the Abbasid state was Abu Salama Hafs ibn Sulaiman al-Khallal al-Hamadani, client of the clan of al-Sabi`. Abu'l `Abbas held something of a grudge against him because Abu Salama had attempted to divest the Abbasid family of their power and hand it to others [i.e. the Alids]. Abu Muslim wrote to al-Saffah advising him to kill Abu Salama, adding: "God has made it licit to you, O Commander of the Believers, to kill him for he has reneged on his oath of loyalty and attempted to change and alter the call." Al-Saffah said: "I do not wish to begin my reign by killing a man of my own party, and especially not someone like Abu Salama who was the champion of our call, who put his own life and blood on the line for us, spent his wealth, counseled his imam well and fought his enemies." Abu Ja`far, his brother, and Dawud ibn `Ali, his uncle, had also spoken to him about this

matter. Abu Muslim had written to both men asking them to advise al-Saffah to kill him. Abu'l `Abbas responded by saying: "I do not wish to nullify his many numerous worthy actions, his major accomplishments and his long record of good conduct simply because of an error inspired by Satan and a moment of forgetfulness that comes over a human being." The two of them said to him: "Yet it behooves the Commander of the Believers to be on his guard against him for we do not trust him near you." Abu'l `Abbas replied: "No indeed. I trust him by day or night, in secret and in the open, alone or in a crowd."

2348. When Abu Muslim heard what Abu'l `Abbas had said, he took his words very seriously and feared that Abu Salama would do him harm. So Abu Muslim dispatched a group of his most trusted companions to see if they could devise a way to kill Abu Salama. Abu'l `Abbas enjoyed Abu Salama's company and the latter often spent the night conversing with him. Abu Salama was a witty man, a delightful conversationalist, possessed literary attainments and was very knowledgeable about politics and government. One night, it is said, Abu Salama left Abu'l `Abbas at night, who was in his city of al-Anbar, and rode back all alone. Abu Muslim's companions attacked and killed him. When Abu'l `Abbas heard the news, he recited the following verse:

Let him go to hellfire, and all who are like him:

What has he left behind for us to feel any sorrow for him?

2349. Abu Muslim's title was "The Trustworthy Man of the Family of Muhammad" while Abu Salama's title was the "Vizier of the Family of Muhammad." When he was assassinated in the manner described above, a poet recited:

A wicked act may sometimes give pleasure,

And pleasure may sometimes be justified at what otherwise you find hateful.

*The vizier, the “vizier of the family of Muhammad”, is dead,
And he who hated you was once a vizier.*

We recounted his death and how it occurred in our book *al-Awsat*.

2350. Abu'l `Abbas enjoyed conversation and the mutual boasts of the Arabs of the Yemen and Nizar factions, and discussions of these topics. Charming stories, boasts and conversations by night are related involving Khalid ibn Safwan and others from Qahtan with al-Saffah, which we related in detail, or else their choicest parts, in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, making it unnecessary to repeat them here.

2351. Among these stories which are well known is the story related by al-Bahlul ibn al-`Abbas>al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy al-Ta'i> Yazid al-Raqashi, who said: “Al-Saffah enjoyed conversations at night. One night, when I was with him, he said: ‘Yazid, tell me the most charming tale you have ever heard.’ I said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, even if it is at the expense of the Hashim clan?’ He said: ‘This would be even more astonishing to me.’ I began: ‘A man from the Tanukh tribe, O Commander of the Believers, once camped as a guest of the clan of `Amir ibn Sa`sa`a. Every time he unpacked an item of his baggage he would quote the following line of verse:

*I swear to you, malice can never disappear from the shirts of the `Amir
clan*

As long as they retain their skins.

A young girl from the clan came out and conversed with him until he felt at ease with her. Then she asked him: ‘To which tribe do you belong, may I always enjoy your company?’ He answered: ‘I am from Tamim’. She said: ‘Do you know the fellow who recited the following verses:
*Tamim is more knowledgeable about the paths of malice than the sand
grouse,*

And were Tamim to follow the paths of righteousness it would get lost.

If a flea riding on a louse

Attacked Tamim's two battle lines, they would flee.

Night, I see, is cleared up by daylight,

But I cannot see how Tamim's great sins can ever be cleared away.

2352. The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Tamim.' She said:

'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from `Ijl.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

I find people giving generously in alms,

But the alms of `Ijl are only threes and fours.

If a man from `Ijl dies in some foreign land,

A grave is dug for him an arm and a finger long.

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from `Ijl.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Yashkur.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

If the garment of a man from Yashkur touches your garment,

Do not mention God until you cleanse yourself.

2353. The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Yashkur.' She said:

'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from `Abd al-Qais.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

I see the `Abd al-Qais have suffered humiliation,

When they eat onions and vinegar,

And drink warm and stagnant salt water,

And now they bring their women out,

Just as the Nabit draw forth wet reeds.*

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from `Abd al-Qais.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Bahila.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

When noble men crowd around to win honors,

The Bahilis step away from that crowd.

*Even if the caliph is from Bahila,
He would fail to equal men of nobility.
Honor for a Bahili, even when careful to protect it,
Is of no more concern to him than a table napkin.*

2354. The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Bahila.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Fazara.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

*Do not, when alone with a Fazari,
Trust him with your young she-camel,
But tie up her vulva with a padlock.
Do not trust a Fazari with an ass,
After that Fazari who pulled out and ate an ass's penis from the fire.
They are a people who, when guests approach their territory,
Tell their mother: Go piss on the fire!*

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Fazara.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Thaqif.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

*Genealogists have lost track of Thaqif's ancestor,
For they have no ancestor but wickedness.
If Thaqif's descent is described or it describes its descent
As going back to someone, that would be impossible.
They are swine who frequent toilets, so kill them,
For shedding their blood is licit for you.*

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Thaqif.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from `Abs.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

*When a woman of `Abs gives birth to a boy,
Bring her glad tidings of yet another malicious person added to their
number.*

2355. The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from `Abs.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Tha`laba.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

Tha`laba ibn Qabs are the worst of all tribes:

The most malicious and most treacherous to a neighbor.

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Tha`laba.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Ghaniyy.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

When a woman of Ghaniyy gives birth to a boy,

Give her glad tidings of the arrival of yet another skillful tailor.

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Ghaniyy.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Murra.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

When a Murra woman daubs henna on her hands

Marry her off and don't trust her not to be an adulteress.

2356. The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Murra.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Dabba.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

Your eyes have turned blue, O Ibn Muka`bir,

Blue from malice, like the eyes of every person from Dabba.

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Dabba.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Bajila.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

We asked about Bajila and where it camped

To find out where it had finally settled.

For when Bajila is summoned to war,

It doesn't know if its ancestor is Qahtan or Nizar.

Bajila is neither one thing nor the other,

And indulges in every shameful deed.

The man said: ‘No, by God, I am not from Bajila.’ She said: ‘From which tribe then?’ He said: ‘I am a man from Azd.’ She said: ‘Do you know the fellow who recited:

*When an Azd woman delivers a boy,
Give her glad tidings of the arrival of yet another skillful sailor.*

2357. The man said: ‘No, by God, I am not from Azd.’ She said: ‘From which tribe then? Woe to you! Have you no shame? Tell me the truth.’

He said: ‘I am a man from Khuza`a.’ She said: ‘Do you know the fellow who recited:

*If Khuza`a boasts of some ancient glory,
We find that glory to be wine-drinking.
They sold the Ka`ba of the All-Merciful openly,*

In return for a wine skin. Wretched is he who boasts of wickedness!

The man said: ‘No, by God, I am not from Khuza`a.’ She said: ‘From which tribe then?’ He said: ‘I am a man from Salih.’ She said: ‘Do you know the fellow who recited:

*What’s the matter with Salih? May God frustrate all their endeavors!
They masturbate using their hands and keep their penises idle.*

2358. The man said: ‘No, by God, I am not from Salih.’ She said: ‘From which tribe then?’ He said: ‘I am a man from Laqit.’ She said: ‘Do you know the fellow who recited:

*I assure you: neither the seas nor deserts,
Are wider than the arseholes of Laqit.
Laqit is the most evil of those who ride on mounts,
And the nastiest of those who tread the earth.*

May God curse the Laqit! They are remnants of captives from the people of Lot.

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Laqit.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Kinda.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

*When a man from Kinda, joyful and handsome, boasts,
He can only boast of sewing and sandal-making,
Of curtain weaving and grave digging.*

Leave Kinda to its weaving:

The most it can boast of is cause for shame.

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Kinda.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Khath`am.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

*And if you were to whistle at Khath`am,
They would fly through the earth like locusts.*

2359. The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Khath`am.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Tai'.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

*Tai' is merely a crowd of native peasants, collected together,
Who said: "We travelled far [taya`na]", but this was a mere word which
lasted through time.*

But were a tick to spread its wings,

On the two mountains of Tai', it would give them shade.

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Tai'.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Muzaina.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

Is Muzaina anything but a tribe,

From which neither generosity nor piety can be expected?

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Muzaina.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Nakh`.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

*If those nasty Nakh` gathered together,
People would be harmed by the stench of their crowding.
No noble glory can be attributed to them,
Nor can they be counted as truly honorable.*

2360. The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Nakh`.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Awd.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

*If you are ever a guest of the Awd, in their territory,
Be sure you will not escape them.
Trust neither an old man, nor a youth,
For every last one of them is a pederast.*

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Awd.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Lakhm.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

*If a tribe were to boast of ancient glory,
Boasting of generosity leaves all of Lakhm far behind.*

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Lakhm.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Judham.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

*If a cup of wine were one day to pass around, toasting some noble act,
It would skip Judham.*

2361. The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Judham.' She said: 'From which tribe then, woe to you! Aren't you ashamed to lie so much?' He said: 'I am a man from Tanukh, and that's the truth.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

*When Tanukh, on a raid for vengeance, blocks a watering hole,
They retire, shamed by God on high,
And with an evil reputation among their own people and their neighbors.*

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Tanukh.' She said: 'From which tribe then, may your mother be bereaved of you?' He said: 'I am a man from Himyar.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

I was told that Himyar was defaming me and I said:

I didn't think they existed or were created.

For Himyar is a tribe with no repute,

Like some tree in a valley, waterless and without leaves.

Their numbers do not increase even when their lives grow long,

And if a fox pisses on them, they drown.

2362. The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Himyar.' She said:

'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Yuhabir.' She said:

'Do you know the fellow who recited:

If a cricket chirps in the land of Yuhabir,

They die of fright and turn into decaying bones in the earth.

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Yuhabir.' She said: 'From

which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Qushair.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

O tribe of Qushair, I have killed your chieftain,

And now there is no blood-money and no revenge.

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Qushair.' She said: 'From

which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Umayya.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

The structure of the Umayya is tottering,

And it is easy for God to destroy it.

In the past, their power defied God,

For neither did the Harb clan obey the Prophet,

Nor did the Marwan clan fear God.

2363. The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Umayya.' She said:
'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Hashim.' She said:
'Do you know the fellow who recited:

*O Hashim, go back to your palm trees,
For dates cost a dirham a sa`.*

*If you say you are the family of the Prophet Muhammad,
The Christians can say they are the family of Jesus son of Mary.*

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Hashim.' She said: 'From
which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Hamdan.' She said: 'Do
you know the fellow who recited:

*If, one day, the wheels of war turn above the heads of men,
You'd see Hamdan urging their mounts quickly to escape the fighting.*

2364. The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Hamdan.' She said:
'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Quda`a.' She said:
'Do you know the fellow who recited:

*Let no person from Quda`a ever boast of his family,
For he is neither of pure Yemen stock nor of Nizar.*

*They swing back and forth: neither Qahtan nor Nizar is their ancestor,
So confine them to hellfire.*

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Quda`a.' She said: 'From
which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Shaiban.' She said: 'Do you
know the fellow who recited:

*Shaiban is a numerous tribe,
And all are disgusting and malicious.*

*Not a single noble or aristocratic person is found among them,
Nor one who is intelligent or generous.*

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Shaiban.' She said: 'From
which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Numair.' She said: 'Do you
know the fellow who recited:

*Lower your gaze for you are from Numair,
And cannot reach the heights of the tribe of Ka`b or of Kilab.*

*If the areseholes of the Numair are placed
On iron dross, the dross would melt.*

2365. The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Numair.' She said:
'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Taghlib.' She said:
'Do you know the fellow who recited:

*Seek not any uncles from Taghlib,
For the Zanj are more noble as uncles.*

*When a man from Taghlib clears his throat at meal times,
He scratches his arse and quotes proverbs.*

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Taghlib.' She said: 'From
which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Mujashi`.' She said: 'Do
you know the fellow who recited:

*A woman from Mujashi`, when her husband is absent, weeps,
And, when heard, her weeping sounds like a donkey braying.*

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Mujashi`.' She said: 'From
which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Kalb.' She said: 'Do you
know the fellow who recited:

*Do not come anywhere near Kalb or the door of its tent,
For the night traveller has no hope of glimpsing their fire.*

2366. The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Kalb.' She said: 'From
which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Taym.' She said: 'Do you
know the fellow who recited:

*A woman of Taym, her clitoris like an elephant's tusk,
Guides the millstone with fingers slow in action [reading mahdhum].*

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Taym.' She said: 'From which
tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Jarm.' She said: 'Do you know the
fellow who recited:

Jarm promises me wine, but what has Jarm to do with wine?

They never drank it when it was lawful,

Nor did they ferment it when it was in demand.

But when wine drinking was divinely prohibited,

You will find a man of Jarm dead drunk and unable to wake.

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Jarm.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from Sulaim.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

If you go to Sulaim at meal-time,

You will return as you went, hungry and famished.

2367. The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Sulaim.' She said:

'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from the Clients*

[*mawali*].' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

He who seeks malice, indecency and foul speech,

Will find with the Clients the neck and arms of all these things.

The man said: 'By the Lord of the Ka`ba, I made a mistake about my descent! I am from Khawz.' She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

May God my Lord never bless you,

O Khawz, for the Khawz are in hell.

The man said: 'No, by God, I am not from Khawz.' She said: 'From which tribe then?' He said: 'I am a man from the descendants of Ham.'

She said: 'Do you know the fellow who recited:

Do not marry the children of Ham,

For God has created them disfigured, except for Ibn Akwa`.

2368. The man said: 'No, by God, I am not descended from Ham but from the pelted Satan.' She said: 'God curse you and curse your father Satan too! Do you know the fellow who recited:

Worshippers of God, behold your enemy, Satan,

Enemy of God's Prophet, braying like a donkey!

He said: 'Is this how you treat one who seeks shelter with you?' She replied: 'Rise and depart in shame and disgrace. And when you stay with some people, do not recite any verses about them until you know who they are. Do not presume to talk about the defects of people, for all peoples have both good and bad qualities, all, I mean, except for God's Messengers and others chosen by God from among His worshippers and whom He guards from their enemies. You are just as Jarir described al-Farazdaq:

*Whenever you alight at the home of any people,
You depart in disgrace and leave shame behind.*

He said: 'I swear I will never recite poetry again!'"

2369. Al-Saffah said: "If you yourself have invented this story and composed all that verse, then you have performed splendidly, and you are the lord of fabricators. But if the story is true and you reported it accurately, that `Amiri maiden must have been the most quick witted of people in her responses and the most perspicacious about the defects of people." Al-Mas`udi said: Other charming stories and night sessions are told of al-Saffah which we recounted in detail in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*.

Chapter 108

An account of the caliphate of Abu Ja`far al-Mansur

2370. Abu Ja`far `Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib, al-Mansur, received the oath of homage while on the road to Mecca. The oath of homage was obtained for him by his uncle `Isa ibn `Ali, and he was to be succeeded by `Isa ibn Musa. This occurred on Sunday, the twelfth of Dhu'l Hijja, in the year 136 [June 8, 754], al-Mansur being forty-one years old at the time. He was born in the month of Dhu'l Hijja in the year 95 [August/September, 714]. His mother

was a freed Berber slave called Sallama. He ruled for twenty-two years less nine days. He died on Saturday, the sixth day of Dhu'l Hijja in the year 158 [October 7, 775], while on pilgrimage and after having arrived in the vicinity of Mecca at a place called Bustan Bani `Amir, on the Iraq road. He died aged sixty-three, and was buried in Mecca with his face exposed since he was in a state of *ihram*.* In another version, he is said to have died in al-Batha', near Bi'r Maimun, and was buried in al-Hajun, aged sixty-five.

A summary narrative of his history and conduct together with a brief account of his days

2371. Sallama, mother of al-Mansur, is reported to have said: "While pregnant with Abu Ja`far I dreamt that a lion had come out of my womb, sat on his haunches, roared and beat the ground with his tail. Lions then approached him from all sides and whenever each lion drew near, it would bow down before him."

2372. Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn Muhammad al-Mada'ini reported that al-Mansur said: "I once accompanied a blind man travelling to al-Sham. He was on his way to see Marwan ibn Muhammad with a poem he had composed about him. I asked him to recite it to me and he did:

*I wonder, has the odor of musk spread out,
Or do I imagine that my joy resides in Khayf?
This was when the Umayyads left that place,
Those noble men, the clan of `Abd Shams.
Orators on pulpits, knights in war,
Eloquent men who speak and are not silent.
No blame attaches to them when silent,
And when they speak, they hit the mark with no ambiguity.
Self-restrained are they when self-restraint is rare,
And their faces are as smooth as dinars.*

Al-Mansur added: ‘No sooner did he finish reciting than I thought his blindness had infected me. By God he was a charming conversationalist and travel companion.’”

2373. Al-Mansur continued: “I went on pilgrimage in the year 141 [758-9]. I dismounted from my camel near the two mountains of Zarwad and walked in the sand for the sake of a vow I had made. Suddenly I saw the blind man so I waved to those with me to fall back. They did so and I approached him, took his hand, and greeted him. He said: ‘Who are you, may I be your ransom? I do not recognize you.’ I said: ‘I am your travelling companion to al-Sham in the days of the Umayyads as you were heading to see Marwan.’ He returned my greeting, sighed then recited:

The women of the Umayyads and their daughters

Are now become lost orphans.

Their good fortune has ended and their lucky star has set,

And stars do fall, and luck can slumber.

Pulpits and thrones are free of them,

So peace upon them until I die.

I asked: ‘How much did Marwan give you?’ He replied: ‘He made me rich so that I need not ask anyone else after him.’ I asked: ‘Exactly how much?’ He replied: ‘Four thousand dinars, costly robes and a beast of burden.’ ‘And where was this?’ ‘In Basra,’ he replied. I asked: ‘Have you recognized me?’ He replied: ‘Yes, I do remember our travelling together, but I do not know your pedigree.’ I said: ‘I am Abu Ja`far al-Mansur, the Commander of the Believers.’ He shook with fear and said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, forgive me! For your cousin the Prophet said ‘Hearts are disposed to love those who have done them good, and hate those who have treated them badly.’ Abu Ja`far added: “By God I was about to kill him but then remembered the respect owed to

companionship, so told al-Musayyab: 'Let him go.' He was released. Then I changed my mind and wanted to converse with him, so ordered him to be summoned but it was as if the desert had swallowed him up.'”

2374. Al-Rabi` said: “One day the following personalities met in the presence of al-Mansur: `Isa ibn `Ali, `Isa ibn Musa ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali, Salih ibn `Ali, Qutham ibn al-`Abbas, Muhammad ibn Ja`far and Muhammad ibn Ibrahim.* They talked about the Umayyad caliphs, their conduct, their state policies and the cause of their downfall. Al-Mansur said: ‘`Abd al-Malik was a tyrant who cared not what he did. Sulaiman was solely preoccupied with his belly and his private parts. `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz was like the one-eyed among the blind. Their real statesman was Hisham. The Umayyads continued to maintain the power that they had been granted and to preserve and protect what God had bestowed upon them. They pursued elevated aims and disdained ignoble deeds until power passed to their spoilt children, who then made it their aim to pursue their pleasures and amusements, in disobedience to God’s commands, and unaware that God was leading them on. They were oblivious to God’s designs against them, neglected to respect the status of the caliphate and treated lightly what is owed to God and to responsible leadership of the community. So God deprived them of their power, covered them with disgrace and ended their good fortune.”

2375. Salih ibn `Ali said: “O Commander of the Believers, when `Abdullah ibn Marwan escaped and entered Nubia with those who followed him, the Nubian king asked about their condition, what had happened to them and what their conduct was like and was informed of all these things. So he rode off to see `Abdullah, asked him about some of their affairs and the reason why their prosperity had come to an end. He addressed certain words to him which I no longer remember, then

expelled him from his country. If the Commander of the Believers wishes to summon `Abdullah to tell him about that affair, he may do so.”

2376. Al-Mansur ordered that `Abdullah be brought from prison. When he stood before him al-Mansur said: “O `Abdullah, tell me your story with the king of Nubia.” He said: “I went to Nubia, O Commander of the Believers, and stayed for three days. The Nubian king then came to see me and sat on the floor, a valuable couch having been spread for him. I asked him: “What prevented you from sitting on our couch?” He replied: “Because I am a king and it behooves a king to be humble, God having elevated him.” He then asked me: “Why do you drink wine when your holy book forbids it?” I answered: “Our servants and retinue were the ones who were impudent enough to do so.” He asked: “Why do you trample down on sown fields with your mounts when your holy book forbids you to act wickedly?” I answered: “This was done by our servants and retinue out of savagery and ignorance.” He asked: “Why do you wear embroidered silk and gold garments when this is forbidden by your holy book and your religion?” I answered: “We lost our power, so made use of foreigners who had embraced our religion and became our supporters. It was they who wore these luxury garments, despite our objections.” The king bowed his head, turning his hands or drawing patterns on the ground then said: “Our servants, our retinue and foreigners who embraced our religion!?” Then he raised his head and said: “It was not as you described it. Rather, you are a people who considered licit what God had declared illicit, and committed such acts as you were forbidden to commit. When in power, you acted unjustly so the Almighty robbed you of your power and covered you with humiliation because of your sins. God has still not finished punishing you, and I fear that His punishment might fall upon you while you are in my country and so suffer that punishment with you. A guest is entitled to three days of hospitality. So gather what supplies

you need for your journey and depart from my country, and I did so.” Al-Mansur was amazed and bent his head in thought. He pitied him and was about to release him but `Isa ibn `Ali reminded him that he owed him an oath of homage as his successor, so al-Mansur had him returned to prison.

2377. Al-Mas`udi said: Ten years after the start of al-Mansur’s caliphate there occurred the death of Abu `Abdullah Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib. This took place in the year 148 [763-4]. He was buried in al-Baqi` cemetery with his father and grandfather, and was fifty-six years old. It is said that he was poisoned. Above their graves at that spot in al-Baqi` is a slab of marble on which is inscribed: “In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate. Praise be to God, creator of all nations and resurrecter of the dead. This is the grave of Fatima, daughter of God’s Messenger, mistress of all women on earth, and the grave of al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali, Muhammad ibn `Ali and Ja`far ibn Muhammad, may God be pleased with them all.”

2378. Abu Ja`far al-Mansur first appointed as vizier Ibn `Atiyya al-Bahili then Abu Ayyub al-Muriyani al-Khuzi. This latter had a significant connection with Abu Ja`far dating back to the time when Abu Ayyub used to act as state secretary to Sulaiman ibn Habib ibn al-Muhallab. Sulaiman had whipped al-Mansur in the Umayyad period and intended to kill him but Abu Ayyub intervened to save him. This was the connection between them. When al-Mansur appointed him as his vizier, he accused him of a number of things including theft of money and evil intentions and was on the point of punishing him, but this was delayed. Each time Abu Ayyub entered his presence, he imagined that he would punish him but then he would leave unscathed. It is said that he had a magical cream which he would daub over his eyebrows whenever he needed to see al-

Mansur. So this cream was adopted by the common people and became known as “Abu Ayyub’s cream”. Eventually al-Mansur dismissed and punished him, and made Aban ibn Sadaqa his correspondence secretary until he died.

2379. A military stratagem employed by Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik was one day mentioned to Abu Ja`far, so he summoned a man in Rusafa to ask him about it. When the man arrived, he said to him: “Were you a companion of Hisham?” He answered: “Yes, O Commander of the Believers.” He said: “Tell me how he acted in that war, in such and such a time.” He answered: “He, and may God be content with him, did such and such, may God show him mercy.” Al-Mansur was annoyed and said to him: “Depart, and may God’s anger fall upon you! You step on my carpet and you call down God’s mercy upon my enemy?!” The old man rose and said: “Your enemy has hung a necklace around my neck and favored me so that only the fellow who washes my dead body can remove it.” Al-Mansur ordered him brought back and asked him: “What did you say?” He said: “He was someone who made it unnecessary for me to ask for any favors and honored me so that I need not beg. Since I saw him last, I have never stood as a suppliant at the door of any Arab or non-Arab. Should I not mention him honorably and couple this with my thanks?” Al-Mansur responded: “Yes, indeed. What a mother she was who begat you! I testify that you are the child of a free woman and noble parentage.” He then heard the tale from him in full and rewarded him. The man said: “O Commander of the Believers, I do not take this reward because of any need. I merely wish to boast of your generosity and the honor of meeting you.” He then took his reward. Al-Mansur said to him: “You may die now if you wish: what a man you are! If your clan had none other than you, you would have left them much glory!” After the man left al-Mansur said to his companions: “To such a man it is fitting to

show favor, to reward him and to recompense him with all that is dear.

Where can I find his like among our own troops?”

2380. Ma`n ibn Za`ida* entered one day upon al-Mansur. When the latter looked at him, he said: “Heh, Ma`n! Did you give Marwan ibn Abi Hafsa a hundred thousand dirhams for having recited:

Ma`n ibn Za`ida, through him

The tribe of Shaiban added further honor to its honor”?

Ma`n answered: “No, O Commander of the Believers. In fact, I gave him that money for having recited:

In the Battle of al-Hashimiyya, you kept your sword drawn

To protect the caliph of the All-Merciful.

You guarded his sanctity and shielded him

From the blows of every sword and spear.”

“Well said, Ma`n,” said al-Mansur.

2381. Ma`n had been a friend of Yazid ibn `Umar ibn Hubaira. He had been in hiding until the Battle of Hashimiyya. This was when some people in Khurasan rioted. Ma`n was present there, his face and head covered. When he saw that the rioters were about to attack al-Mansur, he stepped forward and started driving them away from him with his sword. When the rioters dispersed, al-Mansur asked him: “Who are you, woe to you?” He uncovered his face and said: “I am the man you are trying to capture, O Commander of the Believers. I am Ma`n ibn Za`ida.” When al-Mansur departed, he offered him safe-conduct, was generous to him, paid him respect, presented him with sumptuous robes, and assigned him an official status and salary. One day, Ma`n entered upon al-Mansur who said to him: “How quick people are to feel jealous of your clan!” Ma`n answered: “O Commander of the Believers,

Those who fly high, you will find, are always an object of jealousy,

But you will not find anyone feeling jealous of the ignoble.

2382. Ibn `Ayyash al-Mantuf states that one day al-Mansur was sitting in his reception hall atop the Khurasan Gate, in the city [i.e. Baghdad] he had built and called by his name, i.e. the City of al-Mansur. He overlooked the Tigris river. On each gate of that city and above its arch he had built a reception hall from which he could overlook the part of the countryside nearest to that direction. The gates were four in number, with windows and arches that remain to the present day, which is the year 332. The first of these gates is the Khurasan Gate, also called the Gate of the State, because it was from Khurasan that the Abbasid state emerged. Then there is the Gate of al-Sham, facing al-Sham, the Kufa Gate, facing Kufa, and the Basra Gate, facing Basra. In our book, *al-Awsat*, which this book follows, we recounted how this city was built; how al-Mansur selected that spot between the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Dajil and the Sarat, these latter being canals that lead off from the Euphrates; the history of Baghdad; why it acquired that name; what people have said about this; the story of the Green Dome and its collapse at this time; and the story of the Green Dome built by al-Hajjaj in the Iraqi city of Wasit, and its survival until the present, i.e. the year 332.

2383. As al-Mansur was sitting in that hall atop the Khurasan Gate, a stray [reading `abir] arrow fell in front of him. Al-Mansur was greatly alarmed, then took it up, turned it around and found the following verses written between its feathers:

*Do you aspire to live until the last day when mankind is resurrected,
And imagine that you will not be brought back to life?
You will be questioned about your sins and transgressions,
And then will be asked about God's servants.*

On the next feather he read:

*You felt too confident about your life when times were good,
And felt no fear about what adversities fate might bring you.*

*The nights were genial and you were deceived by them,
But it is when the nights are delightful that sorrow occurs.*

On the next feather he read:

*These are the fates, running their course,
So be patient, for the fates never persist in one condition.
One day they reveal some low born whom they elevate
All the way to the sky, and the next they topple those who soar.*

The narrator adds: “On the side of the arrow was written: ‘A man from Hamadhan unjustly imprisoned in your jail.’”

2384. Al-Mansur dispatched a group of his retinue who searched all the prisons and dungeons until they found an old man in a prison cell. The cell had a lantern and on its door was a garment hung out to dry. The old man was chained in irons with his face turned to the *qibla*, and was reciting the following Qur’anic verse: {Wrongdoers will surely come to know what adversity they shall fall into}. They asked him where he was from and he said: “Hamadhan.” So he was carried out and brought before al-Mansur, who asked him about his story. The man told him he was a wealthy citizen of Hamadhan and added: “Your governor came to our city where I had an estate valued at a million dirhams. He wanted to take it away from me and I refused, so he put me in iron chains and sent me to you, claiming I was a rebel, and I was thrown into this jail.” Al-Mansur asked him: “How long have you been in jail?” “Four years,” the man replied.

2385. Al-Mansur ordered his chains removed and that he be treated kindly, released from jail, be accommodated in great comfort and be returned to him. He then said to him: “Old man, we have returned your estate to you, on which you shall pay the land-tax for as long as you and I live, and I have appointed you as governor of Hamadhan. As for its former governor, you shall be the judge of what is to be done to him.”

The old man thanked him profusely, prayed for a long life for him and said: “O Commander of the Believers, I accept the return of my estate. As for the post of governor, I am not fit to assume it. I forgive the former governor.” Al-Mansur ordered that he be paid a large sum of money, gave him a mount to ride on and sent him back to his city with much honor, after having dismissed the former governor and punished him for forsaking the path of justice and right conduct. He asked the old man to write and tell him about conditions in his city and the behavior of the officials in charge of war and taxation. Al-Mansur then recited:

He who takes Time to be his intimate friend can never be sure how Time will behave,

For Time brings both joys and sorrows.

Each thing, even though it lasts long in safety,

Will, when it ends, inevitably fall short of what is desired.

2386. One day, al-Mansur said to Salm ibn Qutaiba: “What, in your view, should be done with Abu Muslim?” Salm answered, quoting the Qur’an: {Had there been many gods in heaven and on earth they would have been corrupted}. Al-Mansur said: “Enough, Ibn Qutaiba! A heedful ear has grasped your meaning.”

2387. Ibn Da’b and others quoted `Isa ibn `Ali as saying: “Al-Mansur continued to consult us in all his affairs until Ibrahim ibn Harma praised him in a poem where these verses occur:

If he decides on a matter, he consults his own judgment,

A judgment that is consistent and rational.

He does not share his secret decision with intimates [reading al-adnain],

For a rope might tear if held between many fingers.

2388. When al-Mansur decided to kill Abu Muslim he was baffled as to whether to proceed on his own or to consult other people. This kept him awake at night and he recited:

Two courses of action, unattempted with firm resolve, set me at odds with myself,

And this, when difficult undertakings have not yet tested my powers.

Nothing troubles the soul more than a deeply buried anxiety,

Whose cause keeps returning the anxiety back to you.

The sons of `Adnan know well that, with such a crisis,

I can deal audaciously and with boldness.

2389. `Abdullah ibn `Ali [Mansur's uncle] had rebelled against al-Mansur and claimed the caliphate for himself, calling upon the support of the forces from al-Sham and others who were with him. These forces then paid him homage. `Abdullah alleged that al-Saffah had designated as his successor whomever succeeded in killing Marwan. When al-Mansur heard what `Abdullah had done, he wrote the following to him:

I shall place myself with regards to you where you placed it,

And time brings forth days that have consequences.

He then sent Abu Muslim against him and there were many battles between them in the territory of Nasibin and in the locality known as Dayr al-A`war. The two sides fought hard for several months and dug trenches. Eventually, `Abdullah ibn `Ali was defeated and fled with his followers, finally reaching Basra with a few companions. The governor of Basra for al-Mansur was `Abdullah's brother and al-Mansur's uncle, Sulaiman ibn `Ali. Abu Muslim captured the treasuries in `Abdullah's camp so al-Mansur sent Yaqtin ibn Musa to take delivery of the treasury. When Yaqtin entered into the presence of Abu Muslim, and greeted him: "Peace be upon you, O Emir," Abu Muslim replied: "No peace upon you, you son of a whore! I am trusted with the shedding of blood but not with treasure?" Yaqtin responded: "What made you begin by saying this to me, O Emir?" Abu Muslim answered: "Your master has sent you here to take delivery of the treasures in my hands." He said: "I shall divorce my

wife thrice if the Commander of the Believers has sent me for any other purpose than to offer congratulations for your victory!” Abu Muslim embraced him and made him sit next to him. When he left, Abu Muslim said to his intimates: “By God, I know full well that he has already divorced his wife thrice but he is merely being loyal to his master.”

2390. Abu Muslim then marched forth from al-Jazira, intent upon breaking with al-Mansur. He followed the road to Khurasan and avoided Iraq as he headed to Khurasan. Al-Mansur meanwhile headed towards al-Mada'in from al-Anbar and camped at Rumiyyat al-Mada'in, a city built by Chosroes, and mentioned earlier in this work. From there he wrote to Abu Muslim: “I wanted to discuss certain matters with you which cannot be done by correspondence, so come here and you will not be detained long.” Abu Muslim read that letter but kept marching on. So al-Mansur sent him Jarir ibn Yazid ibn Jarir ibn `Abdullah al-Bajali, who was the shrewdest man of his age. He had known Abu Muslim for a long time in Khurasan, so he went to see him and said: “O Emir, you have fought valiantly to protect the members of this family, and now you depart in such a manner? I cannot be certain that people will not blame you both here and there, and that it might be said: ‘Here’s a man who exacted revenge for a dynasty then reneged on his homage to them.’ You will then be opposed by those whom you are now certain will not oppose you. The issue between you and your caliph has not reached a point hateful to you, and I do not see it is wise of you to depart under such circumstances.” Abu Muslim wanted to comply with Jarir’s request to him to turn back but Malik ibn al-Haitham said to him: “Do not do it.” He answered: “Woe to you! Satan himself tempted me but I’ve never been tempted by such a man,” meaning Jarir.

2391. Jarir persisted until he succeeded in bringing Abu Muslim to al-Mansur. Abu Muslim had consulted his history and a description of

himself in ancient books, and found that he was to be killed in a place called al-Rum. He would often quote this as he found it in books of eschatology, and that he was destined to destroy one state and create another. As he entered into al-Mansur's presence, having been welcomed by people, al-Mansur greeted him warmly, hugged him and said: "You were about to leave without knowing what orders I wanted to give you." He replied: "I am now here, O Commander of the Believers, so give me your orders." He ordered him to go home and to wait there for what time and circumstances might bring. He would ride often to see al-Mansur who revealed nothing to him. Then, one day, al-Mansur showed him hostility, so Abu Muslim went to see `Isa ibn Musa, who had a high opinion of him, and asked him to accompany him to see al-Mansur and to stand up for him in the caliph's presence. `Isa ordered Abu Muslim to precede him to al-Mansur and told him he would follow him shortly. So Abu Muslim headed to al-Mansur's tent which had been pitched on the Tigris, in Rumiyyat al-Mada'in. He went in and sat under the flap of the tent---or the forepart of the tent, in another version---and was told that al-Mansur was performing ablutions in readiness for prayer. Al-Mansur had instructed the chief of his bodyguards, `Uthman ibn Nahik, and others with him, including Shabib ibn Waj al-Marwaruwidhi and Abu Hanifa Harb ibn Qais, to stand behind the throne out of sight of Abu Muslim. He commanded them not to appear if they heard him scolding him or raising his voice, but to appear and strike his neck or any other part of him with their swords if they heard him clap his hands.

2392. Al-Mansur then sat on his throne, so Abu Muslim rose from where he had been sitting and entered into his presence. He greeted him and al-Mansur answered his greetings. He ordered Abu Muslim to sit down, then conversed with him for a while. He then began to scold him severely and say: You did this, that and the other. Abu Muslim answered: "This should

not be said to me after all my exertions and accomplishments.” Al-Mansur said: “Son of a whore! You only accomplished these deeds through our good fortune and luck. Had a black slave woman been in your place she would have done just as well. Did you not write to me beginning with your own name first? Did you not write requesting me to give you Umayma bint `Ali’s [Abbasid princess] hand in marriage? Did you not allege that you were the son of Salit ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas? Motherless may you be! You have indeed scaled arduous heights!” Abu Muslim seized his hand, squeezed and kissed it, and apologized to him. Al-Mansur said---and these were the very last words he addressed to him: “May God kill me if I do not kill you!” He mentioned how Abu Muslim had killed Sulaiman ibn Kathir, then clapped his hands and his bodyguard appeared.

2393. `Uthman ibn Nahik began by hitting him a light blow with the sword which merely severed the tassles of Abu Muslim’s sword. Then Shabib struck, cutting his leg. Their swords then fell upon various parts of his body and finished him off, al-Mansur screaming all the while: “Hit him! God cut your hands!” At the first blow, Abu Muslim had said: “Keep me alive O Commander of the Believers, in order to fight your enemies!” Al-Mansur replied: “May God not leave me alive if I leave you alive! What enemy do I have worse than you?” Abu Muslim was killed in the month of Sha`ban of the year 136 [February, 754]. That year also witnessed the homage paid to al-Mansur as well as the defeat of `Abdullah ibn `Ali.

2394. Abu Muslim’s body was wrapped in a carpet. When `Isa ibn Musa entered he asked: “O Commander of the Believers, where is Abu Muslim?” He answered: “He was here a little while ago.” `Isa added: “O Commander of the Believers, you know well his obedience and good counsel, and what Ibrahim the imam thought of him.” Al-Mansur

answered: “You idiot of all idiots! I know of no greater enemy to you than him! There he is, wrapped in that carpet!” `Isa said: “We belong to God, and to Him we shall return!” Ja`far ibn Hanzala then entered and al-Mansur said to him: “What have you to say about Abu Muslim?” He replied: “O Commander of the Believers, if you remove a single hair on his head, you must then kill him and kill and kill!” Al-Mansur said: “God grant you success, he’s over there, wrapped in that carpet!” When Ja`far saw his dead body he said: “O Commander of the Believers, count this day as the first day of your caliphate!” Al-Saffah had been about to kill Abu Muslim, based on the advice of al-Mansur, but then changed his mind [reading *raja`a*].

2395. Al-Mansur then turned to the persons who were with him, with Abu Muslim lying dead before him, and recited:

You claimed that the debt owed to you cannot be repaid,

So receive your measure in full, Abu Mujrim!*

Drink from a cup you used to give others to drink,

More bitter to the throat than colocynth.

2396. It is reported that al-Mansur summoned Nasr ibn Malik, who was head of Abu Muslim’s police force, and asked him: “Is it true that Abu Muslim consulted you about coming to see me and you advised him not to do so?” He replied: “Yes.” “Why?” He replied: “I once heard your brother Ibrahim the imam quoting his father as saying: ‘A person will continue to improve his mind as long as he gives sincere advice to one who seeks it.’ That’s what I did with him and am ready to do with you.”

2397. The followers of Abu Muslim became very restless, so sums of money were distributed among them. When they knew of his death, they kept quiet, out of both their desire to live and their fear of death. After killing Abu Muslim, al-Mansur addressed people in public as follows: “O people, do not abandon the intimacy of obedience for the loneliness of

disobedience. Do not harbor in your hearts any malice towards your imams, for he who harbors such malice will be exposed by God through slips of his tongue and unintended acts, and these will be revealed by God to his imam. For it is God who undertakes to strengthen His religion through His Imam, and to promote divine truth through His imam's success. We have not neglected what is owed to you nor have we neglected what you owe to religion. Whoso attempts to wrest from us the buttonholes of this shirt will fall upon the sword in this sheathe. Abu Muslim paid us homage, swearing that if he reneges on our homage, he will have made it licit for us to shed his blood. He did renege, and we passed upon him a sentence that he passed upon others on our behalf. Nor did our respect for what is right prevent us from meting out rightful punishment upon him.”

2398. When the news of Abu Muslim's execution reached Khurasan and other provinces of the Jibal, the group called Khurramiyya became restless. This was the group, also called Muslimiyya, who believed in Abu Muslim as their imam. After his death, they split up. Some claimed he was not dead and would not die until he reappears to fill the earth with justice. Others believed that he had in fact died and called for the imamate of his daughter Fatima. These are called the Fatimiyya. At this time, i.e. the year 332, most Khurramiyya are divided into two groups: the Kardkiyya and the Ludshahiyya. These account for most of the Khurramiyya. From them issued Babik al-Khurrami who proclaimed a rebellion against al-Ma'mun and al-Mu'tasim in al-Badhdhayn, in the land of al-Ran and Adharbaijan. We will deal with his history and death under the history of al-Mu'tasim in a later section of this work, God willing.

2399. Most Khurramiyya are to be found in the lands of Khurasan, al-Rayy, Isbahan, Adharbaijan, Karaj Abi Dulaf and al-Burj, in a locality

called al-Radhdh and Warsanjan. They're also to be found in the lands of Saimara, Sirawan, Aryujan in Masbadhan, and in other lands. Most are found in villages and estates. They believe that they will one day be very important, and they await certain signs of this future event. In Khurasan, these groups are known as Batiniyyah. In our book entitled *Al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat*, we treated their various beliefs and sects, although other authors on books on the sects preceded us in doing so.

2400. When the Khurramiyya in Khurasan learnt of Abu Muslim's death, they gathered together, and a man among them, called Sunfad, from Nishapur, came out in rebellion, calling for revenge for the death of Abu Muslim. He led a very large force from Khurasan to Rayy, which he conquered, and also seized Qumis and its environs. He seized the treasury of Abu Muslim in al-Rayy, and his followers greatly increased when he was joined by the inhabitants of nearby regions like al-Jibal and Tabaristan. When news of this rebellion reached al-Mansur, he sent against them Jahwar ibn Mirar al-`Ijli with ten thousand men, then reinforced him with other troops. The two armies met at the edge of the desert, between Hamadhan and al-Rayy, and fought very hard, without yielding. Eventually Sunfad was killed and his followers fled. Sixty thousand of them were killed and many children and women were made captive. Between the start of his rebellion and his death was a period of seventy nights. This happened in the year 136, some months after the killing of Abu Muslim.

2401. In the year 145 [762-3], Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib rose in rebellion in Medina. Many cities had paid him allegiance. He was called the "Pure Soul" because of his asceticism and piety. He had not made an appearance during the reign of Abu'l `Abbas and was in hiding from al-Mansur. This lasted until al-Mansur arrested his father `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan, his uncles and many

of his relatives and friends. Al-Mas`udi said: When Muhammad ibn `Abdullah rose in rebellion in Medinah, al-Mansur summoned Ishaq ibn Muslim al-`Uqaili, an old man of wisdom and long experience, and said to him: "I want your advice regarding a rebel who has come out against me." Ishaq said: "Describe him to me." He said: "He is from the progeny of Fatima, daughter of the Prophet, and is ascetical, learned and pious." Ishaq asked: "Who are his followers?" "The descendants of `Ali, Ja`far and `Aqil as well as of `Umar ibn al-Khattab, of al-Zubair ibn al-`Awwam and the rest of Quraish and descendants of the Ansar." He asked: "Describe to me the city in which he rebelled." Al-Mansur replied: "It is a city without agriculture, animal husbandry or extensive trade." Ishaq thought for some time then said: "O Commander of the Believers, fortify Basra with fighting men." Al-Mansur said to himself: "The fellow must be senile. I ask him about a rebel who rose in Medinah and he tells me to fortify Basra with fighters!" So he said to him: "Depart, old man." 2402. Shortly thereafter, news arrived that Ibrahim [brother of Muhammad] had rebelled in Basra so al-Mansur summoned Ishaq again and, when he entered, drew him near to himself and said: "I had consulted you concerning a rebel who appeared in Medinah and you counseled me to fortify Basra. Had you received some private intelligence from Basra?" He answered: "No, but you described to me a rebel who, once he appears, will not fail to gather everyone around him. You then mentioned the city he was in, and that it is clearly limited in resources and cannot support a large army, so I concluded that he would try to move to another region. I thought of Egypt, al-Sham and Kufa and found them all to be stable and under control. When I thought of Basra, I was afraid because it had no troops, so I advised you to reinforce it." Al-Mansur said: "Well done! And now his brother has risen in rebellion in Basra. What do you advise as regards the rebel in Medinah?" Ishaq

responded: “You send against him someone of his social status, so that if one person says ‘This fellow is the son of the Prophet’ another could say ‘That fellow is the cousin of the Prophet.’” Al-Mansur said: “Bravo!”

2403. Al-Mansur then said to `Isa ibn Musa: “Either you march out against them and I stay here and supply you with troops or else you protect my back, I leave you behind and I go out to fight him myself.”

`Isa replied: “Rather, I shall myself save you from harm, O Commander of the Believers, and go out against him myself.” So al-Mansur sent him out of Kufa with four thousand cavalrymen and two thousand infantrymen, then sent after him Muhammad ibn Qahtaba with a large army. They fought Muhammad in Medinah until he was killed, aged forty-five.

2404. When Ibrahim, in Basra, heard of his brother’s death, he mounted the pulpit, announced his death, then quoted the following verse:

Champion of all battles, best of knights!

Whoever mourns the death of one like you mourns grievously.

God knows that if I feared them

And my heart was gripped with terror of them,

They would not have killed him nor would I have surrendered him to them

Until we die together or live together.

2405. The children and brothers of Muhammad had dispersed in various countries, calling for his imamate. Among these, his son `Ali went to Egypt where he was killed. His son `Abdullah went to Khurasan and when pursued there he fled to Sind and was killed there. His son al-Hasan went to Yemen where he was imprisoned and died in jail. His brother Musa headed to al-Jazira and his other brother Yahya to al-Rayy then on to Tabaristan. Yahya’s further history with al-Rashid will be reported in later sections of this book. His brother Idris travelled to the Maghrib

where a large number of people responded to his call, so al-Mansur sent someone in secret to assassinate him by poison after he had captured a number of cities in the Maghrib. His son, Idris ibn Idris ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan, succeeded his father, and the country came to be known as the “Land of Idris son of Idris.” In our book *al-Awsat*, we recounted their history when we reported the history of `Ubaidullah, ruler of the Maghrib, and his building the city called al-Mahdiyya, and also the history of his son Abu’l Qasim, and their move from Salamiyya in the province of Homs to the Maghrib.

2406. Muhammad’s brother, Ibrahim, had headed to Basra which he captured and his cause was joined by the people of Faris, al-Ahwaz and other cities. Ibrahim then advanced with a large army of Zaidi Shi`ites and others who today uphold the views of the Baghdad Mu`tazilites as well as others. He was accompanied by `Isa ibn Zaid ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with them all. Al-Mansur dispatched against them `Isa ibn Musa and Sa`id ibn Salm with an army, and Ibrahim fought until he was killed at a place called Bakhamra, at a distance of sixteen *farsakhs* from Kufa, in a region called al-Taff. This is the locality mentioned by poets who composed elegies for Ibrahim. Among these elegies is the one composed by Di`bil ibn `Ali al-Khuza`i, whose poem begins thus:

Schools where the Qur’an is taught are hushed and without the sounds of recitation,

And the site of divine revelations, its quarters desolate.

The poem continues:

Tombs in Kufa, others in Tayba,

Others in Fakhkh, reached by my prayers,

Others located in the land of Juzajan,

And a tomb in Bakhamra, near the dams.

Along with Ibrahim, four hundred, or five hundred in another version, of his Zaidi followers were also killed.

2407. Some historians have quoted Hammad al-Turki as saying: “Abu Ja`far al-Mansur was in a monastery on the heights of the banks above the Tigris, which today is called al-Khuld, as the City of Peace was being built, when al-Rabi`* arrived during the afternoon nap. Al-Mansur was sleeping in his room, and Hammad was sitting by the door. Al-Rabi` was carrying the postal message which announced the rebellion of Muhammad ibn `Abdullah. Al-Rabi` commanded Hammad to open the door but Hammad said: “The Commander of the Believers has just gone in to rest.” Al-Rabi` shouted: “Open the door, I say! May your mother be bereaved of you!” Al-Mansur heard these words, rose, opened the door himself and took the postal message, read its contents then recited the following Qur’anic verse: {We have sown hostility and hatred among them until the Day of Resurrection; whenever they kindle the flame of war, God shall extinguish it. They roam the earth corrupting it, and God loves not those who corrupt}. He then summoned his military commanders, clients, family members and followers, ordered Hammad al-Turki to saddle the horses, Sulaiman ibn Mujalid to march forth and al-Musayyab ibn Zuhair to prepare supplies.

2408. He then came out, ascended the pulpit, thanked and praised God, called blessings upon His Prophet then recited the following verses:

Why do I placate Sa`d but he curses me?

Were I to curse Sa`d’s clan, they’d fall silent.

They act barbarously against us but are cowards when facing their enemy,

Wretched indeed are these two qualities: barbarity and cowardice!

By God, they [i.e. Alids] were incapable of achieving what we achieved, but then were neither grateful to him who achieved this nor thanked the

one who spared them that effort. Matters were made easy for them but they deliberately made them difficult. They were envious and became ungrateful. What do you want from me? Am I to be given dirty water to drink and be made to grieve? No, by God! I would rather die in honor than live in humiliation. If he refuses to accept my pardon, he cannot expect anything else that I possess. Happy is the man who learns from the example of another.” He descended and said to a page: “Bring my horse.” He mounted and went at once to his military camp and said: “O God, let us not trust Your creatures for we will be lost, and let us not trust ourselves for we will fail. Let us only trust You!”

2409. It is reported that one day an omelet of bone marrow and sugar was prepared for him which he found very tasty and said: “Ibrahim wanted to deprive me of this pleasure and others like it!” It is mentioned, following the deaths of both Muhammad and Ibrahim, that al-Mansur once said to those sitting with him: “By God, I never heard of one wiser in his counsel than al-Hajjaj’s counsel to the Marwanid family.” Al-Musayyab ibn Zuhair al-Dabbi rose and said: “O Commander of the Believers, al-Hajjaj has not surpassed us in any endeavor we failed to achieve. By God, God has not created anything in this world dearer to us than our Prophet. You ordered us to kill his progeny and we obeyed you. Did we, or did we not, counsel you well?” Al-Mansur said: “Sit down, may you never sit!”

2410. We already mentioned that al-Mansur had arrested `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali together with Muhammad and Ibrahim, the sons of `Abdullah, and many members of his family. This occurred in the year 144 [761-2], as al-Mansur was returning from his pilgrimage. They were transported from Medinah to al-Rabadha, on the Iraq road. With `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan were also transported Ibrahim ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan, Abu Bakr ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan, `Ali “The Good” and his brother `Abbas, `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Husain, and

Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn `Uthman ibn `Affan, brother of `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan, their mother being Fatima bint al-Husain ibn `Ali and their grandmother being Fatima daughter of the Prophet. At al-Rabadha, al-Mansur had Muhammad ibn `Abdullah stripped and given a thousand lashes. He asked him about his two nephews, Muhammad and Ibrahim, and he denied any knowledge of their whereabouts. There then flowed [lacuna] of Muhammad the son of `Uthman.

2411. Al-Mansur then left al-Rabadha under a parasol while the prisoners were chained and mounted with their heads bare. As al-Mansur passed them on his she-camel and under the parasol, `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan shouted: “O Abu Ja`far, is this how we treated you in the Battle of Badr*?” He ordered them taken to Kufa and placed in an underground dungeon where they could not tell day from night. He released Sulaiman and `Abdullah, the sons of Dawud ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan, Musa ibn `Abdullah and al-Hasan ibn Ja`far but kept the rest of those mentioned above in prison until they died. The prison was located on the bank of the Euphrates, near the Kufa bridge. Their tombs in Kufa are still visited to the present day, i.e. the year 332. The dungeon had been destroyed on top of them. In prison, they used to perform ablutions where they sat until the smell became too strong. So some of their clients managed to smuggle in some musk which they used to drive away the foul stench. Swellings would first begin in their feet then spread upwards to reach their hearts and they would die.

2412. Another version has it that those prisoners we mentioned were unable to determine the times of prayer so they divided the Qur`an into five sections and would pray when each had finished reciting his section. By then only five of them remained alive. Then Ibrahim ibn al-Hasan died and was left among them until his body began to decompose which

filled Dawud ibn al-Hasan with consternation and he too died. The head of Ibrahim ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan was brought to al-Mansur who sent it with al-Rabi` and he placed it in their midst. `Abdullah was then praying so his brothers said to him: “Hurry your prayers, Abu Muhammad.” He performed the greetings then saw the head, took it in his lap and placing it on his knee he said: “Welcome Abu’l Qasim! By God you have always been, ever since I knew you, like one of those addressed by God as follows: {They who fulfill the pledge of God and do not violate the covenant, who bind the ties of kinship that God commanded to be bound}--to the end of the verse.” Al-Rabi` asked him: “How was Abu’l Qasim in his person?” He answered: “He was as described by the poet:

*A youth whose sword protected him from humiliation,
And the stains of sins were sufficient to make him avoid them.”*

`Abdullah then turned to al-Rabi` and said: “Tell your master that the days of our wretchedness have passed, and the days of your prosperity have also passed, and we shall meet on Resurrection Day.” Al-Rabi` added: “I never saw al-Mansur more dejected than at that moment when I relayed that message from `Abdullah.” The poet, al-`Abbas ibn al-Ahnaf, took that idea and included it in the following verses:

*If you [feminine] were one day to compare my state and yours,
With a glance unaffected by caprice,
You would see that each of my wretched days that pass by,
Is counted as a day of blessing for you.*

In our work *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we gave a full and detailed account of the violent deaths of the Talibids, making it unnecessary to repeat it here.

2413. When al-Mansur captured `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan, his brothers and the few family members who were with them, he ascended the pulpit in al-Hashimiyya, thanked and praised God, called down blessings on his

Prophet then said: “People of Khurasan, you are our party, our supporters and those who answered our call. Had you paid allegiance to others you would not have found them better than us. I swear by the One and Only God that we left the progeny of Ibn Abi Talib free to pursue the caliphate on their own and did not stand in their way at all. The first among them to assume the caliphate was `Ali ibn Abi Talib but he failed in that endeavor, then appointed the two arbitrators, thus splitting the community and dividing its views. Eventually, his own party and supporters rebelled against him and killed him.

2414. “He was succeeded by his son al-Hasan ibn `Ali but by God he was not the man for it. He was offered money and he accepted it. Mu`awiya passed him a message in secret promising to make him his successor, so he abdicated the caliphate and abandoned his status and turned it over to Mu`awiya. He then turned to women, marrying one day and divorcing the next, and went on like this until he died in his bed. Al-Husain ibn `Ali followed but the people of Iraq and Kufa deceived him, people of discord, hypocrisy and prone to civil strife, the people of this region---and he pointed to Kufa. For, by God, it is not a city at war with me so that I can wage war against it, nor is it a city of peace so I can conclude peace with it. May God put a long distance between me and it! Anyway, its people let him down, repudiated him and surrendered him until he was killed.

2415. “Then after him Zaid ibn `Ali rose in rebellion and he too was deceived and cheated by the Kufans. Having brought him out and led him into battle, they surrendered him. My father, Muhammad ibn `Ali, had pleaded with him not to rebel and told him not to trust the promises of the Kufans, adding: ‘We find in knowledge revealed to us that a member of our family will be crucified in the Kunasa quarter [of Kufa] and I fear you might be the one.’ My uncle Dawud ibn `Ali also pleaded with him

and warned him against the treachery of the Kufans, but he would not listen, and went on with his rebellion, until he was killed and crucified in al-Kunasa. The Umayyads then attacked us all, robbing us of our honors and our prestige. By God, they had no cause to demand revenge from us and this all happened because of them [Alids] and their rebellions. They exiled us from our homeland and we ended up at times in al-Ta'if, at others in al-Sham or else in al-Sharat [southern Jordan]. This continued until God sent you forth as our party and supporters, thus restoring our prestige and our power by your agency, O people of Khurasan. With your truth God repelled falsehood and handed power to us as our inheritance from our Prophet. Thus, right finally triumphed. God revealed His light , empowered His supporters, and put an end to the tyrants. God be thanked. 2416. "When our state and power were firmly established through God's favor and His just verdict, they began to rebel against us. They did so out of envy of us and covetousness since God had honored and preferred us to them as regards His caliphate and His Prophet's inheritance. Towards the Umayyads they had displayed cowardice but towards us they showed audacity, as in the line of verse:

They act barbarously against us but are cowards when facing their enemy,

Wretched indeed are these two qualities: barbarity and cowardice!

People of Khurasan, I swear by God I did not act the way I did towards them out of violence or mere suspicion. I had been informed that they intended malice, so I secretly dispatched some men to penetrate their ranks, telling each of them: 'Up, so and so, and take this sum of money.' I then outlined a pattern of conduct they were to follow. These men left and went to Medinah and distributed these monies among them. By God, there remained not a single old man or youth, whether well known or obscure, but paid allegiance whereby [reading *baya`ahum bi`atan*] I

considered it licit to shed their blood since they had repudiated the oath of homage to me, were intent on civil strife and sought to rebel against me.”

Al-Mansur then recited from the pulpit the Qur’anic verse: {A bar shall be set between them and what they desire, as was done with their like in times past. They are plunged in perplexing doubt.}

2417. One day al-Mansur asked al-Rabi’: “What is it that you need?” He replied: “Commander of the Believers, what I most need is for you to love my son al-Fadl.” “Woe to you! Love happens through several causes.” “O Commander of the Believers, God has made it possible for you to bring about these causes.” “Such as?” “Be gracious to him, for if you are gracious to him he will love you, and if he loves you, you will also love him.” Al-Mansur said: “By God I love him already even before there is any cause for such love. But why choose love rather than anything else?” “Because if you love him his minor good deeds will appear to be major while his major misdeeds will appear minor to you. His misdeeds would then seem to you to be like those of young boys, and his need of you will be like that of the naked intercessor.”* Al-Mansur once said to al-Rabi’: “Woe to you, O Rabi’! How lovely life is were it not for death!” He replied: “It can only be pleasurable because of death.” “How so?” “Because were it not for death, you would not be in your present seat.” Al-Mansur said: “That’s true.”

2418. Ishaq ibn al-Fadl said: “One day, as I was at the gate of al-Mansur, `Amr ibn `Ubaid* approached, dismounted from his donkey and sat down. Al-Rabi’ went out to him and said: “Get up, O Abu `Uthman! I beseech you by my father and mother!” When he entered into al-Mansur’s presence, the latter ordered woolen cushions to be spread for him, told him to draw near and sat him close to him after he had greeted him. He then said: “O Abu `Uthman, give me some moral advice.” `Amr did so, and as he rose to leave, al-Mansur said to him: “We have ordered

ten thousand dirhams to be paid to you.” `Amr replied: “I have no need of them.” Al-Mansur said: “I swear you shall take them!” “No, by God, I shall not!” Al-Mahdi was present on that occasion and said: “The Commander of the Believers swears and you swear in return?” `Amr turned to al-Mansur and asked: “Who is this young man?” “He is my son Muhammad, al-Mahdi, my heir apparent.” `Amr said: “By God, you have dressed him up in clothes that do not belong to pious men and called him by a name which he doesn’t deserve through any act which he has performed. You have prepared him for a responsibility which he will enjoy as much as he will neglect to perform it.” Then `Amr turned to al-Mahdi and said: “Yes, my nephew, when your father swears an oath, your uncle can counter his oath, since your father is more able to atone for his oaths than your uncle.” Al-Mansur asked `Amr: “Is there anything that you need, O Abu `Uthman?” He replied: “Do not summon me until I come to you.” He said: “Then we shall never meet again!” `Amr answered: “That is what I want.” As he left, al-Mansur’s gaze followed him out then he recited:

All of you walk slowly,

All of you are out hunting for something,

All except `Amr ibn `Ubaid.

2419. One day, `Amr entered into al-Mansur’s presence after the latter had obtained homage for his son al-Mahdi. Al-Mansur said to him: “O Abu `Uthman, here’s the son of the Commander of the Believers and the one who will be in charge of the Muslim community.” `Amr replied: “O Commander of the Believers, I see that you have prepared the way for him so that he will succeed you. But you are responsible for him.” Al-Mansur, with tears in his eyes, said: “Give me some moral advice, O `Amr.” He replied: “O Commander of the Believers, God has granted you the whole world so buy the good of your soul with a little worldly sum.

This matter that now rests in your hands: had it lasted in someone else's hands, it would not have reached you. Beware of a night that brings forth a day beyond which there is no night." He then recited:

*O you who are tempted by false hopes,
And do not expect to meet with sorrow or death,
Do you not see that this world and its adornments,
Are like like a place where a caravan stops then departs?
Death stalks this world, and life in it is full of adversity,
Its serenity is hardship, its kingship ever-changing.
It constantly pounds its inhabitant with fearful blows,
And neither ease nor firmness is of any use to him.
It is as if he is a target for misfortune and death,
Upon whom the vagaries of time vie with one another.
The soul escapes as death stalks it,
And each stumble of a foot is counted a sin.
A man will endeavor to make his heir inherit him,
But it is the grave that shall inherit all the man's endeavors.*

2420. `Amr ibn `Ubaid died in the days of al-Mansur in the year 144 or 145. His patronymic was "Abu `Uthman". His full name is `Amr ibn `Ubaid ibn Bab, a client of the Tamim, and of the clan of Malik ibn Hanzala. He was a man of Balkh, and his grandfather had been a captive from Kabul, in the Sind mountains. He was the founder and most prominent Mu`tazilite of his days and of later times, and was the author of numerous epistles, sermons and discourses on justice, divine unity and other topics. In our work entitled *al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat*, we mentioned his history, together with a selection of his sayings and debates.

2421. In the year 141 [758-9], al-Mansur headed to Bayt al-Maqdis [Jerusalem] in order to fulfill a vow he had made, then departed.

2422. In the year 146 [763-4], Hisham ibn `Urwa ibn al-Zubair died, aged eighty-five. Whenever Hisham heard from someone words that he disliked he would say: "I elevate myself above what you say." Once he argued with `Ali ibn al-Hasan, and Hisham reviled him, so `Ali said: "Kindly practice what you used to preach."

2423. In the year 150, Abu Hanifa al-Nu`man ibn Thabit*, client of Taym Allat, a clan of the Bakr ibn Wa'il, died in Baghdad, in the days of al-Mansur. He died while prostrating in prayer, at age seventy. In that year too, `Abd al-Malik ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Jurayj al-Makki, client of Khalid ibn Asid, died, aged seventy. His patronymic was "Abu'l Walid." Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn Yasar* also died that year. He was a client of Qais ibn Makhrama, from the Muttalib family. His patronymic was "Abu `Abdullah." It is also reported that he died in 151 or 152.

2424. In the year 157 [773-4], Al-Awza`i died. His full name was Abu `Amr `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Amr. He was from al-Sham but not from the Awza` tribe. His home in Damascus was in their quarter so he was counted of their number. He was from the captives of Yemen and died towards the end of al-Mansur's days, aged seventy. In the days of al-Mansur too, Layth ibn Abi Sulaym al-Kufi, client of `Anbasa ibn Abi Sufian, died in 158. His patronymic was "Abu Bakr." In 156, Sawwar ibn `Abdullah, the judge, died, and in 156 Abu `Amr ibn al-`Ala' died, in the days of al-Mansur.

2425. `Abdullah ibn `Ali spent a long time in al-Mansur's prison. Some say he spent nine years, others mention other periods. When al-Mansur intended to go on pilgrimage in the year 147, he transferred him from his custody to that of `Isa ibn Musa and ordered him to kill him without anyone knowing about it. `Isa consulted Ibn Abi Laila* and Ibn Shubruma*. Ibn Abi Laila said: "Follow the orders of the Commander of the Believers," while Ibn Shubruma said: "He has left you in a spot wider

than what lies between heaven and earth, so do not get involved in this matter.” So he imprisoned him in secret and refused to kill him while telling al-Mansur that he had killed him. This became known, so the sons of `Ali sent word to al-Mansur regarding their brother `Abdullah, and he told them that he was in the custody of `Isa ibn Musa. Arriving in Mecca, they asked `Isa ibn Musa about him and he told them he had killed him. Returning to al-Mansur, they said: “`Isa claims he has killed him.” Al-Mansur pretended he was angry with `Isa and said: “He dares to kill my uncle without my permission? By God I shall kill him!”

2426. Al-Mansur had hoped that `Isa had in fact killed him which would allow him to kill `Isa in revenge, and so got rid of them both. He then summoned `Isa and asked him: “Did you kill my uncle?” He said: “Yes, and it was you who commanded me to do so.” He said: “No, I did not command you.” `Isa replied: “Here’s your letter about it.” Al-Mansur said: “I did not write this letter.” When `Isa saw that al-Mansur was in earnest, he feared for his own life and said: “He’s with me. I did not kill him.” He said: “Send him to Abu’l Azhar al-Muhallab ibn Abi `Isa.” This was done, and he remained in prison until Abu’l Azhar was ordered to kill him.

2427. Abu’l Azhar went into prison where he found `Abdullah with a slave woman. He began by choking him to death then spread his body on a mattress. He then turned to the slave girl to choke her and she said: “Servant of God! Any death but this!” Abu’l Azhar used to say: “I never felt any pity for anyone I killed except for that woman. I turned my face away from her and ordered her strangled. Her body was then placed alongside `Ali’s on the bed, her hand was put under his side and his under hers, like two people embracing. I then ordered the chamber to be destroyed on top of them. Al-Mansur then called for Ibn `Ulatha the judge and others to witness `Abdullah and the slave woman lying

together in that position, then ordered him to be buried in the Abu Suwayd cemetery at the al-Sham Gate, on the western side of Baghdad. 2428. Al-Mas`udi said: `Abdullah ibn `Ayyash al-Mantuf reported the following: “Once, when we were in his company, al-Mansur said: ‘Do you know of a tyrant whose name begins with the letter `ayn who killed a tyrant whose name begins with `ayn, another whose name begins with `ayn and a third whose name begins with `ayn?’ I replied: ‘Yes, O Commander of the Believers. `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan killed `Amr ibn Sa`id ibn al-`As, `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair and `Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Ash`ath.’ He asked: ‘Do you know of a caliph whose name begins with `ayn who killed a tyrant whose name begins with `ayn, another whose name begins with `ayn and a third whose name begins with `ayn?’ I said: ‘That’s you, O Commander of the Believers. You killed `Abd al-Rahman ibn Muslim, `Abd al-Jabbar ibn `Abd al-Rahman and your uncle `Abdullah ibn `Ali, who died when the roof collapsed on top of him.’ He said: ‘How is it my fault if the roof collapsed on top of him?’ I said: ‘It’s not your fault.’ He smiled, then asked: ‘Do you remember the verses spoken by the wife of al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik when `Abd al-Malik killed her brother `Amr ibn Sa`id?’* I replied: ‘Yes I do, Commander of the Believers. The day her brother was killed, she came out, her head uncovered, and recited the following verses:

*My eyes, be generous in your tears for `Amr,
When the caliphate is now seized by brute force.
You killed `Amr treacherously, you sons of a false pedigree,
And all of you build your power on treachery.
`Amr was not powerless, but the ropes of death,
Ensnared him suddenly, and unsuspecting.
It was as though, when the Marwanids killed him,
They were like despicable birds crowding around a hawk.*

*God curse a world that leads its people to hell,
And rends the veil of kinship!
Oh my people, what about loyalty and treachery,
And those who locked the door behind `Amr?
We departed at night, as did those who rejoiced in our affliction,
As if blocks of boulders were tied around their necks.’”*

2429. Ibn `Ayyash added: “Al-Mansur asked: ‘What were the verses sent by `Amr ibn Sa`id to `Abd al-Malik?’ I answered: ‘Yes, O Commander of the Believers. He wrote the following verses to him:

*Ibn Marwan intends certain things
Which I believe will cause him difficulties from me.
He intends to break a covenant that Marwan had firmly concluded,
And wants to void it through denial and lying.
I put him ahead of me though I was ahead of him,
And had I not submitted, there would have been no end of troubles.
What I conceded to Marwan was a mistake,
Where my view was overridden and this was a calamity.
If you fulfill the agreement that existed between us,
We will all enjoy peace and tranquility,
But if he hands it over to `Abd al-`Aziz, unjustly,
The Harb family is more worthy of it than me or him.*

2430. Al-Mansur was born the year al-Hajjaj died, i.e. the year 95 [713-14]. He used to say: “I was born in Dhu`l Hijja, circumcised in Dhu`l Hijja, assumed the caliphate in Dhu`l Hijja, and I suppose my death will occur in Dhu`l Hijja.” It turned out as he had predicted. Al-Fadl ibn al-Rabi` narrated the following: “I was travelling with al-Mansur on the trip during which he died. He alighted at a way station and summoned me while he was in his domed chamber, his face turned to the wall. He said: ‘Did I not forbid you to permit the common people to enter these houses

and write those trivial things?’ I asked: ‘Where and what are these things, O Commander of the Believers?’ He said: ‘Don’t you see what is written on the wall:

O Abu Ja`far, your death is near,

Your years are ended, and God’s verdict must no doubt pass.

O Abu Ja`far, will some seer or astrologer,

Reverse God’s judgment, or are you an ignorant person?’

I said: ‘I swear to God I can see nothing written on this wall which is perfectly clean and white.’ He said: ‘You swear?’ ‘I do,’ I replied. He said: ‘Then, by God, my soul is being summoned to depart this world! Take me quickly to the sanctuary and peace of my Lord in order to escape from my sins and overindulging myself!’ So we departed, and his illness grew more severe until we reached Bi’r Maymun where I said to him: ‘We have reached Bi’r Maymun and you are now in sacred territory.’ He said: ‘God be thanked!’ and died that very day.”

2431. Al-Mansur was a man of extraordinary determination, sound management of affairs and skillful policies, to which no description can do justice. He would spend huge amounts if spending them led to real change and withhold paltry sums if these were a waste. He was as Ziyad once described himself: “If I had a thousand camels, one of which was mangy, I would ride it like one who owned no other camel but it.” Abu Ja`far left behind six hundred million dirhams and fourteen million dinars, but was nevertheless miserly, and carefully examined things that even common people do not examine. Thus, he agreed with his kitchen chef that he could keep the heads, trotters and skins of slaughtered animals provided he paid for the spices and logs.

2432. In the year 136, Rabi`a ibn Abi `Abd al-Rahman*, known as “Rabi`a al-Ra`i”, died. His patronymic was “Abu `Uthman.” He was the client of the Munkadir clan and his father’s name was Farrukh. He died in

al-Anbar. In that year also, Zaid ibn Aslam, client of `Umar ibn al-Khattab, died.

2433. Al-Mansur once sent his uncles, ten in number, the sum of ten thousand dirhams each. Their names were: `Abdullah ibn `Ali, `Abd al-Samad ibn `Ali, Isma`il ibn `Ali, `Isa ibn `Ali, Dawud ibn `Ali, Salih ibn `Ali, Sulaiman ibn `Ali, Ishaq ibn `Ali, Muhammad ibn `Ali and Yahya ibn `Ali. In building Baghdad, which he built and which is known till today by his name, he employed fifty thousand laborers. Al-Mansur's children were: Muhammad al-Mahdi and Ja`far, whose mother was Umm Musa al-Himyariyya. Ja`far died in the days of al-Mansur. He also fathered `Isa, Sulaiman, Ya`qub and Ja`far the Younger, their mother being a Kurd, then Salih, known as the "Wretched", and a girl called `Aliya.

2434. Charming stories are narrated of al-Mansur and al-Rabi`, `Abdullah ibn `Ayyash, Ja`far ibn Muhammad, `Amr ibn `Ubaid and others we have not mentioned. Also preserved are his speeches, sermons, actions and royal policies which we selected for their value and recounted in detail in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In this work, we merely record gleanings and refer readers to our earlier works. In God is success.

Chapter 109

An account of the caliphate of al-Mahdi

2435. Al-Mahdi then received the oath of homage. His full name was Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas. His patronymic was "Abu `Abdullah". His mother was Umm Musa bint al-Mansur ibn `Abdullah ibn Dhi Sahn ibn Abi Sarh, who was descended from Dhu Ru`ayn, a king of the Yemen. The oath of homage was taken on his behalf in Mecca by al-Rabi`, his client, on Saturday, the sixth of Dhu'l Hijja in the year 158 [October 7, 775]. His client Manara brought him news of his father's death and the homage paid to him. He

stayed in seclusion for two days after Manara's arrival, then addressed the people, announced his father's death, called for homage and received public homage. He was born in 127 [744-5]. In 169 [785-6], he left the City of Peace and headed for the land of Qirmasin, in the province of Dinawar. The healthy climate of the territory of Masabadhan in the land of Sirawan and Jurjan was described to him, so he turned towards the place called Arzan and al-Ran, and died in a village called Raddayn on the night of Thursday, seven days remaining from the month of Muharram, in the year 169 [August 5, 785]. His caliphate lasted ten years, one month and fifteen days. He died aged forty-three, though other versions exist. His son, Harun al-Rashid, prayed over his body while the other son, Musa al-Hadi, was absent in Jurjan. It is said that he died from poisoned pastry that he had eaten, and we mentioned this in our book *al-Awsat*. His slave girl Hasana and others in his retinue wore coarse haircloth and black in mourning for him. Regarding this, the poet Abu'l `Atahiya* recited:

*They departed, wearing embroidered garments,
But the following morning they wore haircloth.
Every ram who smites with his horns will,
Even if he lives long, meet with a day that smites him.
You are not everlasting even if you live as long as Noah.
So mourn for yourself, if you must mourn.*

A narrative of his history and conduct together with a brief account of his days

2436. Al-Fadl ibn al-Rabi`* recounted the following story: "One day, Sharik the judge entered into the presence of al-Mahdi who said to him: "You must answer one of three demands I shall make of you." "What are they, O Commander of the Believers?" Al-Mahdi said: "You either assume the office of judge, or relate Hadith to my two sons and tutor

them, or share a meal with me.” Sharik thought for a while, then said: “Sharing the meal is the easiest to bear for me.” So he kept him with him then told his cook to prepare for him a dish of bone marrow thickened with *tabarzad* sugar, honey and other ingredients. When he finished eating, the cook said to al-Mahdi: “O Commander of the Believers, the old man will never recover from that meal!” Al-Fadl added: “So Sharik related Hadith to them, tutored the royal children and assumed the office of judge for the Abbasids. A letter was then sent to the finance officer regarding his salary, but the latter gave him trouble and said: “Did you not use your salary to sell silk?” Sharik replied: “Yes, by God! I sold more than silk! I sold my religious conscience!”

2437. Al-Fadl ibn al-Rabi` said: “Al-Mahdi went out one day for a stroll. With him was `Umar ibn Bazi`, his client, who was a poet. He wandered off and lost track of his troops who were hunting, and al-Mahdi became very hungry so he said to `Umar: ‘Woe to you! Do you have anything one can eat?’ ‘Nothing,’ `Umar replied. ‘Then go find me a man who has some food.’ `Umar kept riding until he found a man with a vegetable garden and a hut nearby. Going up to the man `Umar asked him: ‘Do you have any food?’ ‘Yes, some barley flatbread, some fish paste, and what you see here of beans and leeks,’ said the man. Al-Mahdi said: ‘If you have some oil, this would make it all perfect.’ ‘Yes, I have some leftover,’ the man replied. So he presented all these to them and they ate voraciously. Al-Mahdi would express his delight with the food, and did so much justice to it that he left nothing behind. He then said to `Umar: ‘Compose some verses to describe what happened to us here.’ `Umar recited:

*He who offers his guests fish paste with oil,
Barley bread and leeks,
Deserves a slap or two or three,*

For such a bad deed.

Al-Mahdi said: ‘By God, this is a wretched verse. Better for you to have said:

Deserves a purse full of money or two or three,

For such a good deed.’

The troops then came up, followed by the treasury, the royal servants and mounted escorts, and al-Mahdi ordered that three purses be given to the owner of that vegetable garden.

2438. One day, and out on a hunt, al-Mahdi’s horse bolted and led him to the tent of a nomad. He was very hungry and said: “Nomad, do you have any food to offer a guest?” The nomad answered: “I see you have a soft, fat and unblemished body, so if you can bear our food, we will offer you what we have.” Al-Mahdi said: “Let’s have it.” He brought out some bread baked in ashes which al-Mahdi ate and found delicious so asked the nomad to bring out what other food he had. He next brought out milk in a leather skin and gave him to drink. Al-Mahdi enjoyed it and asked for more. So the nomad brought him some date wine in a cup. The nomad drank one swig and gave al-Mahdi another. When he drank it, he asked the nomad: “Do you know who I am?” “No, by God,” replied the nomad. Al-Mahdi said: “I am a royal servant.” The nomad said: “May God bless you, whatever your station in life, and may He preserve you, whoever you may be.” The nomad drank another cup then handed it to him. When he drank it al-Mahdi said: “Nomad, do you know who I am?” “Yes, you mentioned you were a royal servant.” “No, I am not,” said al-Mahdi. “So who then are you?” “I am one of al-Mahdi’s military commanders.” “Welcome to this, your house, and may your visit be enjoyable.” The nomad then drank and passed it to al-Mahdi. When he drank the third cup, al-Mahdi asked him: “Do you know who I am?” “Yes. You claimed you were one of al-Mahdi’s commanders.” He said: “No I am not.” “Who

then are you?" "I am the Commander of the Believers in the flesh." The nomad took his cup and hung it up. When al-Mahdi said: "Give me to drink," the nomad replied: "No, by God, you will not drink a single swig of it or anything more." "Why not?" asked al-Mahdi. "When I gave you the first cup, you claimed you were a royal servant, so I swallowed it. When I gave you a second cup, you claimed you were one of al-Mahdi's commanders so I swallowed that too. With the third cup you claimed you were the Commander of the Believers. No, by God! I am not sure that after the fourth cup you won't claim you are the Prophet of God!"

2439. Al-Mahdi laughed, the troops then surrounded him and the royal princes and nobles dismounted to greet him. The nomad was terrified and all he could think of was to flee for his life. So he ran away as fast as he could but he was caught and brought back, and al-Mahdi said: "Have no fear." He then commanded that he be given a handsome reward consisting of money, garments, cotton cloths and tackle. The nomad said to him: "I testify that you spoke the truth, and had you claimed anything further after the fourth and fifth cup, you would have been believed." Al-Mahdi laughed so much he almost fell off his horse when he heard about the fourth and fifth cups. He added the nomad to his retinue and gave him a regular salary.

2440. Al-Mahdi's vizier was Abu `Ubaidullah Mu`awiya ibn `Ubaidullah al-Ash`ari, the grandfather of Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab, the state secretary. He had been his secretary before he assumed the caliphate. Al-Mahdi then executed a son of Abu `Ubaidullah for heresy, so they became estranged from one another and Al-Mahdi dismissed him from his post. Abu `Ubaidullah lived on until the year 170 [786-7]. Then Ya`qub ibn Dawud al-Sulami became al-Mahdi's intimate and he wrote to all offices of state informing them that al-Mahdi had promoted him. He had access to him at all times, unlike any other person. Later, al-Mahdi

accused him of some matter to do with the Talibids and was about to kill him, then put him in prison, where he remained until the days of al-Rashid, who released him. It is alleged that he believed that the imamate rightfully belonged to the eldest of the descendants of al-`Abbas, and that al-Mahdi's uncles were more worthy of it than him.

2441. Al-Mahdi was popular with both elite and commoners because he began his caliphate by reinstating the courts dealing with abuse of power [*mazalim*], stopped executions, offered security to those in fear, righted wrongs and was very liberal with money, spending all that al-Mansur had accumulated. This came to six hundred million dirhams and fourteen million dinars, not counting the taxes collected in his own days. When his treasuries were empty, Abu Haritha al-Nahdi, his treasurer, came to see him, threw the keys down before him and said: "What is the point of having keys to empty chambers?" Al-Mahdi dispatched twenty royal officials to raise money and the monies arrived in a few days, so Abu Haritha was kept busy counting and recording them for three days, during which he did not see al-Mahdi. When he finally came to see him, al-Mahdi asked: "What kept you from coming?" He replied: "I was busy counting and recording the money." He said: "You are a foolish nomad! Did you suppose that money would not come if we needed it?" Abu Haritha replied: "A sudden crisis, when it occurs, will not wait for you to dispatch people to collect the money and bring it back."

2442. It is said that al-Mahdi in the space of ten days disbursed ten million dirhams of his own wealth, at which point Shabba ibn `Iqal stood up and addressed the following words to him: "Al-Mahdi may be compared to several things, for instance, the shining moon, the coming of spring, the crouching lion and the overflowing sea. The shining moon resembles his beautiful visage and splendor. The coming of spring resembles his purity and freshness. The crouching lion resembles his

assault and his impact. The overflowing sea resembles his liberality and generosity.”

2443. Al-Khaizaran, mother of al-Hadi and al-Rashid, was living in her mansion, today known as Ashnas. With her were mothers of the children of caliphs and other Hashimite women. She was sitting on an Armenian carpet while they sat on Armenian cushions. Zainab bint Sulaiman ibn `Ali was the highest in rank among them. As they sat, a servant entered and announced: “There is a woman at the door, handsome and good looking, but wearing tattered clothes, who refuses to disclose her name or what she wants to other than you ladies, and wishes to come in.” Al-Mahdi had previously asked al-Khaizaran to keep the company of Zainab bint Sulaiman, and to emulate her conduct and moral character since she, according to him “is our leading lady and one who knew the former members of our family.” Al-Khaizaran told the servant to admit her, and a woman, splendid and beautiful, entered, wearing tattered garments. When she spoke, she did so clearly and eloquently. When they asked who she was, she answered: “I am Muzna, wife of Marwan ibn Muhammad. Fate has reduced me to the state which you can see. By God, even those tattered garments I am wearing are borrowed! When you defeated us and wrested power from us, and having suffered much harm, we did not feel safe consorting with commoners lest some impulsive action by them might deprive us of our honor. So I have come to you to seek refuge in any manner you care to offer it until the call to God comes to whomever the call is addressed.”

2444. The eyes of al-Khaizaran filled with tears. But Zainab bint Sulaiman regarded her and said: “May God not relieve your hardship, O Muzna! Do you remember when I went to see you in Harran while you sat on this very same carpet with your female relatives sitting on these cushions and I asked you to give me back the body of Ibrahim the imam,

how you spoke harshly to me, ordered me to be thrown out and said: ‘What have women to do with men’s affairs?’ By God, Marwan was fairer to me than you. When I entered into his presence, he swore to me that he did not kill him, though he lied. He then gave me the choice of either handing over his body to me or burying it himself, and I chose to take his body. He also offered me some money which I refused to accept.” Muzna replied: “By God I do not think that this miserable situation I am in was caused by anything other than the way I then acted. It sounds as if you approved of it, so encouraged that lady [i.e. Khaizaran] to do the same. In fact, you should have encouraged her to do a virtuous act and not to return evil for evil, in order to gain God’s blessings and safeguard her religious beliefs.” Turning to Zainab, she said: “My cousin, you saw what God had done to us when we disobeyed Him and should have avoided emulating our example.” She then departed in tears.

2445. Khaizaran was loath to contradict Zainab so winked at one of her slave women to take Muzna to one of her chambers, and she did so without Zainab’s knowledge. Khaizaran ordered that her apparel be changed and she be shown kindness. When al-Mahdi came to see her, Zainab having departed---his habit was to meet some of his intimate womenfolk each night---and Khaizaran related the story to him and how she had ordered that Muzna’s apparel be changed, al-Mahdi summoned the slave girl who was put in charge of bringing her back and asked her: “When you turned her back and lodged her in that chamber, what did you hear her say?” She replied: “I followed her, O Commander of the Believers, into the corridor, found her crying as she was leaving and comforting herself by reciting the following verse of the Qur’an: {God strikes a simile: a town, once secure and contented, its livelihood coming to it in plenty from all directions, which then blasphemed against God’s

blessings. So he made it taste the raiment of hunger and fear because of what they did.}” Al-Mahdi said: “By God, had you done anything to her other than what you actually did, I would never have spoken to you.” He then wept profusely and said: “O God, I take refuge with You against the loss of Your blessings.” He objected to Zainab’s action and added: “Had she not been our most senior woman of our family, I would have sworn never to speak to her again.”

2446. He then sent one of his slave women to the chamber set aside for Muzna and told the slave: “Greet her in my name and tell her: ‘Cousin, your sisters have gathered here with me, and were it not that I might cause you grief we would all have come to see you.’” When Muzna heard the message, she understood its import. Zainab bint Sulaiman was in attendance with the others. So Muzna came dragging her robes behind her and al-Mahdi greeted her, seated her near to him and above Zainab, and proceeded to converse with her about ancestors, ancient battles and the transience of empires. By God, she never left room for anyone else to speak in that assembly.” Al-Mahdi said: “I swear, cousin, were it not that I do not wish the people to whom you belong to have anything to do with our dynasty, I would have married you. But nothing will protect you better than the seclusion you have here with me, and being with your sisters in my palace. You shall have the same privileges and duties as they do, until the verdict of Him who passes all verdicts passes upon you as it is passed on all His creatures.” He then assigned to her the same fiefs as were assigned to the other royal women, rewarded her and provided her with servants. She was to remain in his palace until al-Mahdi died then lived through the days of al-Hadi and until the early days of al-Rashid, when she died during his caliphate. No distinction was made between her and the women of the Hashim family or their most intimate

free women or slaves. When she died, al-Rashid and his women folk were stricken with grief.

2447. Al-Tiyashi related to us from al-Asma`i, who said: “‘Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn `Utba entered into al-Mahdi’s presence to console him for the death of al-Mansur, and said: ‘May God reward the Commander of the Believers for bearing with the loss of the Commander of the Believers before him, and may He bless him for having succeeded him, for there is no calamity greater than the loss of a father and imam, and no outcome more august than to be the caliph of God over His worshippers. So accept, O Commander of the Believers, God’s greatest gift and seek His reward by bearing up with the best of calamities.’”

2448. Some who transmit traditions and histories state that when Abu`l `Atahiya exceeded all bounds in his amatory verses addressed to `Utba, the slave of Khaizaran, `Utba complained to her mistress about the bad reputation he was giving her. One day, al-Mahdi went to see Khaizaran and found `Utba weeping before her mistress. Inquiring as to the reason for her crying, she told him. So he summoned Abu`l `Atahiya and he was brought to him. When he stood before him, al-Mahdi said: “Are you the one who composed the following verse about `Utba:

May God judge between me and my mistress:

She rebuffed me and heaped blame on me

When did she ever allow you near her to make you complain about her rebuffing you?” Abu`l `Atahiya said: “O Commander of the Believers, I did not compose that verse but rather the following:

O camel, carry us speedily and do not weaken,

Or consider any rest for yourself,

Until you bring us to a king,

Crowned by God with glory.

He says to the wind when it blows:

O wind, would you like to race against me?

Two crowns rest on his head:

A crown of beauty and another of humbleness.

2449. Al-Mahdi bowed his head and struck the ground with a stick he carried, then raised his head and said: “Aren’t you the one who recited:
What is the matter with my mistress? What indeed?

She grew coquettish and I have to bear her coquettishness.

She’s a slave of kings, and beauty dwells within her shirts.

How do you know what dwells within her shirts?” He answered, using the same meter and rhyme:

The caliphate came to him, of its own accord,

Dragging its tails behind.

It would not have fitted anyone but him,

And none but him was fit to assume it.

Al-Mahdi then asked him about certain things and Abu’l `Atahiya was unable to answer him. So al-Mahdi ordered him to be whipped almost as much as per Qur’anic punishment, then was released after having received these lashes. `Utba happened to see him in that state and he recited:

Bravo, Bravo, `Utba! For your sake,

Al-Mahdi slaughtered a man to avenge you.

Her eyes filled with tears and she entered the palace weeping, and went to see al-Khaizaran. She ran into al-Mahdi who was with Khaizaran. He asked her: “Why is `Utba crying?” The people around told him that she had seen Abu’l `Atahiya after he had been whipped, and so cried. He said some words to her then ordered fifty thousand dirhams to be paid to Abu’l `Atahiya, which he distributed to the crowds standing outside the gate. Al-Mahdi was told of this so sent word to him asking why he distributed what was a personal gift to himself. He replied: “I would not

consume a price I paid for my beloved.” Al-Mahdi sent him another fifty thousand and made him swear he would not distribute them. He took the money and left.

2450. Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Mubarrad narrated the following incident: “One day, on the feast of Nawruz or al-Mihrajan, Abu’l `Atahiya sent a gift to al-Mahdi, a vessel of baked clay which contained a garment dipped in musk on which was inscribed in amber:

My soul is still attached to something in this world,

Which God and the caliph al-Mahdi can supply.

I lose all hope of her but then I am made greedy for her

By your contempt for this world and all that’s in it.

2451. Al-Mahdi was about to send `Utba to him but she said: “O Commander of the Believers, with all my respect, my rights and my service, you still wish to send me to a seller of jars who makes his living by writing verse?” Al-Mahdi sent him the following message: “Where `Utba is concerned, there is no way for you to get to her, but we have commanded that the jar you sent be filled with money and sent back to you.” `Utba came out to find Abu’l `Atahiya arguing with the royal officials and maintaining that the sum he was given was in dinars while they insisted it was in dirhams, so she said: “Had you been truly in love with `Utba you would not be busy arguing about gold and silver.”

2452. Abu’l `Atahiya, whose name was Isma`il ibn al-Qasim, was a jar seller. His diction was of the simplest kind and he was better than anyone else at balancing his words and coining charming phrases. It was as though he spoke in verse on all occasions and addressed all kinds of people in language that resembled poetry or rhymed prose. It is related that he once met Abu Nuwas and a group of other poets. One of them called for water to drink. When he drank it he said:

The water was sweet and delicious

Then turned to the other poets and said: "Complete the next hemistich."
They hesitated and none of them could come up with anything that resembled it in its easy and simple diction. When Abu'l `Atahiya appeared, they said: "This is the man for it." He asked: "What's this about?" They replied: "We took up the first half of a line and now we're perplexed as to how to end it." "What did he say?" he asked. They replied:

The water was sweet and delicious.

Abu'l `Atahiya at once recited:

What a wonderful drink is water!

2453. Among the verses we selected which Abu'l `Atahiya recited about `Utba are the following amatory lines:

I implore you, by God, you with the beautiful eyes, visit me,

Before I die, or let me visit you.

These are two actions so choose what you like best,

Or else the summoner of death will call to me.

If you wish I will die, for you own my soul for ever,

And if you wish me to live, then resurrect me.

O `Utba, you're a creature unique,

Created not of clay, like all other humans.

I am amazed at a love that draws me

To one who drives me away from it and exiles me.

I do not hope for much from you, and were you to tempt me

With only a little, it would suffice me.

2454. Among his other verses about `Utba which are widely admired, we selected the following:

O `Utba, like a full moon over al-Rusafa,

Possessed of beauty and purity,

You have won my love and my compassion,

But I, and may I die for you, have won not a wink from you.

When I see you I become abased,

As if you have been sent to blight me.

Love has made me constantly sick,

Like someone laid low by wine.

2455. Among his other verses about her which we selected, and experts have admired, are the following:

How ignorant people are about my calamities,

My travails and my miseries!

People blame me regarding a beloved,

But they know not my disease.

O how I long for a companion,

In whose palm lies my cure.

Love made me a stranger,

Without a land, without a sky.

Hardship has reached its utmost extent,

So how can I be patient, and what can console me?

You [fem] are my calamity and my sickness,

And you know my cure.

By God, whenever your name is mentioned,

My tears pour down on my garments.

God be blessed! You whom I love,

What led you to be so unkind to me?

You are all I think of in the morning,

And all I think of at night.

I am amazed, after what I met from you,

At my sickness.

There is such a distance between us,

As regards my sincere love and my loyalty.

*I granted you my pure love,
And that's what I received as my reward.*

2456. Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Mubarrad and others recounted the following: "Raita, daughter of Abu'l `Abbas al-Saffah, sent word to `Abdullah ibn Malik al-Khuza`i regarding the buying of some slaves for manumission. So Raita ordered her slave `Utba---it is said that she belonged to Raita but later passed to al-Khaizaran---to attend that transaction. As she sat one day, `Abu'l `Atahiya came wearing the garb of an ascetic and pretending humility and meekness. Approaching `Utba, he said: 'May God make me your ransom! I am a weak old man and no longer good for service. Should you decide, God honor you, to order that I be bought and freed, your reward will be great.' `Utba turned to `Abdullah and said: 'O Abu'l `Abbas, here is a man of goodly shape, obvious weakness and an eloquent and fluent tongue, so buy him and free him.' Abu'l `Atahiya said: 'May God guide you aright! Would you allow me to kiss your hand and thank you for your noble act and for the debt incurred to you?' She did so, and he kissed her hand and left. `Abdullah laughed and said: 'Do you know who that man was?' 'No,' she answered. He said: 'That was Abu'l `Atahiya who tricked you until he succeeded in kissing your hand.' She hid her face in shame and said: 'A plague upon you, Abu'l `Abbas! Does someone like you play tricks? I was deceived by your words.' `Utba then rose and left and did not return to him."

2457. Charming stories are reported of Abu'l `Atahiya, as also much fine poetry which we shall mention when we come to the history of later caliphs, where we will recount his history in brief and what we found to be of merit in his verse, as also his death. Had he written no other verses than the following, where he described the true meaning of friendship and loyalty, he would be considered superior to all his contemporaries:

Your true brother is he who stands with you,

*And who harms himself to benefit you;
Who, when bad times assail you,
Dissolves himself in order to make you whole.*

This trait of character is not found, and indeed is impossible to find, in our own day and age, and can never be encountered or seen.

2458. Abu'l Qasim Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn Hamdan al-Mawsili, the jurist, transmitting from Ibn 'Ayyash and Ibn Da'b, reported the following: "Al-Mansur had attached al-Sharqi ibn al-Qutami to al-Mahdi when he left him behind in al-Rayy, and ordered him to get him to learn the battle days of the ancient Arabs, their noble characteristics, their history and their poetry. One night, al-Mahdi said to him: 'O Sharqi, ease my heart with something that might divert it.' He answered: 'Yes, O Emir. They say that a king of al-Hira once had two boon companions who were as dear to his heart as his own self. They never left his side whether he was playing or relaxing or sleeping or waking or staying or travelling, while he never decided any matter or took any action without consulting them. This lasted a long time. Then, one day, as he was drinking wine and being entertained, the wine affected his mind to the point where he lost his reason. So he called for his sword, attacked his two companions and killed them. Then, overcome by sleep, he slept.

2459. "The following morning, he woke up and asked for them and was told what he had done. He fell to the ground and bit the dust in his sorrow and grief at losing them. He stopped eating and swore he would never again drink something that might deprive him of his reason. He buried them and built on their tombs a column and called them the "Two Idols." He made it a law that all who pass by these tombs must bow. When a king among them instituted a regulation, it became one that was transmitted from generation to generation, was ever renewed and maintained, and became an obligatory injunction and duty, with fathers

bequeathing this to their descendants. For a long time, people continued to observe this injunction and no one who passed by their tombs, whether great or not, failed to bow before them. So this became like a compulsory law and comparable to a religious duty. Whoever did not bow was condemned to death, after being allowed two wishes, which had to be granted whatever they might be.

2460. “One day, a laundryman, carrying a bag of clothes with his club inside, was passing by that monument. The people in charge of the two idols said to him: ‘Bow!’ He refused, so they told him that he would be executed if he refused, but he still would not bow. The affair was referred to the king who was informed of the incident, so the king asked him: ‘What prevents you from bowing?’ He answered: ‘I did bow but they lied about it.’ He said: ‘You lie! Now choose two wishes which will be granted and then I shall execute you.’ The laundryman asked: ‘Will I without doubt be executed simply because these guardians reported this against me?’ The king said: ‘Without any doubt.’ The laundryman said: ‘Then my wish is to strike the king’s neck with my club.’ The king said: ‘You fool! Had you wished that I would give your descendants enough money to make them rich, this would profit you more.’ He answered: “I wish for nothing else but to strike the king’s neck.’

2461. “Turning to his viziers, the king asked: ‘What is to be done about what this fool has decided?’ They replied: ‘This is a law you yourself instituted and you know well that to break this law would entail great dishonor, calamity, sin and hellfire. Then again, if you break this law you might also break other laws, and this would be done by your successors with the result that all laws would be voided.’ He said: ‘Tell the laundryman to ask for whatever he wants but spare me this, for I will fulfill any wish he might have, even if he decides to share half my realm.’ They tried to make him change his mind and to tempt him but he said:

‘All I want is to strike the king’s neck.’ When the king saw that he was determined upon that wish, he sat in public audience and summoned the laundryman, who pulled out his club, struck the king a blow which dislodged him from his throne, and he fell down unconscious. He remained very sick for six months and was so ill that he was given water in drops.

2462. “When he finally recovered and began to speak, eat and drink, he asked about the laundryman and was told he was in prison. So he summoned him and said: ‘You have one more wish so state it and afterwards I shall inevitably kill you in order to uphold the law.’ The laundryman replied: ‘If I am to be executed my wish is to strike a blow at the other side of your neck.’ When the king heard this, he was so terrified that he fell upon his face and said: ‘By God, I shall surely die!’ Turning to the laundryman, he said: ‘Woe to you! Leave off what does you no good since it has not done you any good in the past, and state any wish you like, whatever it may be, and I will carry it out.’ He answered: ‘I have no other wish in mind but to strike another blow.’ The king asked his viziers what was to be done and they said: ‘It is better for you to die while upholding the law.’ He said: ‘Woe to you! By God, if he strikes the other side of my neck I’ll never be able to drink water again because I know well what I suffered the last time.’ They replied: ‘We have nothing else to suggest.’

2463. “When the king finally realized what he was about to undergo, he said to the laundryman: ‘Tell me this. Did I not hear you say when the guardians of the idols brought you before me that you had in fact bowed but that they had called you a liar?’ ‘Yes, I said this but I was not believed.’ ‘Did you in fact bow?’ ‘Yes,’ he replied. The king jumped down from his seat, kissed the laundryman’s head and said: ‘I hereby witness that you are more truthful than those wicked people who told a lie

about you, and I appoint you in their place and permit you to choose the manner of chastising them.” Al-Mahdi laughed so much he scraped the ground with his feet and said: “A charming story, by God!” and rewarded him.

2464. Al-Haytham ibn `Adiyy said: “I once attended the assembly of al-Mahdi when the chamberlain entered to announce that Ibn Abi Hafsa was at the door. Al-Mahdi said: ‘Do not admit him. He is a hypocrite and a liar.’ Al-Hasan ibn Qahtaba pleaded on his behalf so al-Mahdi permitted him to enter and said to him: ‘You hypocrite! Are you not the one who recited the following verses about Ma`n:

*A mountain is he, in whom the whole of Nizar takes refuge,
Its peaks inaccessible, its sides firmly laid?*

He replied: ‘No, O Commander of the Believers, but I am one who says about you:

*O you who inherited the Prophet Muhammad,
To the exclusion of other relatives from the female side.’*

He proceeded to recite the entire poem, so al-Mahdi forgave him and gave him a present.”

2465. Al-Qa`qa` ibn Hakim said: “I was once with al-Mahdi when Sufyan al-Thawri* was brought in. As he entered, Sufyan greeted al-Mahdi with the common, but not the caliphal, greeting. Al-Rabi` was standing by al-Mahdi’s side, leaning on his sword and observing the scene. Al-Mahdi, a pleasant expression on his face, said to Sufyan: ‘O Sufyan, you keep fleeing from us, here at one time, there at another. Do you suppose that if we intended to do you harm we would not be capable of doing so? We have you now, so aren’t you afraid we shall judge you as we please?’ He responded: ‘If you judge me, you will be judged by a king who is able to distinguish between truth and falsehood.’ Al-Rabi` said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, will you allow this uncouth man to address

you in such a manner? Permit me to strike off his head.’ Al-Mahdi said to him: ‘Be silent, woe to you! All that this man and others like him want is for us to kill them so that we suffer in hell while they go to paradise.

Write down his appointment as judge of Kufa, with no appeal allowed against any of his verdicts.’ His appointment was then drafted and handed over to him. He took the letter and left, threw the letter in the Tigris and fled. He was pursued in every land but could not be found.”

2466. `Ali ibn Yaqtin said: “We were with al-Mahdi in Masabadhan when one day he said to me: ‘I am hungry so get me some loaves of bread and some cold meat.’ I did so, he ate them, went into his chamber and slept. We were outside in the corridor and were alerted by his weeping. We went in quickly to him and he said: ‘Did you see what I saw?’ ‘We saw nothing,’ we replied. He said: ‘A man stood above my head, one whom I’d recognize among a thousand men by his image and voice. He recited:

*It is as if I can see this palace, its inhabitants dead and gone,
Its site and its chambers all in ruin.*

*The chieftain of the people, following joys and royalty,
Is laid in his grave, with the gravestones laid upon him.
Nothing remains but his memory and what is spoken about him,
With his wives grieving over him.*

Following that vision al-Mahdi lived ten more days before he died.”

2467. Al-Mas`udi said: Zufar ibn al-Hudhail, the jurisprudent and follower of Abu Hanifa al-Nu`man ibn Thabit, died in the year 158, that being the year when al-Mahdi received homage, as noted above. In the year 161, and in the days of al-Mahdi, Sufyan ibn Sa`id ibn Masruq al-Thawri died in Basra. He belonged to the Tamim tribe. He died aged sixty-three, and his patronymic was “Abu `Abdullah.” Also during the days of al-Mahdi, Ibn Abi Dhi`b died in Kufa in the year 159. His full

name was Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Mughira. His patronymic was “Abu`l Harith.” In the year 160, Shu`ba ibn al-Hajjaj, whose patronymic was “Abu Bistam,” died. He was a client of the clan of Shaqra, a clan of the Azd. In that year too `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Abdullah al-Mas`udi* died. In the year 166, Hammad ibn Salama died, also in the days of al-Mahdi.

2468. Al-Mas`udi said: Other charming reports are narrated about al-Mahdi and the major events and wars and other matters that took place in his days, all of which we recounted in detail in our book *al-Awsat*, where we also recorded the deaths of jurists, Hadith scholars and others who died during his reign,

Chapter 110

An account of the caliphate of al-Hadi

2469. Musa ibn Muhammad al-Hadi received the oath of homage, aged twenty-four years and three months. This took place on Thursday, seven days remaining from the month of Muharram, on the morning following the night during which his father, al-Mahdi, had died, in the year 169 [August 4, 785]. He died in `Isa Abadh, near Baghdad, in the year 170, twelve nights remaining from the month of Rabi` I, of that year [September 17, 786] . Thus, his caliphate lasted one year and three months. His patronymic was “Abu Ja`far.” His mother was al-Khaizaran bint `Ata`, a manumitted slave from Jurash. She was also the mother of al-Rashid. He was in Tabaristan and Jurjan, engaged in a war, when allegiance was paid to him, so rode on postal horses [to Baghdad] where his brother al-Rashid received homage on his behalf. Regarding this incident, a poet recited:

When the best of the Hashim family

Assumed the caliphate of God, while in Jurjan,

He rolled up his sleeves for war,

Neither inexperienced nor irresolute.

A short narrative of his history and conduct together with a brief account of his days

2470. Al-Hadi was hard of heart, with a vile temper and very stubborn, but was very fond of literature. He was a stalwart character, courageous, a warrior and very generous. The state secretary Yusuf ibn Ibrahim, companion of Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi, narrates from Ibrahim that he was standing before al-Hadi while the latter was mounted on a donkey in his well-known orchard in Baghdad when someone told him that a Kharijite rebel had been captured. Al-Hadi ordered him to be brought forward. As the Kharijite drew near, he grabbed a sword from one of the guards and approached al-Hadi. I, and everyone with me, fell back while he remained seated and immobile on his donkey. When the Kharijite came up to him al-Hadi shouted: ‘Strike his neck!’ There was no one behind the Kharijite but al-Hadi had tricked him. As the Kharijite turned round to look, al-Hadi leapt, wrestled him to the ground, took the sword from his hand and struck his neck.” Ibrahim added: “We were more terrified of him than of the Kharijite. By God, he neither censured nor blamed us for falling back but he never rode a donkey after that incident and was never without his sword.”

2471. `Isa ibn Da`b used to sit and converse with him. He was from the Hijaz and the most educated man of his age and the most knowledgeable about history. Al-Hadi used to order a seat he could lean on for him, a privilege to which none of his other companions aspired. Al-Hadi used to say to him: “O `Isa, I never thought you were late in coming to me, by day or night, nor were you ever absent from me without my imagining that I saw none but you.”

2472. `Isa ibn Da`b reported the following: “One day, al-Hadi was told that a man from al-Mansura, in Sind, an aristocrat and a chieftain from

the family of al-Muhallab ibn Abi Sufra, had adopted a Sindi or Hindi youth, who then fell in love with his mistress and seduced her. His master entered and found them together so he castrated and cut off the youth's testicles, then treated him until he recovered, and time passed. The master had two sons, a child and an adolescent. The master was absent from his house then returned to find that the Sindi had grabbed his two sons, and climbed up to the highest parapet of the house. When the master entered and looked up he saw his two sons on the parapet and said: 'You there! You have exposed my sons to death!' The Sindi answered: 'Never mind that! Unless you castrate yourself while I look on, I swear I'll throw them down!' The master said: 'O God, spare me and my sons!' The Sindi said: 'Never mind that! By God, I've nothing to lose but my life, and it means no more to me than a drink of water!' He made to throw them down so the master quickly took hold of a knife and castrated himself. When the Sindi determined that he had done so, he threw the boys down and they were cut to pieces. He then said: 'You have now done to yourself what you did to me and the killing of the two boys is an additional revenge!'" Al-Hadi ordered that a letter be sent to the governor of Sind to arrest the Sindi and subject him to the worst kind of torture, and ordered the expulsion of every Sindi from his realm. Thus, in his days, Sindi slaves became very cheap and were bought or sold for very little.

2473. Al-Hadi had appointed al-Rabi` as his vizier then added to his functions the state financial offices previously held by `Umar ibn Bazi`. He then appointed `Umar ibn Bazi` as his vizier and in charge of correspondence, and put al-Rabi` in charge of the state finances. Al-Rabi` died that year, and it is said that al-Hadi had given him a poisoned drink because of a slave woman who had been given to him by al-Mahdi. She had formerly belonged to al-Rabi`, and al-Rabi` had mentioned his right to her. But other versions of this incident also exist.

2474. In his days, al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib rose in rebellion. He was the “man killed at Fakhkh”, a place six miles distant from Mecca, the day the pilgrims provisioned themselves with water. The army that fought him was led by a group of the Hashim family including Sulaiman ibn Abi Ja`far, Muhammad ibn Sulaiman ibn `Ali, Musa ibn `Isa and al-`Abbas ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali, at the head of four thousand knights. Al-Husain and most of those with him were killed. Their bodies were left without burial for three days to be eaten by wild animals and birds. With al-Husain was Sulaiman ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali who was taken prisoner that day then beheaded in cold blood in Mecca. With him too was killed `Abdullah ibn Ishaq ibn Ibrahim ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali, while al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan was taken prisoner and beheaded in cold blood. `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali and al-Husain ibn `Ali obtained safe conduct and were imprisoned by Ja`far ibn Yahya ibn Khalid ibn Barmak, but were later executed.

2475. Al-Hadi was furious with Musa ibn `Isa for having killed al-Husain ibn `Ali before leaving it up to him to pass on him the judgment he pleased, and so seized the wealth of Musa. When those who brought al-Hadi the head of al-Husain and showed their delight at doing so, al-Hadi wept and scolded them, saying: “You bring me his head in joy as if it is the head of a Turk or a Dailam? This is the head of a member of the Prophet’s family! The least reward would be not to reward you at all!” Regarding al-Husain ibn `Ali, the “man killed at Fakhkh”, a poet of that era composed the following verses:

*I shall cry for al-Husain, weeping loudly,
And for al-Hasan,
For the son of `Atika, too,
Whom they buried without a shroud.*

*They were abandoned at dawn, in Fakhkh,
Far from home.
Noble men they were, now massacred,
And they were neither heedless nor cowardly.
They cleansed themselves of humiliation,
As clothes are cleansed from dirt.
Mankind were rightly guided by their grandfather,
And mankind owes them a great debt.*

2476. Al-Hadi was very obedient to his mother al-Khaizaran and met all her requests when people approached her with their needs. Her door was never free from streams of people. Regarding this, the poet Abu'l Mu`afa recited:

*O Khaizaran, how lucky, oh how lucky you are!
Your two sons rule over God's worshippers.*

2477. One day she asked him for a favor but he could not grant her request and gave her some excuse so she said: "You must grant my wish." "No, I will not," he answered. She said: "I assured `Abdullah ibn Malik his wish shall be granted." Al-Hadi was angry and said: "Damn that son of a whore! I knew it was him who made that request! By God, I shall never grant it!" She replied: "Then I'll never ask you for anything else again!" He replied: "And by God I do not care!" His anger intensified and she rose to leave, also in anger. He said: "Stop where you are! Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you or I am quit of my kinship to the Prophet. If I hear that any of my commanders, retinue or servants is standing at your door, I shall cut his head off and seize his wealth! Whoso wishes, let him obey! What are these streams of people that come to your door every day? Don't you have a spindle to occupy you, a Qur'an to remind you of God or a chamber that shelters you? Beware! Don't ever again open your mouth to request some favor for a

Muslim or a non-Muslim!” She left in panic, hardly able to see where she was stepping and thereafter never uttered a word in his presence, sweet or sour.

2478. Ibn Da’b recounted the following story: “Al-Hadi summoned me at a time of night when it was not customary for him to do so. I entered into his presence and found him sitting in a small winter chamber with a notebook before him which he was examining. He said: “‘Isa!” I answered: “Here I am, O Commander of the Believers.” He said: “I couldn’t sleep tonight and all sorts of ideas and troubling thoughts disturbed me. I thought of all the blood of our family that was shed by the Umayyads, both the Harb and Marwan branches.” I said: “O Commander of the Believers, `Abdullah ibn `Ali killed at the Abi Futrus river such and such a man among them---and I listed the names of most of those whom he had killed. Then `Abd al-Samad ibn `Ali killed in the Hijaz and on a single about as many of them as `Abdullah ibn `Ali. It was he who recited, once he’d shed their blood:

*My soul was cured of its sickness,
When I revenged myself upon the family of Marwan,
And upon the family of Harb. If only my father
Could have seen how I shed the blood of the Sufian clan!”*

Ibn Da’b added: “Al-Hadi was very pleased and became light-hearted. He said: ‘Yes, O `Isa, it was indeed `Abdullah ibn `Ali who recited these lines and `Abd al-Samad killed those people you mentioned in the Hijaz. You reminded me of these events and it was as if I had just heard them for the first time.’ I said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, it is said that `Abdullah ibn `Ali recited them while at the Abi Futrus river.’ He said: ‘Yes, so it was said.’”

2479. Ibn Da’b continued: “Our conversation then passed on to the history of Egypt, its merits and demerits, and the reports about its Nile.

Al-Hadi said: 'Its virtues exceed its vices.' I said: 'This is what the Egyptians themselves claim, O Commander of the Believers, but they adduce no proof for this claim. And it is up to the plaintiff to produce evidence. The Iraqis reject the Egyptians' claim and assert that its vices exceed its virtues.' 'Like what?' He asked. I answered: 'O Commander of the Believers, among its faults is the fact that no rain falls there, and if it does, they find it hateful and start praying to God. For God has said: {It is He who sends the winds softly blowing, ahead of His mercy}. This then is a clear mercy from God to these people which they abhor. Rain brings them harm and is not useful to them, nor does it cause their plants to grow or their land to become fertile. Among Egypt's faults too is the southern wind which they call Marisiyya. This is because the Egyptians call Marisa the land from the Upper Sa'id to Nubia. When that southern wind blows for thirteen consecutive days, the people of Egypt start to buy shrouds and perfumes for dead bodies and are certain that a deadly plague and general death will follow. Among its vices too is that the Egyptians need to change their garments many times in a single day because of the changes of their climate. So they wear shirts at one time, and stuffed cotton garments at other times and woolens at yet others because the air changes from one hour to the next, as do the directions of the winds at all seasons, by day as well as night. Egypt imports food but does not export it. If afflicted by drought, its people die.

2480. "As for the Nile, it is enough for one to remember how totally different it is from any river, large or small, in this world. Neither the Euphrates nor the Tigris nor the Balkh River nor the Amu Darya nor the Syr Daria contain anything that resembles crocodiles. These are found in the Nile and are harmful and injurious without any benefit or advantage. Concerning this matter a poet recited:

I turned my back on the Nile, detesting it,

When told crocodiles exist in the Nile.

Some see the Nile up close, eyes wide open,

But I only see the Nile in drinking cups [bawaqil].”

Al-Hadi said: “Woe to you! What are these *bawaqil* in which you see the Nile?” I replied: “This is the term used in Egypt for drinking vessels and cups.” He said: “So what did the poet intend by that description?” “He means he only enjoys Nile water when it is found in cups, since he is too scared of crocodiles to venture into the Nile itself for they snatch humans and animals all of a sudden.” He said: “That animal has prevented people from making full use of that river. I had been anxious to see that land but your description of it has put me off.” Ibn Da’b continued: “Then al-Hadi asked me about Dunqula, capital of the kingdom of Nubia, and what the distance was between it and Aswan. I replied: ‘A journey, they say, of forty days along the banks of the Nile, with continuous habitations.’”

2481. Ibn Da’b added: “Al-Hadi then said: ‘Well now, Ibn Da’b! Let us have done with the history of the West and let’s turn to the merits of Basra and Kufa and how each surpasses the other in some respects.’ I said: ‘It is reported from `Abd al-Malik ibn `Umair that he said: ‘Al-Ahnaf ibn Qais* once came with Mus`ab ibn al-Zubair to Kufa and I never saw ugliness of any kind without seeing something that resembled it in al-Ahnaf’s face. He had a small thin skull, a warped nose, drooping ears, was one-eyed, had hanging cheeks, a crooked mouth, his teeth piled one on top of the other, thin shoulders and feet turned inwards. However, it was when he spoke that he truly revealed the excellence of his mind. One day he began to boast about Basra while we boasted of Kufa. We said: ‘Kufa has more nourishment, more wholesome food, is more spacious and has a better climate.’ A man then said to him: ‘I swear Kufa resembles nothing so much as a young girl with a beautiful face, a noble lineage but no wealth. When she mentions her poverty the suitors

disperse. Basra on the other hand resembles an old woman with many needs but also much wealth. If she mentions her wealth and her needs, her suitors disperse.’ Al-Ahnaf said: ‘Basra has its bottom made of reeds, its middle made of wood and its top made of dates. In Basra, we have more teak, ivory, and embroidered silk, more sugar cane and coinage. By God, I never come to Basra except willingly and never leave it except unwillingly.’ A youth from the Bakr ibn Wa’il got up and addressed al-Ahnaf as follows: ‘O Abu Bahr, how have you acquired such a reputation among people when you are not, by God, the most handsome among them, nor the most generous, nor the most courageous?’ Al-Ahnaf replied: ‘Nephew, by behaving in exactly the opposite manner to the way you have behaved.’ ‘What is that?’ ‘By minding my own business as you failed to mind yours.’”

2482. Al-Mas`udi said: Charming stories are narrated about Ibn Da`b and al-Hadi which would take too long to relate and explicate here. In this book we cannot do so because we took it upon ourselves to be brief and concise, deleting the chains of transmitters [*isnad*] and avoiding repetition of phrases.

2483. Many debates are recorded between Basrans and Kufans regarding the quality of their respective waters, their benefit or harm. Thus the Kufans criticized the Basrans by saying: “Your waters are murky, smelly and dirty.” The Basrans responded: “How can our waters be murky when seawater is limpid, as also the waters of the swamps?” The Kufans reply: “It is of the nature of pure and sweet water, when mixed with seawater, for both to become turgid. A person might keep a body of water still for forty nights but if he then pours some of it into a bottle it will be agitated and murky.” The Kufans boasted of their water which comes from the Euphrates, considering it superior to the water of the Tigris which is the water of Basra. They argue thus: “Our water is the sweetest and most

nourishing, and healthier for bodies than the water of the Tigris. The Euphrates is superior to the Nile. As for the Tigris, its water diminishes male sexual appetite and stops horses from neighing. When they stop neighing their vigor ends and their strength dissipates. If those who inhabit the banks of the Tigris do not eat fatty foods, their bodies will grow thin and their skins will turn dry. Almost all Arabs who camp by the Tigris will not allow their horses to drink from its water but from well water and buckets. This is because Tigris waters are mixed and of diverse kinds, and are not all from one source because many rivers pour into it like the two Zabs and others. Consuming liquid is unlike consuming solid food. This is so because eating different foods is not harmful whereas drinking different liquids, like grape wine, date wine and other kinds of wine is harmful to a human being. If this is the reason why our waters are superior to those of the Tigris, how much more is it superior to the waters of Basra which are mixed with seawater and swamp water that stagnates among the roots of reeds and papyri? God has said: {This one fresh and sweet water, that one salty and bitter} Sweet [*furat*=Euphrates] water is the sweetest of all. Indeed the name of the river Euphrates [*al-Furat*] is applied to every sweet water and is derived from the waters of Kufa.”

2484. The Kufans further berate the Basrans by arguing: “Basra is the quickest of all lands to fall into ruin. It has the vilest soil, is furthest away from heaven and the quickest place to flood.” The Basrans did answer the Kufans and responded to their charges. Those who drink from the Tigris berated the Kufans and cited its vices and what is reported of its people such as their miserliness with food and drink, their treachery and their lack of good faith. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we gave a detailed account of all these debates where we also explained at length the characteristics of soils and waters, the seasons of the year, the diverse regions of the earth and similar topics, whereas in this book we merely

record short selections from all these subjects. Let us now turn back to the history of al-Hadi and end this digression.

2485. Al-Hadi had wanted to deprive his brother al-Rashid from succession and to appoint his son Ja`far ibn Musa as his heir. He imprisoned Yahya ibn Khalid al-Barmaki and intended to kill him but Yahya, who was in charge of the affairs of al-Rashid, said to him: “O Commander of the Believers, if that eventuality does take place which I pray God to spare us and not to bring it about, and to delay the appointed time of the Commander of the Believers, does he imagine that people will submit to Ja`far the son of the Commander of the Believers, who has not yet attained puberty and that they will accept him to lead them in prayer, in pilgrimage and in war?” Al-Hadi said: “I think not.” Yahya went on: “Can you be sure that the prominent members of your family, and others as well, will not aspire to the caliphate, with the result that power will pass from the progeny of your father to others? In that case you would have caused people to break their oath of allegiance and made such an oath an easy matter to break. If you leave the succession to your brother undisturbed and nominate Ja`far to succeed him, that would be a wiser course of action. Once Ja`far reaches the age of manhood, you can then ask your brother to allow him to precede him.” Al-Hadi said: “By God, you have alerted me to something that I had not thought of.”

2486. Later on, al-Hadi was intent on divesting al-Rashid of succession, willingly or unwillingly. He ordered that al-Rashid be severely constrained in most of his affairs. Yahya advised al-Rashid to obtain his brother’s permission to go hunting and to take his time doing so, because al-Hadi had only a short time to live as determined by the stars at the time of his birth. Al-Rashid did so and permission was granted, so he headed to the banks of the Euphrates in the territory of al-Anbar and Hit, and went into the desert near al-Samawa. Al-Hadi wrote ordering him to

return but al-Rashid kept proffering excuses so al-Hadi began to curse him. An opportunity presented itself to al-Hadi to go to al-Haditha, where he fell ill and turned back, his sickness growing more severe. None dared enter into his presence except youthful royal servants to whom he indicated that they should bring his mother Khaizaran. When she came and sat by his head, he said to her: "I shall die this night, and my brother Harun [i.e. al-Rashid] will succeed me. You know what was determined when I was born in Rayy. I had forbidden you to do certain things and ordered you to do others. This was in accordance with the requirements of kingship, not of religious law, for I was a dutiful son to you and was not ill-mannered towards you. Indeed, I protected you, was dutiful to you and was generous." He then died holding her hand which he had placed on his chest. He had been born in Rayy as was Harun al-Rashid. That night thus witnessed the death of al-Hadi, the succession of al-Rashid and the birth of al-Ma'mun.

2487. It is reported that a man, a state official, was brought before him accused of many crimes. Al-Hadi began to remind him of these crimes so the man said: "O Commander of the Believers, my apologies to you are my answer to your charges, and my admitting the crimes you mention convicts me. However, I would say this:

If you seek relief in punishing,

Do not, if you forgive, consider light your divine reward."

Al-Hadi released him and gave him a present.

2488. A number of historians, experts in Abbasid history, recount that Musa said to his brother Harun: "It is as if you are saying to yourself that the vision will come to pass and that you are hoping for an outcome that is far for you to attain. Between you and achieving this lies the stripping of the goat's thorn from its leaves*." Harun answered: "O Commander of the Believers, he who grows haughty is abased, and he who is humble is

raised high, and he who acts unjustly will fail. If power should pass to me, I shall attach to me those whom you cut off, be kind to those whom you dispossessed, and shall place your children above my own and marry them to my daughters, thus fulfilling the obligation we owe to the imam al-Mahdi.” Al-Hadi’s anger vanished and his face brightened with pleasure. He said: “That’s what I thought you would do, O Abu Ja`far. Come close to me.” Harun rose up, kissed his hand then turned to go back to his seat but Musa said: “I swear by our august ancestor and noble king, you will sit next to me in the center of this assembly!” Turning to his treasurer, he said: “Dispatch a million dinars at once to my brother Harun and when the next land-tax comes in, send him half of it.” When Harun wished to leave, his mount was brought forward to step on the carpet.

2489. `Amr al-Rumi said: “I once asked al-Rashid about the vision and he told me the following: ‘Al-Mahdi said: ‘I saw in a vision that I had given a stick to Musa and another to Harun. Musa’s stick sprouted some leaves on top but Harun’s stick was full of leaves from top to bottom.’ The vision was narrated to the sage Ibn Ishaq al-Saimari who was a dream interpreter and he said: ‘They will both rule, but Musa’s reign will be short whereas the reign of al-Rashid will last as long as that of any caliph, and his days will be the best of days, his era the best of eras.’” `Amr al-Rumi added: “When the caliphate passed to Harun, he married his two daughters, Hamduna to Ja`far ibn Musa and Fatima to Isma`il ibn Musa, thus fulfilling all that he had promised his brother.”

2490. `Abdullah ibn al-Dahhak >al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy, who said: “Al-Mahdi once gave the sword of `Amr ibn Ma`dikarib*, called al-Samsama, to Musa al-Hadi. When Musa became caliph, he called for the sword to be placed before him then for a large basket full of dinars to be set alongside it and asked his chamberlain to invite the poets. When they entered, he commanded them to recite verse on the subject of the sword.

2491. The first to begin was Ibn Yamin al-Basri who recited:

*Of all mankind, it was the trustworthy Musa who won the Samsama of
`Amr al-Zabidi,*

*The sword of `Amr, which we hear was the best that any sheath ever
enclosed.*

Lightening bolts ignited fires above it, while instant death mingled with it.

*If you unsheathe it, it exceeds the sun in shining, and the sun can barely
be seen.*

*It is as if its grain and substance along its two sides were a spring of
water.*

*It cares not, when a man is smitten by it, whether the blow falls from left
or from right.*

Al-Hadi said to the poet: "Take both the sword and the basket of money."

Ibn Yamin divided the money among the other poets and said: "We all came in together and you were denied the prize because of me. The sword is enough as compensation." Al-Hadi later sent to purchase back the sword and gave him fifty thousand for it.

2492. Delightful stories are narrated about al-Hadi even though his days were short. These we narrated in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In God is success.

Chapter 111

An account of the caliphate of Harun al-Rashid

2493. Harun ibn al-Mahdi received the oath of homage in the City of Peace on Friday, the morning that followed the night in which al-Hadi died. This took place twelve days remaining from the month of Rabi` I, in the year 170 [September 17, 786]. He died in Tus, in a village called Sanabadh, on Saturday, the fourth of Jumada II, in the year 193 [March 25, 809]. His reign thus lasted twenty-three years and six months, or twenty-three years, two months and eighteen days in another version. He

assumed the caliphate aged twenty-one years and two months and died aged forty-four years and four months.

A short narrative of his history and conduct together with a brief account of his days

2494. When the caliphate passed to al-Rashid he summoned Yahya ibn Khalid [al-Barmaki] and said to him: “Father, it was you who put me in this place through your blessings, good fortune and sound management. I have turned over the running of affairs to you,” and handed him his signet ring. Regarding this incident Ibrahim al-Mawsili recited:

Do you not see how the sun had grown feeble,

But when Harun took over, its light shone forth?

This was due to Harun, the one trusted by God, and generous,

So Harun is the ruler of the state and Yahya is its vizier.

2495. Raita, daughter of Abu'l `Abbas al-Saffah, died some months after the accession of al-Rashid but towards the end of al-Hadi's days in another version. Al-Khaizaran, mother of both al-Hadi and al-Rashid died in 173 [789-90], and al-Rashid walked in front of her funeral procession. She left behind one hundred and sixty million dirhams.

2496. In that same year, Muhammad ibn Sulaiman died, and al-Rashid seized his monies in Basra and elsewhere, which amounted to some fifty million dirhams, apart from estates, houses and agricultural yields. His daily income used to be a hundred thousand dirhams. It is said that he once was riding in Basra with Sawwar the judge as companion in a funeral of a female cousin of his, when he was stopped by a madman known in Basra as “Ewe's Head.” This latter said to him: “O Muhammad, is it fair that your daily income should be one hundred thousand dirhams while I go begging for half a dirham and do not find it?” He then turned to Sawwar and said: “If this is fairness, I disavow it.” Muhammad's pages ran up but he stopped them and ordered that he be

paid a hundred dirhams. As Muhammad and Sawwar were about to leave “Ewe’s Head” intercepted them and said to Muhammad: “God has privileged your station in life, honored your pedigree, made your face handsome and elevated your rank! I pray that this is all for the sake of some good that God intends for you, and pray that God might join together for you the good of this life and of the next!” Sawwar drew near and said: “You nasty fellow, this is not what you said at first!” He said: “I ask you in the name of God and of the Emir to tell me the name of the chapter in which the following verses of the Qur’an occur: {If given a portion thereof, they are content, but if they are not given anything they become discontented.}” Sawwar answered: “In the chapter called ‘Quittance’.” He said: “Correct, and may God and his Prophet be quit of you!” Muhammad ibn Sulaiman laughed so much he almost fell off his mount.

2466. When Muhammad ibn Sulaiman built his palace in Basra on some canals, `Abd al-Samad ibn Shabib ibn Shaiba entered into his presence and Muhammad asked him: “How do you find my construction?” He replied: “You have built the most impressive building on the most charming site, with the widest extent, the purest air and the best location in between ship masts, fish and gazelles.” It is said that these words were uttered by the man who built the palace who was `Isa ibn Ja`far, as reported by Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Ghallabi from al-Fadl ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn Shabib ibn Shaiba. Regarding that palace, Ibn Abi `Uyayna recited:

Go visit the valley of the Palace: how lovely that palace and its valley!

You must visit it without an appointment.

Go and visit it for there is nothing like it,

Whether in a city or in the wilderness.

Its great ships dock while the camels stand by,

With the lizard, the fish, the sailor and the camel driver.

2498. In the year 175 [791-2], al-Laith ibn Sa`d al-Misri al-Fahmi, whose patronymic was “Abu`l Harith”, died, aged eighty-two. He had performed the pilgrimage in the year 113 [731-2] and heard Hadith from Nafi`.

2499. In the year 177 [793-4], Sharik ibn `Abdullah ibn Sinan al-Nakh`i, the judge, died, aged eighty-two. His patronymic was “Abu `Abdullah.” He was born in Bukhara. He is to be distinguished from Sharik ibn `Abdullah ibn Abi Nimr al-Laythi, since this latter died in the year 140 [757-8]. We mention this here because their names and the names of their fathers and mothers are similar though separated in time by thirty-seven years. Sharik ibn `Abdullah al-Nakh`i was the judge of Kufa in the days of al-Mahdi but was dismissed by al-Hadi. With his understanding and knowledge, Sharik was also smart and quick-witted. There was an exchange between him and Mus`ab ibn `Abdullah in the presence of al-Mahdi when Mus`ab accused Sharik of disparaging the reputation of Abu Bakr and `Umar. Sharik responded: “By God, I do not even disparage the reputation of your ancestor [`Abdullah ibn al-Zubair] who is their inferior!” Once Mu`awiya was mentioned in front of Sharik as possessing self-restraint, and Sharik said: “One cannot call someone self-restrained when he belittled the cause of righteousness and fought `Ali ibn Abi Talib.” A whiff of date wine was once smelt on Sharik’s breath, so the Hadith scholars said to him: “Had this been smelt on our breath we would have been embarrassed.” He answered: “This is because you judge on suspicion.”

2500. In the days of al-Rashid, Abu `Abdullah Malik ibn Anas* ibn Abi `Amir al-Asbahi died, aged ninety. His mother was pregnant with him for three years. He died in the month of Rabi` I. It is said that Ibn Abi Dhi`b prayed over his body but there is a dispute here regarding the death date of Ibn Abi Dhi`b. Al-Waqidi states that Malik frequented the mosque,

attended prayers and Friday congregational prayers, was present at funerals, visited the sick and judged legal cases. He then abandoned all this. When questioned about it, he replied: "It is not every man who can openly express his excuse." He was slandered before Ja`far ibn Sulaiman [governor of Medinah] who was told that Malik believes that "the oath of allegiance paid to your family is worthless." He was whipped then placed on the rack and stretched until his shoulders were dislocated. The same year in which Malik died, i.e. the year 179, also witnessed the death of Hammad ibn Zaid.

2501. In the year 161*, `Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak al-Marwazi, the jurist, died in Hit, after leaving Tarsus.

2502. In the year 182 [798], Abu Yusuf Ya`qub ibn Ibrahim al-Qadi* died, aged sixty-nine. He belonged to the Ansar and was appointed a judge in the year 166 [782-3], in the days when al-Hadi travelled to Jurjan. He remained a judge for fifteen years until his death. Al-Mas`udi said: The mother of Ja`far had written to Abu Yusuf seeking his opinion on a matter of law, and his response concurred with her desire, as required by religious law in his view and as decided according to his own individual judgment. So she sent him a round box made of silver containing pellets of silver in each of which was a different kind of perfume, a golden tray of dirhams, a silver tray of dinars, slave boys, wardrobes of clothes, an ass and a mule. A man who was sitting with him said: "The Prophet said: 'Whoso receives a gift, those sitting with him are partners in that gift.'" Abu Yusuf replied: "You have interpreted this Prophetic report literally but if one judges according to what is best suited for the era concerned, this would inhibit its enactment. This is because gifts in those ancient times consisted of dates and milk and such things, whereas today's gifts are of gold and silver and similar things and {Such

is God's favor dispensed to whomsoever he wishes. And God's favor is All-Surpassing.}”

2503. Al-Fadl ibn al-Rabi` said: “`Abdullah ibn Mus`ab ibn Thabit ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair came to me and said that Musa ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali wanted me to pay homage to him.” Al-Rashid then brought the two men together and the Zubairid said to Musa: “You plotted against us and wanted to undermine our state.” Musa turned to him and said: “And who may you be?” Al-Rashid was overcome with laughter so raised his head to the roof in order not to show this. Musa then said: “O Commander of the Believers, this fellow you see before you who now tells lies about me had rebelled, along with my brother Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali, against your grandfather al-Mansur, and is the one who recited the following verse:

*Call for allegiance and we'll be quick to obey you,
For the caliphate belongs to you, O progeny of al-Hasan.*

This is from a longer poem. His slander, O Commander of the Believers, is not motivated by love of you or respect for your state but from hatred for us all, the entire family of the Prophet. Had he found anyone to support him against all of us he would have sided with him. He has uttered a falsehood and I shall ask him to take an oath. If he swears that I said what he alleges, then the Commander of the Believers can justifiably shed my blood.”

2504. Al-Rashid said: “Swear, O `Abdullah.” When Musa insisted he should swear, `Abdullah hesitated and delayed, so al-Fadl said to him: “Why are you reluctant to swear when you have already asserted that he said what he said to you?” Finally, `Abdullah said: “I will so swear.” So Musa said to him: “Repeat after me: ‘May I be constrained in power and strength, to the exclusion of God's power and strength, and reduced to

my own power and strength, if what I said about you is untrue.”

`Abdullah swore that oath. Musa said: “God is Great! My father told me, from my grandfather, from his father, from his grandfather `Ali, who reported that the Prophet said: ‘None swears that oath falsely but God would punish him quickly and within three days.’ By God I never lied nor was called a liar and here I am, O Commander of the Believers, entirely in your power. Go ahead and keep me under lock and key, and if three days have passed and nothing happens to `Abdullah ibn Mus`ab, then the Commander of the Believers can rightfully shed my blood.” Al-Rashid said to al-Fadl: “Take Musa in hand and be responsible for him until I decide what’s to be done with him.”

2505. Al-Fadl added: “By God, I had barely finished my afternoon prayers on that very day when I heard screams coming out of the house of `Abdullah ibn Mus`ab. I sent someone to find out what was happening and was told he had contracted leprosy (*judham*), had bloated and grown black in color. So I went to see him but could hardly recognize him since he had become like a huge sack, and black as coal. I went to al-Rashid and told him and had barely finished speaking when his death was announced. I left and ordered that he be prepared for burial quickly, and took charge of praying over his body. As they lowered him into his grave, his body no sooner settled than the earth collapsed beneath him and a most awful stench arose from the body. I looked and saw people carrying firewood passing by so ordered the firewood brought up. As the firewood was thrown into the hole, the earth once more collapsed so I said: “Bring me planks of teak.” These were placed over his grave and earth was heaped on top. I then went to see al-Rashid to tell him what I’d witnessed. He was amazed and ordered me to release Musa ibn `Abdullah and pay him a thousand dinars. Al-Rashid then summoned Musa and said to him: “Why did you choose not to employ the oath that is habitually

used by people?” He replied: “Because we were informed on the authority of our great-grandfather `Ali that the Prophet said: ‘If a person swears a false oath in which he glorifies God, God is too shy to punish him quickly. But if someone swears a false oath where he competes with God regarding his own power and strength, God will hasten his punishment within three days.’” It is also reported that the man in this story was Yahya ibn `Abdullah, Musa’s brother. Yahya had travelled to the land of the Dailam seeking refuge, but the Dailam chieftain sold him to al-Rashid’s governor for a hundred thousand dirhams and he was executed, God’s mercy upon him. Given the disparities in copies and lines of transmission in books of genealogy and history, yet another version holds that Yahya was thrown into a pit with wild animals that had been made hungry but they refrained from devouring him, crowded together in a corner and refused to come near from awe of him. So he was immured while still alive in a structure of gypsum and stone.

2506. Muhammad ibn Ja`far ibn Yahya ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali had gone to Egypt. When pursued there, he fled to the Maghrib and settled in the land of Lower Tahirt where large numbers attached themselves to him and he dealt with them justly and fairly. He died there poisoned. We dealt with his history and what happened to him in our book entitled *Hada`iq al-Adhhan fi Akhbar Ahl Bait al-Nabiyy wa Tafarruqihim fi`l Buldan*.

2507. In the year 188 [804], al-Rashid went on pilgrimage, the last he ever performed. A report transmitted from Abu Bakr ibn `Ayyash, a prominent religious scholar, has it that when al-Rashid passed by Kufa on his way back from the pilgrimage, Abu Bakr said: “This road will never be traversed by any Abbasid caliph after him.” He was asked: “Is this some sort of supernatural revelation?” He answered: “Yes.” “Is it a divine inspiration?” “Yes.” “Revealed to you?” “No, but to Muhammad. This

was reported by the man who was killed here”, and he pointed to the spot in Kufa where `Ali was assassinated.

2508. In the year 189 [805], and in the days of al-Rashid, `Ali ibn Hamza al-Kisa'i died, expert on Qur'an readings. His patronymic was “Abu'l Hasan.” He had travelled with al-Rashid to al-Rayy but died there. In that year too, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaibani, the judge, died. His patronymic was “Abu `Abdullah”. He was buried in al-Rayy when he too accompanied al-Rashid, who saw his death as an ill omen because of a dream he saw in his sleep. In that year too occurred the death of Yahya ibn Khalid ibn Barmak.

2509. In the year 188 [804], al-Rashid was greatly displeased with `Abd al-Malik ibn Salih ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib. Yamut ibn al-Muzarra`>al-Riyashi>al-Asma`i, who said: “I was with al-Rashid when `Abd al-Malik ibn Salih was brought in, dragging his chains. When he saw him he said: “Heh, `Abd al-Malik! As I look at you it is as if, by God, I can see a downpour has fallen and lightening has lit up the mountain; it is as if the threat of rebellion has exposed fingers without wrists and heads without necks. Slowly, slowly O clan of Hashim! By God, what is hard has been made easy for you, your grief has given way to joy, and the reins of all great matters have been placed in your hands. Beware of me before some furious calamity strikes you with hand and foot.” `Abd al-Malik said: “Am I allowed a single word or two?” “Two,” replied al-Rashid. “Fear God, O Commander of the Believers, as to the authority He gave you and be careful how you treat your subjects in whose charge He placed you. For, by God, I have made the arduous easy for you, and brought together all hearts to fear and look up to you. I was like the man described by that poet from the clan of Ja`far ibn Kilab [Labid] who recited:
Many a narrow and strait situation I made wide and easy,

Through my tongue, my eloquence or my reasoning.

Were an elephant and its driver to take my place,

They would slip up and retire.”

2510. Yahya ibn Khalid al-Barmaki wanted to lower the status of `Abd al-Malik in the eyes of al-Rashid so said to him: “O `Abd al-Malik, I have heard that you harbor grudges.” He answered: “May God guide the vizier, if harboring a grudge means my retaining both good and evil thoughts, then they both are kept in my heart.” Al-Rashid turned to al-Asma`i and said: “O Asma`i, take down that sentence for, by God, I never heard such a defence of harboring a grudge as the one uttered by `Abd al-Malik.” He then ordered him returned to prison and turned to al-Asma`i once again and said: “By God, O Asma`i, I frequently gazed at his neck and saw where the sword might strike it but I was prevented from doing so by my desire to preserve the lives of persons like him among my family.”

2511. Yusuf ibn Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi>Sulaiman al-Khurasani, the royal servant and client of al-Rashid, who said that he was once standing at the head of al-Rashid as the latter was eating, in al-Hira, when `Awn al-`Ibadi, governor of al-Hira, walked in, carrying a fish called *al-Samn*. He placed the fish before him. It sat in a sort of cage which had been made for it. Al-Rashid attempted to eat a piece of it but Jibril ibn Bukhtishu`*prevented him from doing so and signaled to the steward to remove it far away from al-Rashid. Al-Rashid noticed this. When the meal was ended, and al-Rashid had washed his hands, Jibril having left, al-Rashid ordered me to follow him and to barge in on him in his house as he was eating, and to report back to him what I had learnt. I followed his orders, and I guess that my assignment had not escaped Jibril’s attention because of the caution I observed in his actions. For he went to a place in `Awn’s house and asked for food. This was brought to him, and the food included the fish. He then called for three cups, in one of which

he placed a piece of that fish and poured into it some wine from Tiznabadh---This is a village between Kufa and al-Qadisiyya with vineyards, trees, date palms and orchards, crisscrossed by canals leading off from the Euphrates. Its wine is famous for its superior quality, like Qutrabulli wine. Of the first cup he said: "This is Jibril's meal." In the second cup, he placed a piece of the fish then poured over it some iced water and said: "This is the food of the Commander of the Believers, may God glorify him, provided he does not mix this with anything else." In the third cup he placed a piece of the fish with morsels of meat grilled in various ways, together with sweetmeats, cold dishes, vegetables and other kinds of food that had been offered to al-Rashid, placing a morsel or two of each kind, then poured on them iced water. He said: "This is the food of the Commander of the Believers, if the fish had been mixed with other kinds of food." He then handed the three cups to the steward and told him to keep them with him until the Commander of the Believers arose from his sleep. Jibril then turned to the fish and ate from it until he was filled. When thirsty, he would call for a glass of pure wine and drink it. He then fell asleep. When al-Rashid woke up, he asked me what I had learnt about Jibril and whether he had eaten any portion of that fish and I told him what I had witnessed. So he ordered the three cups to be brought to him. In the first cup, the one that Jibril called his own, had eaten from, and on which he had poured pure wine, he found that the mixture had disintegrated, grown soft and blended together. In the second cup, which Jibril had called the Commander of the Believers' cup, and had poured iced water on it, al-Rashid found that the mixture had swelled by about half of what it had been. When he looked into the third cup, the one described by Jibril as the food of the Commander of the Believers if the fish had been consumed with other kinds of food, he found that it had changed its odor and emitted such a foul stench that al-Rashid was about

to vomit as he came close to it. So he ordered me to take five thousand dinars and give them to Jibril, saying: "How can anyone blame me for loving this man who takes such good care of me?" I then delivered the money to Jibril.

2512. `Abdullah ibn Malik al-Khuza`i, head of al-Rashid's household and bodyguard, said: "One day a messenger from al-Rashid arrived at a time at which he'd never arrived before. He dragged me out from where I was and wouldn't allow me to change my clothes. I was afraid, and when I arrived at the palace, the messenger had preceded me and announced my arrival. Al-Rashid permitted me to enter and I found him sitting on his bed. I greeted him and he remained silent for a while, so my fear increased and I was mindless with terror. Finally he said: 'O `Abdullah, do you know why I summoned you at such an hour?' 'No, by God, O Commander of the Believers,' I replied. He said: 'I just saw a dream in which an Abyssinian wielding a spear came up to me and said: "Either you release Musa ibn Ja`far at once or I'll pierce you with this spear." So go and release him.' Three times I asked him: 'O Commander of the Believers, am I to release Musa ibn Ja`far?' He confirmed his order and said: 'Go at once and release Musa ibn Ja`far, give him thirty thousand dirhams and tell him the following: 'If you wish to stay here you will find it to your liking, but if you prefer to go back to Medinah you are at liberty to do so.'"

2513. `Abdullah continued: "So I went to the prison to release him. When he saw me, he leapt up thinking I had been ordered to do him harm. I said: 'Fear not. The Commander of the Believers has ordered me to release you and to pay you thirty thousand dirhams. He tells you that if you care to remain here you will find it to your liking, but if you wish to return to Medinah you are at perfect liberty to do so.'" I handed over the thirty thousand dirhams and released him, then said to him: 'Your case is

cause for wonder to me.’ He said: ‘I’ll tell you. While I slept I saw the Prophet who came to me and said: “O Musa, you have been unjustly jailed. Repeat these words after me and you will not spend the rest of this night in jail.” I said: “What are they, may my mother and father be your ransom?” He answered: ‘O You who hears all voices, You who provides all nourishment [reading *sa’iq al-qut*], You who covers the bones with flesh and who resurrects them after death: I ask You by your Beautiful Names and by the greatest name of all, hidden from all creatures, You who are self-restrained and patient with a patience none can match, You whose blessings are endless and uncountable, relieve me.’ So you can see what happened.””

2514. Hammad ibn Ishaq ibn Ibrahim al-Mawsili>Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi, who said: “I went on pilgrimage with al-Rashid. While on the road, I fell back while mounted, and was overcome by sleep. My mount led me astray and I woke up to find myself far from the road. The heat was intense and I felt very thirsty. I saw a tent looming in the distance so rode towards it and found it to be a dome with a well and a farm nearby. This was somewhere between Mecca and Medinah. I saw no one, so I entered the dome and found a black man asleep. He woke up when he sensed my presence and opened his eyes which were like two pools of blood, then sat upright. He had a massive figure and I said: ‘O black man, give me to drink from that water.’ He replied: ‘O black man, give me to drink from that water,’ echoing my words to him, then said: ‘If you’re thirsty, dismount and drink.’ I was riding on a heavy-duty horse that was nasty and nervous, and was afraid that if I dismounted it might bolt. So I struck the horse’s head and my singing never benefited me except that day, for I raised my voice and sang the following verses:

*Shroud me, when I die, in Arwa’s shirt,
And give me to drink from the well of `Urwa.*

*She has a home near the sea,
And a summer home in a palace, the palace of Quba’.
Her body is warm in winter but cool in summer, a full moon in a dark
night.*

2515. The black man raised his head to me and said: ‘What would you prefer: for me to give you just water to drink or water with gruel?’ I replied: ‘Water and gruel.’ He produced a wooden bowl of gruel which he poured into the cup and gave me to drink. He then began to beat his head and chest: ‘O how fiery is my chest! How the flames lap my heart! O master, sing some more and I’ll give you more to drink.’ So I drank his gruel, and he said: ‘Master, there are many miles between you and the main road, and I cannot be sure you will not be thirsty once more. But I shall fill up my water skin and carry it, and walk ahead of you.’ ‘Do so,’ I responded. He filled his water skin and walked before me, taking short steps and keeping to the rhythm of my singing. Whenever I stopped to rest, he would come up and say: ‘Master, are you thirsty?’ I would then sing the song to its end. This went on until he led me to the highway then said: ‘Go, and may God protect you and not rob you of all the blessings He bestowed upon you.’ He said all this in broken Arabic but approximately with that meaning. So I rejoined the caravan. Meanwhile al-Rashid had found I was missing so sent camels and horses looking for me and was pleased when he saw me.

2516. “I went to him and told him what had happened to me so he ordered the black man summoned. Shortly thereafter, the black man was brought in and al-Rashid asked him: ‘Woe to you! What is it that makes your chest fiery?’ He replied: ‘Master, it is Maimuna.’ ‘Who’s Maimuna?’ ‘An Abyssinian girl,’ he replied. ‘Which Abyssinian?’ he asked. He answered: ‘Daughter of Bilal*, master.’ Al-Rashid then ordered someone to interrogate him properly and it turned out he was a

slave of the family of Ja`far al-Tayyar while his black beloved was a slave of the family of al-Hasan ibn `Ali. Al-Rashid then ordered that she be bought and given to him but her masters refused to take any money and gifted her to al-Rashid. So he bought the black man, freed them both, got them married, then granted him two orchards from his personal property in Medinah and three hundred dinars.

2517. One day Ibn al-Sammak entered into the presence of al-Rashid and found a dove before him pecking at some seeds. Al-Rashid said:

“Describe this scene, and be brief.” He said: “With her two eyes like rubies, she pecks with two pearls at two stones made of carnelian.”

2518. The following poem was once recited to me:

A dove was cooing when her companion announced he was leaving her,

Her neck ring like the roundness of the letter Nun, with curving edges,

Her eyes, when looking at you, are like two rubies,

And she breathes through two holes, like two pearls.

She is seen, like orchards, with two feet,

And two jaws, like temples, like two mountain-tops,

And two pink feet, like two corals.

Above its two wings she wove two cloaks,

Her color like a peacock, her two shoulders sweet-smelling, [reading binan al-mankibain]

Under the shade of a thicket, its two sides open,

She lost her companion and wept for her sad lot and his departure,

She cries for him without tears, her eyeballs dry,

For she does not color her eyes with kohl, as I color mine.

2519. Ma`n ibn Za`ida once entered into the presence of al-Rashid who had been angry with him, so Ma`n approached with short steps. Al-Rashid said: “By God, Ma`n, you have grown old.” He replied: “In obedience to you, O Commander of the Believers.” “However, there

remains something in you.” “It belongs to you, O Commander of the Believers.” “And yet you are still sturdy.” “Against your enemies, O Commander of the Believers.” So he pardoned him and appointed him to some office. Ma`n’s words were relayed to `Abd al-Rahman ibn Zaid, the most ascetical of the people of Basra, who said: “Woe to that man! He left nothing up to his God!” One day, al-Rashid said to Ma`n ibn Za`ida: “I have intended you for a major undertaking.” He replied: “O Commander of the Believers, God has intended my heart to be dependent upon your counsel, my hand is ready to obey you, and my sword is sharpened against your enemy. Whenever you please, say what you will.” This reply is also attributed to Yazid ibn Mazyad.

2520. Al-Kisa`i* said: “I entered into the presence of al-Rashid and, once having properly greeted him and prayed for his welfare, I rose to leave but he said: ‘Sit down.’ I stayed with him until most who were in the assembly had left and only his intimates remained. He said to me: ‘O `Ali, wouldn’t you like to see Muhammad and `Abdullah [his two sons]?’ I replied: ‘I am most eager to do so, O Commander of the Believers! How delighted I will be to observe the blessings of the Almighty upon the Commander of the Believers, through them!’ So he ordered them to be brought in. Soon thereafter, they came in like two stars on a horizon, decked with calmness and dignity, their eyes downcast and taking short steps, until they reached the door of the assembly. They then greeted their father with the caliphal greeting and prayed for his welfare in the most decorous manner. He commanded them to draw near and sat Muhammad on his right and `Abdullah on his left, then ordered me to get them to recite the Qur’an and ask them questions, and I did so. To every question I posed they gave excellent and full answers. Al-Rashid was delighted and I observed this on his face. Then he asked me: ‘O `Ali, how do you

find their education and their answers?’ I replied: ‘They are, O Commander of the Believers, as described by the poet:

*I see two moons of splendor, two branches of a caliphate,
Adorned by a noble pedigree and descent.*

O Commander of the Believers, they are like a branch from a fragrant stem, planted in purity, firmly rooted, and a place of sweet water. Their father is the most elevated of rulers, of widest knowledge and greatest forbearance; they judge matters as he does, they shine through his radiance, they speak with his tongue and they flourish beneath his happy state. May God give joy to the Commander of the Believers through them and may He delight the community by preserving his life and theirs.’

2521. ‘I then asked them: ‘Do you memorize any poetry?’ Both said they did, and Muhammad recited to me:

*I am patient when poor, but share my wealth with others,
And keep apart from those whose character does not agree with mine.
My wealth I use to defend my honor and to protect myself,
And am liberal with what remains of it.*

‘Abdullah recited:

*At dawn she rose to blame you,
And she blames without being aware of it.
My affairs are ruled by an All-Powerful One,
Who grants what He wills of prosperity.*

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How many there are who are pleased with misfortune,

And others stricken by the calamities of time.

When I prop up my spear it will be seen to be,

Hardy in strength and not easily broken.

I never met any children of caliphs, or branches of that blessed tree, more eloquent in tongue, more articulate in speech or more able to recite what they had memorized than these two boys.” I prayed at length for their well-being and al-Rashid uttered ‘Amen’ to my prayers. He then hugged them to his chest and spread his arms around them. When he released them, I saw tears pouring down his chest.

2522. “He then ordered them to leave and when they did so he turned to me and said: ‘It is as if I can see, when divine judgment reaches its limit, the heavenly verdict descending and what is foreordained comes to pass, that the views of these two shall diverge, quarrels shall take place between them and enmity will arise. Nor will this end before blood is shed, much killing will occur and the sanctity of women shall be violated. Many who are alive then will wish they were dead!’ I said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, is this due to some vision seen at the time of their birth, or to some report that was transmitted to the Commander of the Believers at their birth?’ He answered: ‘No, by God, but according to an authentic report transmitted by scholars from saints who transmitted it from prophets.’”

2523. Al-Ahmar al-Nahawi said: “Al-Rashid sent for me to tutor his son Muhammad al-Amin. When I entered into his presence he said: ‘O Ahmar, the Commander of the Believers has entrusted you with his very soul and the fruit of his heart, so exercise your full powers over him and

make it his duty to obey you. Be to him where the Commander of the Believers has placed you. Make him read the Qur'an, get him to study prophetic reports, get him to recite poetry, teach him the laws of religion, instruct him in correct speech, and how speech begins, and forbid him to laugh except where appropriate. Inculcate in him respect for the elders of the Hashim clan when they enter into his presence, and teach him to give military commanders seats of honor in his assemblies. Let not a single hour pass without your passing on to him something that would benefit him, but without perplexing him to the point where you deaden his mind. Do not be too forgiving whereby he will enjoy and get used to leisure time, and discipline him as much as you can through friendliness and gentleness. But if he is recalcitrant then use severity and harshness."

2524. It is reported that al-`Umani, the poet, rose in the presence of al-Rashid and made a speech where he praised Muhammad al-Amin very highly and urged al-Rashid to renew his covenant of succession to him. When he ended, al-Rashid said: "Be of good cheer, O `Umani, for I have indeed named him as my successor." He replied: "Yes, O Commander of the Believers, I am as pleased to hear this as grass is pleased with rain, as a woman who bears few children with a newly born baby, as a chronically sick man with the advent of health. For Muhammad is unique, the protector of his glorious past and is akin to his grandfather." Al-Rashid asked: "What have you to say about `Abdullah?" He replied: "A pasture without equal, like that of *al-Sa`dan**." Al-Rashid smiled and said: "God damn him, what a nomad he is, and how well he detects the desires of others! By God, in `Abdullah I perceive the determination of al-Mansur, the asceticism of al-Mahdi and the high sense of honor of al-Hadi. If God had wanted me to cite a fourth comparison, I would have done so."

2525. Al-Asma`i said: "One night, while conversing with al-Rashid, I saw that he became very agitated. He would sit at one time, lie down at another and recline at a third. He then recited:

*Entrust the affairs of God's worshippers to a trustworthy person,
One who is decisive, and neither changes his mind nor is easily bored.
Pay no attention to the obscenities that some people utter,
And who do not understand what others do.*

When I heard these verses, I knew he was contemplating a matter of great importance. He then told his servant Masrur: 'Summon Yahya.' When he arrived, he said to him: 'O Abu'l Fadl, the Prophet of God died without leaving a will, while Islam was still young, faith was still a new thing, and the Arabs were still of one view. God had granted them security following fear, and power following humiliation. Soon enough, however, most Arabs apostasized, rebelling against Abu Bakr, and the rest you know. Abu Bakr delegated `Umar to succeed him and the community accepted him and was content with his caliphate. `Umar then turned it over to a consultative council, and you know the civil strife that ensued until the caliphate passed to those unworthy of it. I am anxious to set straight this issue of succession and to nominate whomever I approve of as to his conduct, feel certain as to his sound policy and am confident he will not weaken or become feeble. This is all true of `Abdullah. The Hashim clan are inclined towards Muhammad who is a creature of caprice, behaves according to his instincts, spends everything he owns, and includes women and female slaves in his decisions. `Abdullah on the other hand is laudable in behavior, firm in judgment, and may be depended upon in any major crisis. If I incline towards `Abdullah, I annoy the Hashim clan, and if I give sole authority to Muhammad I cannot be sure he will not act rashly with the people. Let me hear your advice about this issue, an advice whose benefit will be widespread. For

you are, God be thanked, a man of blessed views and fine perspicacity.’
Yahya replied: ‘O Commander of the Believers, every mistake can be excused and every error can be made good except for this matter of succession. A mistake here cannot be guaranteed to end well, and an error cannot be reversed. To examine this matter well, another meeting is needed, other than this one.’ Al-Rashid knew he meant a private audience so he ordered me [Asma`i] to move away. I rose and sat to the side where I could hear them conversing. They talked and argued for a long while until the night ended, then broke up, having agreed that succession would pass to `Abdullah after Muhammad.”

2526. Umm Ja`far [Zubaida] then entered to see al-Rashid and said: “You have not been fair to your son Muhammad by assigning Iraq to him and denying him troops and resources, and gave all this to `Abdullah instead.” He answered: “What have you to do with the management of political affairs and judging the worth of men? I gave your son [Muhammad] a civilian assignment and `Abdullah a military assignment, and the person in charge of war needs troops more than the civilian administrator. And yet, we fear what your son might do to `Abdullah more than what `Abdullah might do to your son if he receives homage.”

2527. In the year 186 [802], al-Rashid left on pilgrimage with his two heirs al-Amin [Muhammad] and al-Ma`mun [`Abdullah]. He had the two covenants between them transcribed and hung on the wall of the Ka`ba. It is reported from Ibrahim al-Nakha`i that when the text was raised to be hung on the Ka`ba, it fell. So Ibrahim said to himself: “It has fallen even before it was raised. This is a venture that will fail before it comes to fruition.”

2528. Sa`id ibn `Amir al-Basri said: “I went on pilgrimage that same year and found people to be utterly amazed by the covenant and by vows hung

on the Ka`ba. I saw a man from Hudhail who was leading his camel and reciting:

A homage whose oath has been violated,

And a civil war whose flames have been stoked.

I said to him: “Woe to you! What are you saying?” He replied: “I am saying swords will be unsheathed, a civil war will break out, and a struggle over kingship will occur.” “How so?” I said. He answered:

“Don’t you see that camel standing over there with the two men fighting, and crows standing in the blood and smeared with it? By God, this affair will only end in war and evil.”

2529. It is reported that when al-Amin swore that oath to al-Rashid and wanted to leave the Ka`ba, Ja`far ibn Yahya made him go back and said to him: “If you act treacherously to your brother, God will abandon you.” He made him swear that oath three times. This was the reason why Umm Ja`far [Amin’s mother] bore a grudge against Ja`far ibn Yahya. She was later to be among those who urged and encouraged al-Rashid to bring about his downfall.

2530. Al-Mas`udi said: In the year 187 [803], al-Rashid obtained homage for his son al-Qasim to succeed al-Ma`mun. Once the caliphate passed to al-Ma`mun it was left up to al-Ma`mun to either confirm that appointment or remove him from succession.

2531. In that same year, i.e. 187, al-Fudail ibn `Iyad died. His patronymic was “Abu `Ali.” He was born in Khurasan, came to Kufa, heard Hadith from al-Mansur ibn al-Mu`tamir and others, then became an ascetic and moved to Mecca where he died. Sufyan ibn `Uyayna said: “Al-Rashid invited us and as we entered into his presence, al-Fudayl was the last to do so, his head covered by his robe. He said to me: ‘O Sufyan, which one is the Commander of the Believers?’ I said ‘Him,’ and pointed to al-Rashid. He said to him: ‘O you with the handsome face who hold in your

hand and upon your neck the affairs of this community, you indeed shoulder a vast responsibility.’ Al-Rashid wept. Then each of us was handed a money purse, and everyone accepted it except al-Fudayl. Al-Rashid said to him: ‘O Abu `Ali, if you consider it illicit to accept this money, give it to some poor man in debt or feed a hungry man or clothe a naked one.’ However, al-Fudayl begged to be excused. When we went out I said to him: ‘O Abu `Ali, you were wrong not to have taken it to spend on some charitable deed.’ He grabbed my beard and said: ‘O Abu Muhammad, you are the foremost and most respected jurist of this city and you make such a mistake? Had the money been licitly obtained by them, it would have been licit for me to accept it.’”

2532. Fifteen years into the reign of al-Rashid, and in the year 186 [802], Musa ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib died, aged fifty-four, from poison. In our epistle entitled *Al-Bayan fi Asma' al-A'imma al-Qitti'iyya min al-Shi`a*, we mentioned their names, the names of their mothers, the site of their tombs, their ages and how much time each had spent with his father or had known his grandfather.

2533. Kulthum al-`Attabi composed the following verses about al-Rashid:

An imam whose fingers hold in his hand

The rod of religion, whose shaft cannot possibly be worn away.

His eye takes in the whole of mankind with a glance,

Whether near or distant.

An ever-wakeful heart, he is secretly whispered to

By those enclosed in wombs, in order to settle their affairs.

He hears perfectly if, from the bottom of some pit of distress,

A person calls out to him, a call he need not repeat.

2534. Yamut ibn al-Muzarri` said: “My uncle, `Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz said: ‘Kulthum al-`Attabi used to disparage the poetry of Abu Nuwas. So

the transmitter of Abu Nuwas's poetry said to him one day: 'How can you possibly disparage his poetry when he composed a verse like this:

If we praise you for some virtuous quality,

It is you we praise, and you are superior to any praise we can offer.

And if our words run away with us and heap praise

On someone other than you, it is you whom we have in mind.

Al-'Attabi said: 'This is plagiarized.' 'From whom?' 'From Abu Dahbal al-Jumahi.' 'Where he says what?' 'Where he says:

And if to some youth is said: 'What a wonderful youth he is!'

It is Ibn al-Mughira who is meant by that 'wonderful youth.'

Women have become barren and cannot beget his like,

Indeed, women are too barren to carry someone like him.

Abu Nuwas's transmitter said: "But he excelled in the following line:

It [wine] overran their body members,

As health overruns a sick person."

"Another plagiarism." "From whom?" "From Shusa al-Faq'asi." "Where he says what?" "Where he says:

When that which constricts a sick person's body is relieved,

Its health ascends through that body and overruns it.

When health mixes with his innards, you would imagine

He had never at any time been in pain."

Abu Nuwas's transmitter said: "But he excelled in the following line:

It [wine] was not created except for their hands to spend generously on it,

And their feet were not created except to step on pulpits."

"Yet another plagiarism." "From whom?" "From Marwan ibn Abi Hafsa."

"Where he says what?" "Where he says:

It [wine] was not created except for their hands to spend generously on it,

And their tongues were created only to adorn speech.

One day they vie with the winds in liberality,

And another day they apply themselves to eloquent oratory.

Abu Nuwas's transmitter fell silent." Yamut, quoting Jahiz, added: "Had he quoted his entire poetic output, Kulthum al-`Attabi would have said it was all plagiarized!"

2535. Abu'l `Abbas Ahmad ibn Yahya Tha`lab* said: "Abu'l `Atahiya had pestered al-Rashid about `Utba, so al-Rashid promised he would marry him to her but seek her opinion first. If she consented, he would pay for her trousseau and give Abu'l `Atahiya a large sum of money. Al-Rashid then became preoccupied for some time with some other affair, and Abu'l `Atahiya was not granted permission to see him. So Abu'l `Atahiya handed three large fans to Masrur, the senior royal servant, who smiled and took the fans in to al-Rashid. The fans were all stacked together. On one al-Rashid read the following verse:

*I endeavored to employ the winds to achieve my desire,
And found they carried a fragrance of your hands.*

Al-Rashid said: 'The sly fellow has excelled.' On the second fan was written:

*I tied myself to a hope from you,
A hope without a stride to get me to you, nor does it skip to you.*

Al-Rashid said: 'Well expressed!'

On the third fan was written:

*At times I'd lose hope, then I'd say to myself:
But the person who guaranteed success is noble.*

Al-Rashid said: 'Damn him, how charming is his verse!' He then summoned him and said: 'I gave you my word, Abu'l `Atahiya, and tomorrow, God willing, we shall fulfill your wish.'

2536. "Al-Rashid then sent the following message to `Utba: 'I have something to ask of you, so wait for me in your house tonight.' `Utba was amazed and alarmed, and went to see al-Rashid to try to ask him to

change his mind, but he swore he would not mention what he had in mind except in her house. When night fell, al-Rashid with a group of intimates went to see her and said: 'I shall not mention what I need unless you assure me you will fulfill it.' She replied: 'I am your slave and any order you give me is obeyed except if it concerns Abu'l `Atahiya. I swore an oath to your father, God's mercy on his soul, an oath used by both the wicked and the virtuous, that I will walk barefoot to God's sanctuary, and whenever one pilgrimage is ended I will bind myself to another, nor will I expiate any of them. Whatever I gain I shall give it away in alms except the clothes I pray in.' She then wept before him. He pitied her and felt compassion for her, then left.

2537. "In the morning, Abu'l `Atahiya came to see al-Rashid, certain that he had won her. Al-Rashid said: 'By God, I was not remiss in pleading your case, and here are Masrur, Husain, Rashid and others who will testify to the fact.' He then explained the situation to him. Abu'l `Atahiya said: 'When he told me all this, I remained for a while not knowing where I was. Then I said: 'Now that she has refused you and I know she will never accept intercession from anyone else, I can say all hope is abandoned.' Abu'l `Atahiya then wore woolen garments* and recited the following verses:

*I cut off all ropes of hope I had of you,
And took down the baggage on my mount.
I found the coldness of despair in my heart,
And felt no need to stay behind or to travel."*

2538. It is said that when al-Rashid heard the verse recited by Abu'l `Atahiya regarding `Utba:

*But a gazelle belonging to the caliph hunted me,
Though I had not transgressed against the caliph's gazelle,*

Al-Rashid was angry and said: “Is he making fun of us and joking at our expense?” He then ordered him imprisoned, handing him over to Tunjab, who was in charge of administering punishment, a hard-hearted and violent man. So Abu'l `Atahiya recited:

*O Tunjab, do not be quick to punish me,
For this is not his [al-Rashid's] real view.
I never imagined this would take place,
As indicated by the light from the lightening of his sky.*

2539. Among the poems he wrote after having been imprisoned for a long time was the following:

*You [al-Rashid] are nothing but a mercy and a safe refuge,
May God increase you in happiness and honor.
I am beneath your blessed shade, abandoned,
And continuing thus, but how long will this last?
I am told you have pardoned me,
But how am I to see a sign of your pardon?*

Al-Rashid said: “What a father’s son he is! Had I seen him, I would not have imprisoned him, but allowed myself to imprison him because he was absent.” He then ordered him to be released from jail.

2540. Abu'l `Atahiya is the poet who recited:

*We are terrified for a while when death is mentioned,
But are seduced by the world, so we amuse ourselves and play.
We, sons of this world, have been created for another world,
But while you're in it, you find it something lovable.*

He also recited:

*Its bereavements stalk you, and life in this world is hardship,
Its toil is full of trouble, its kingship ever-changing.*

He also recited:

When a person lives long, his end delayed,

He becomes like a robe which is tattered when once it was new.

I am surprised by an intelligent person who wastes

That which he needs on the day of his death.

He also recited:

Do not trust this world and its treachery:

How many like you has it deceived!

All are agreed in censuring it,

But none, I see, are willing to leave it.

2541. He recited:

You are merely something borrowed

From that to which you shall be returned, as all things borrowed are.

How can one enjoy the pleasure of a few days,

When his every breath is counted?

He also recited:

Your life is a series of breaths that can be counted,

And as each breath is exhaled, a part of you has passed away.

Each moment that keeps you alive also kills you,

While a camel driver chants to you, intending no jollity.

He also recited:

O death, I find you inevitable,

You arrive, neither acting unjustly nor showing favoritism.

As if you have attacked my grey hairs,

As once my grey hairs attacked my youth.

2542. He recited:

I forgot death, among other things I forgot,

As if I do not see anyone dying.

Is not death the end of every living thing?

So why do I not hasten to do that which must come to pass?

He also recited:

*Certain events have admonished you, silently,
And times gone by have mourned you [reading na`atka azminatun].
They spoke of bones rotting and shapes that are at rest.
They showed you your tomb among other tombs,
While you're still alive and not yet dead.*

He also recited:

*How many have built a house to rest in its shade,
But rested in their grave, the house uninhabited.*

2543. Ishaq ibn Ibrahim al-Mawsili reported: "One night, as I sang to al-Rashid, he was enchanted by my singing and said: 'Do not leave.' I continued to sing to him until he fell asleep so I stopped singing, placed the *oud* in my lap, and sat down. Suddenly, there entered a youth with a handsome face, a shapely figure and wearing apparels of silk, beautifully turned out. He greeted me and sat down. I was amazed how he managed at that time of night to gain access into that place without asking permission, then said to myself that he may be a son of al-Rashid whom I did not know before or seen. He then took hold of the *oud*, removed it, placed it in his lap and pressed it. I saw that he did so better than any of God's creatures. He tuned it in a manner that I did not recognize, then struck its chords and never had I heard a better sound. Finally, he started singing:

*Pass the cup round [reading adirha `alayna], you two, before we part,
And give me to drink from that clear wine.*

*The morning's light is about to expose the night,
And the shirt of the night is about to be torn.*

He then placed the *oud* in his lap and said: 'You biter of your mother's clitoris! When you sing, sing like this.' He then left. I went after him and said to the chamberlain: 'Who was that young man who just left?' He said: 'No one entered or left.' I said: 'Yes, indeed. Just now a youth

passed in front of me, of such and such a description.’ He answered: ‘By God, no one entered or left.’ I was amazed and went back to where I was sitting. Al-Rashid woke up and said: ‘What’s the matter with you?’ I told him the story and he too was amazed and said: ‘You must have encountered a demon.’ He then asked me to repeat that song and I did so. He was entranced, ordered a reward for me and I left.”

2544. Ibrahim al-Mawsili said: “One day al-Rashid gathered together all the singers, and none of the masters among them was missing. I was present among them and so was Miskin al-Madani, known as Abu Sadaqa. He used to beat the cadence with a stick, was self-taught and skillful, and was a charming companion with a stock of interesting tales. Al-Rashid, intoxicated by date wine, suggested a song. The man in charge of the curtain ordered Ibn Jami` to sing it but al-Rashid was not taken by his singing. He did the same with the others present but was not entertained by any of them. The man in charge of the curtain turned to Miskin al-Madani and said: ‘The Commander of the Believers orders you to sing that tune if you can sing it well.’ So Miskin proceeded to sing it, and we all fell silent, amazed at the audacity of someone like him to sing a tune in which we all had failed to please the caliph. When he finished, I heard al-Rashid say loudly: ‘O Miskin, repeat it.’ He did so with energy and a strong heart and performed extremely well. Al-Rashid said: ‘Bravo, Miskin! You have rendered that song very well indeed.’ He then ordered the curtain between us and him removed, and Miskin said to him: ‘O Commander of the Believers, there is a strange story associated with that song.’ ‘What is it?’ al-Rashid asked.

2545. “Miskin said: ‘I was a slave of the Zubairid family and a tailor. I owed my master a daily payment of two dirhams. Once I paid these

two dirhams, I was free to conduct my own business. I was extremely fond of singing, and sewed one day a shirt for some Talibid family member who paid me two dirhams, gave me lunch at his house and several cups of wine to drink. I left him in a jovial mood and encountered a black woman with a jar on her shoulder, singing that very song. This caused me to forget every important matter and every duty, so I said to her: 'I beseech you, by him who lies in that tomb [the Prophet] and by his pulpit, to teach me that song!' She responded: 'By him who lies in that tomb and by his pulpit, I will only do so if you give me two dirhams.' Accordingly, O Commander of the Believers, I swear to God, I pulled out the two dirhams I had prepared to give as tribute to my master and gave them to her. She then took down the jar from her shoulders, sat beating time on the jar, then proceeded to sing. She kept repeating the song until I felt it had been imprinted in my heart, and I left to see my master who, when he saw me said: 'Out with the tribute you owe me.' I said: 'This and that happened.' He said: 'You son of a filthy woman! Have I not told you already that I will not accept any excuse even if you are short by a fraction of a dirham?' He then threw me to the ground and gave me fifty lashes with a palm leaf whip as hard as possible, then shaved my head and beard, and I spent that night, O Commander of the Believers, as the most wretched creature on earth. The beating was so severe that I forgot the song, and this was the worst thing for me to bear. When morning came, I covered my head, put my tailor's scissors in my sleeve, and went to the place where I had met the black woman. I stood there not knowing what to do, having no idea what her name was or where she lived. Standing like this for a while, I then saw her coming, and at once forgot all I had suffered, so happy

was I to see her. I approached and said: 'By the Lord of the Ka`ba, I was made to forget that song.' She said: 'Yes, it is as I thought.' I told her all that had happened to me and how my head and beard had been shaved then added: 'May God reward you if you repeat it to me.' She replied: 'By the tomb and he who lies in it, I will not do so unless you give me two dirhams.' I took out my scissors, pawned them for two dirhams and paid her. Once more, she took down the jar as she had done the day before and began to sing. An hour passed as she did so, after which I said: 'Give me back the two dirhams. I have no need any longer of your singing.' She replied: 'By God, you shall never see them again or hope to recover them from me.' She added: 'I can just see you receiving four thousand dinars from the caliph instead of these four dirhams.' She then sang and beat the rhythm on her jar and kept repeating the song until it was firmly fixed in my heart. She then left and I went to see my master, feeling anxious and fearful. When he saw me he said: 'Out with your tribute.' I mumbled my answer and he said: 'You son of a filthy woman, wasn't it enough what happened to you yesterday?' I said: 'I will tell you the truth and hide nothing. With my tribute yesterday and today I purchased this song' and then sang it to him. He said: 'Woe to you! You've had this song with you for two days and did not tell me?' He added: 'I swear I would have divorced my wife if I would not have manumitted you had you sung this yesterday. I can do nothing about your shaved hair and beard. As for your tribute, God has excused you from paying it until your hair grows again.'"

2546. "Al-Rashid found the story funny and said: 'By God, I don't know what is more charming, your story or your singing. I have ordered that you be paid what the black woman stipulated.' Miskin

did not leave his seat before he was paid four thousand dinars. The verses of that song were the following:

Stand by these campsites for a while and ask yourself:

Can a traveller find lodging in this place?

Such a ruin is this place that I can see myself,

Carried to my own ruin in a casket.

2547. One day al-Rashid held a horse race in al-Raqqa. When the race began, he moved to his place in the center of the racecourse where the horses passed by him, and waited for his horse. When the horses appeared, there was a bunch of horses in the lead, with two horses running head to head, neither of which was overtaking the other. Looking closely, al-Rashid cried: "My horse, by God!" He looked again and recognized the other horse: "And that's my son's---meaning al-Ma'mun's---horse, running second!" The two horses ended up cheek to cheek ahead of the rest and al-Rashid's horse came first with al-Ma'mun's horse coming second. Al-Rashid was delighted at that result with the rest of the horses following behind. When the assembly broke up and he was about to leave, al-Asma`i, who was present and had noticed al-Rashid's delight, said to al-Fadl ibn al-Rabi`: "O Abu'l `Abbas, this is a remarkable day and I would like you to get me to see the Commander of the Believers." Al-Fadl rose and went to al-Rashid, saying: "O Commander of the Believers, here's al-Asma`i who wishes to mention something about the two horses which will increase the pleasure of the Commander of the Believers." Al-Rashid said: "Bring him." When al-Asma`i came up, al-Rashid said: "What do you have for me?" He answered: "O Commander of the Believers, you and your son and your two horses reminded me of the verses of al-Khansa'*:

He raced against his father and they came first,

Near as waist to waist.

When they came into view, they appeared,

Like two falcons landing on a nest.

His father's face was seen to come first,

While the son, intent on his pride, kept running.

It would have been far more fit for him to come near,

Were it not for the dignity of age and reputation.”

2548. Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi* recounted the following tale: “I invited al-Rashid in al-Raqqa and he accepted my invitation. He used to eat hot food before cold. When the cold plates were put before him on the table he saw among what was placed nearest to him a silver bowl containing condiments like fish condiments. He found the pieces too small and asked: ‘Why did your cook slice the fish in this manner?’ I replied: ‘O Commander of the Believers, these are not slices of fish. They are fish tongues.’ He said: ‘It looks as if this bowl must contain a hundred tongues.’ Muraqib, my servant, said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, it contains more than one hundred and fifty tongues.’ Al-Rashid made him swear to tell him how much all this had cost and he told him it cost more than a thousand dirhams. Al-Rashid stopped eating and swore he would not eat anything more unless Muraqib brought him a thousand dirhams. When the money arrived, he ordered that it be distributed as alms, and said to him: ‘I hope this will atone for your prodigality in spending a thousand dirhams on a bowl of fish.’ He then stretched his hand forth, took the bowl and gave it to one of his servants, commanding him: ‘Go out of my brother’s house and give it to the first beggar you meet.” Ibrahim added: “The silver bowl had cost al-Rashid two hundred and seventy dinars. I winked at a servant of mine to follow the first servant and buy back from whoever he had

given it to, but al-Rashid seems to have noticed so he cried out to the servant carrying the bowl of fish: 'You there! When you give that silver bowl to the beggar, tell him that the Commander of the Believers warns you not to sell it for less than two hundred dinars, since it costs more.' So al-Rashid's servant carried out his command and my own servant could not retrieve the bowl from the beggar except by paying him two hundred dinars."

2549. Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi recounted the following tale: "I was once on board a fast boat with al-Rashid heading to Mosul. The rowers were rowing and a chess-board was set between us. When we finished the game he said to me: 'Tell me, Ibrahim, what is the best of names in your view?' 'The name of the Prophet,' I answered. 'What next?' 'Harun, the name of the Commander of the Believers.' 'Which name is the most unpleasant?' 'Ibrahim,' I replied. He scolded me and said: 'Woe to you! Is it not the name of Ibrahim, the friend of the All-Merciful?' 'It is because of the ill-omened nature of that name that he suffered at the hands of Nimrod what he suffered,' I replied. 'And what about Ibrahim, son of the Prophet?' 'It's not surprising that having been called Ibrahim, he didn't live long,' I replied. 'And what about Ibrahim the imam?' 'It is because of his name that Marwan al-Ja'di killed him by inserting his head in a bag of lime,' I answered, 'And let me add to the list, O Commander of the Believers: Ibrahim ibn al-Walid was deposed, Ibrahim ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan was murdered, and every person I know of called by that name was either killed or beaten or exiled.' I had barely finished my words when I heard a sailor on a boat call out in a loud voice: 'O Ibrahim, row hard!' This was followed by: 'O Ibrahim, biter of your mother's so and so, row!' I turned to al-Rashid and said: 'Commander of the Believers, do

you now believe me that Ibrahim is the most ill-omened of names?' He laughed so much he scraped the deck with his feet."

2550. Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi told the following story: "I was with al-Rashid one day when a messenger arrived bearing trays of reed (*khaizaran*) covered with napkins and a letter. Al-Rashid read the letter and said: 'May God be kind to him and reward him.' I asked: 'O Commander of the Believers, who is this man whom you've praised so highly so that we may join you in praising him?' He answered: 'It is 'Abdullah ibn Salih.' He then removed the napkin and found trays arranged one on top of the other, in one of which was pistachios, in the other hazelnuts, and in others fresh fruits. I said: 'By God, O Commander of the Believers, I do not see in this gift what deserves all that much praise, unless the letter contains something that has escaped my notice.' He handed the letter over and I read the following: 'O Commander of the Believers, I entered an orchard of mine in my house, one planted through your blessings, and found its fruits had grown ripe, so took some from each kind and wrapped them in trays of stalks and sent them to the Commander of the Believers, so as to receive his blessed prayers, just as I have received his extraordinary generosity.' I said: 'No, by God, O Commander of the Believers, there's nothing in this letter also that deserves all that praise.' He said: 'You fool! Don't you see how, instead of writing reeds (*khaizaran*), he wrote stalks (*qudban*) out of respect for the memory of our mother [al-Khaizaran], may God be merciful to her?'"

2551. It is reported that an Umayyad family member waited by the roadside for al-Rashid, holding in his hand something resembling a petition. This was found to contain four lines of verse:

O you who are trusted by God,

I wish to speak a word of truth, heartfelt, and to do with pedigree.

You are superior to us,

But, because of you, we're superior to all Arabs.

`Abd Shams was second after Hashim,

And they are relatives through fathers and mothers.

So be kind to your relatives,

For `Abd Shams was the uncle of `Abd al-Muttalib.

Al-Rashid appreciated the verse and ordered that he be paid a thousand dinars for each line of verse, adding: "Had there been more lines, we would have increased your reward."

2552. One day al-Rashid sat in his assembly with Abu Yusuf, the judge, and `Abd al-Wahhab al-Kufi in attendance. They began to discuss the various kinds of dates and Abu Yusuf said: "*Al-Sakkar* is more delicious than *Al-Mushan*." `Abd al-Wahhab said: "*Al-Mushan* is more delicious." So al-Rashid ordered food to be brought in and invited a number of the Hashim clan to join them. They all helped themselves to the *Sakkar* and ignored the *Mushan*. Al-Rashid said: "O Abu `Abd al-Rahman, they have judged against you unawares." Abu `Abd al-Rahman answered: "I never saw a *Mushan* worse than this." Abu Yusuf said: "That's how it always is when the two kinds are found together."

2553. `Abd al-Malik ibn Salih once came to see al-Rashid. His chamberlain said to him: "The Commander of the Believers was tonight bereaved of a son, and a son was born to him, so condole and congratulate." When he stood in his presence, he said: "O Commander of the Believers, God has given you pleasure through that which He gave you sorrow. May the one event balance the other and be at once

a recompense for patient acceptance and a reward to one who is thankful.”

2554. When, in the year 193 [808-9], the sickness of al-Rashid grew more severe as he arrived in Tus, his physicians made light of his illness. So he sent for a Persian physician who was in that city, and he was shown al-Rashid’s urine in a bottle among several others. When he came to al-Rashid’s bottle, and he did not know to whom it belonged, he said: “Inform the person, whose urine sample this is, that he is assuredly on the point of death. So let him draw up his will for he will never recover from this illness.” Al-Rashid was told of this and he wept bitterly, tossed in his bed and kept repeating the following two lines of verse:

*A physician, with all his medical knowledge and cures,
Cannot ward off what is predestined.*

*Why is it that a physician dies from that very sickness,
From which he used to cure others in the past?*

2555. Al-Rashid’s illness grew worse when he heard what that physician had said, and rumors of his death spread among the people. When he heard about these rumors, he ordered an ass to be brought up so he could ride it, but when he mounted it his thighs collapsed and he could not remain on the saddle, saying: “Bring me down. The gossip mongers are telling the truth!” He then called for some shrouds to be spread before him and chose some he liked, ordered a grave to be dug, and when he stood above it, quoted the Qur’an: {My wealth avails me not; my power has collapsed around me}. He then summoned Rafi’s brother and said: “You greatly inconvenienced me by making me suffer the toil of these journeys, when I was ill and weak.” Rafi’s brother had been a rebel. So al-

Rashid said to him: "I shall kill you in such a way as none has been killed before!" He commanded that he be torn limb from limb. Later on, Rafi` himself sought amnesty from al-Ma'mun, and we recounted his story in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

2556. He then summoned the Hashimites who were in his camp and said: "Every living thing is doomed to death and every new thing will grow old. You can see my condition, and I charge you to keep in mind the following three things: maintain your faithfulness, your sincere counsel to your imams and your unanimity of views. Observe Muhammad and `Abdullah: if either rebels unjustly against the other, strive to make him abandon his rebelliousness, and explain to him the ugliness of treachery and breaking one's word." That day, al-Rashid gave away as fiefs much wealth and many estates and landed properties.

2557. Abu Khalifa al-Fadl ibn al-Hubab al-Jumahi and Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Durayd>al-Riyashi> al-Asma`i, who said: "One day, I came into the presence of al-Rashid and found him reading a piece of writing, with tears pouring down his cheeks. I remained standing until he calmed down and, glancing in my direction, he said: 'Sit, Asma`i.' When I sat, he said: 'Did you see what was happening?' I answered: 'Yes, O Commander of the Believers.' He said: 'By God, if it had to do with anything worldly, you would not have seen what you saw.' He then tossed the paper to me and I found it contained some verses by Abu'l`Atahiya, written in a magnificent hand:

Will you not learn your lesson from someone,

Of whom you were bereaved, once his mansions disappeared?

Or from someone whom death brought low

And his intimates washed their hands of him?

*Or from one whose fine couches and pulpits
Were empty of him?
Where are the kings, and where is their self-delusion?
They have succumbed to a destiny that you yourself will succumb to.
You who prefers this world because of his pleasure in it,
And who is always ready to vie against another,
Take from this world whatever you wish,
But death will bring it all to an end.*

Al-Rashid said: 'By God, it is as if I, of all people, am the person addressed here.' Soon afterwards, he died."

2558. Al-Mas`udi said: In our earlier works as well as in the present work we recounted the history of al-Rashid in summary form and in general terms, but we have not mentioned before anything about the history of the Barmakids in this work. Let us now turn to narrate their history in general terms and in a separate chapter, where we relate both their happy and unhappy days, though we covered most of their history and their days of glory in our earlier works.

Chapter 112

An account of the Barmakids and their history and the events of their times

2559. Al-Mas`udi said: None of the progeny of Khalid ibn Barmak* was his equal in soundness of mind, courage, learning or all his other qualities: neither Yahya in his views and rationality, nor al-Fadl ibn Yahya in his generosity and skill, nor Ja`far ibn Yahya in his excellence in writing and his eloquence, nor Muhammad ibn Yahya in his liberality and resoluteness, nor Musa ibn Yahya in his courage and intrepidity. Concerning all those we mentioned above, the poet Abu'l Ghul recited:
The sons of Yahya ibn Khalid are four in number,

Divided between a master and a follower.

If you investigate them, you'll find that virtue

Is dispersed among them and collected together.

2560. When the caliphate passed to al-Rashid, he appointed the Barmakids as his viziers, and they appropriated the wealth of the realm which they denied to him, to the extent that he needed a small amount of money but could not get hold of it. Al-Rashid destroyed their power in the year 187 [803] and the cause of their downfall is a point of dispute. The apparent cause is their hoarding of the state's wealth and their release of a man from the Talibid family who was imprisoned by them. The hidden cause is unknown. Certain things have been mentioned, and God knows best whether they are true but we shall narrate what occurs to us of these, and report them in this chapter devoted to their history, after having mentioned their days of glory and joy.

2561. A person well acquainted with the history of the Barmakids states that a letter one day arrived, addressed to al-Rashid by the postal official of Khurasan. Yahya ibn Khalid was present. The letter stated that al-Fadl ibn Yahya was too busy with the hunt and with his pleasures to pay any attention to the affairs of the subjects. When al-Rashid read the letter, he tossed it to Yahya and said: "Father, read this letter and write him an answer that would make him stop this sort of conduct." Yahya stretched his hand forth to al-Rashid's inkstand and wrote on the back of the same letter: "May God preserve you, my son, and make you a source of joy. The Commander of the Believers has learnt that you are too busy with the hunt and with the pursuit of pleasure to look into the affairs of the subjects, and the Commander of the Believers finds this conduct reprehensible. So pursue the sort of conduct more worthy of you, for he who habitually does either what adorns or what shames him will only be

known as such by his contemporaries. Peace.” He then added the following verses to the bottom of the letter:

By day, devote yourself to the pursuit of high ideals,

And be patient at the loss of a beloved.

When night arrives,

And all shameful conduct is hidden,

Spend the night the way you wish,

For night is like the day for a man of sense.

How many a youth you imagine to be an ascetic,

But when night comes he does the strangest things.

Night folded him in its curtains,

And he spent it in entertainment and joyous living.

But the amusements of the fool are visible to all,

And the subject of calumny from every enemy who observes them.

Al-Rashid was looking at what Yahya was writing and when he finished he said to him: “Father, you have delivered the message.” When al-Fadl received that letter, he never abandoned the mosque by day until his work was done.

2562. Ishaq ibn Ibrahim al-Mawsili recounted the following story: “One day al-Rashid sat to drink wine with the Barmakids, and a slave woman brought in by Yahya ibn Khalid sang as follows:

I could not sleep, as if I was in love with sleeplessness,

And wasted away, as if sickness was created only for me.

My tears overflowed my heart, and drowned it:

But who has ever seen a person drowning in water while on fire?

Al-Rashid asked who had composed that song and was told that it was composed by Khalid ibn Yazid, the state secretary. He ordered him summoned. Khalid ibn Yazid added: ‘When I was summoned, al-Rashid commanded the slave woman to repeat the song, then asked me who had

composed that song and I said I had. As we talked, a female servant came in carrying an apple on which was inscribed in musk:

*Your joy has made you forget my appointment,
So I made my apple to be a reminder.*

Al-Rashid took another apple and wrote on it:

*I broke my promise but did not forget it,
And this apple of mine is an apology.*

He then said to me: ‘O Khalid, compose some verse about this.’

So I recited:

*An apple came out of her mouth, like a pearl,
More delicious to me than all that’s in this world.
Reddish white, inscribed in musk,
As if plucked from the cheek of the one who offered it.”*

2563. Al-Mubarrad>al-Jahiz>an informant>Anas ibn Abi Shaikh, who said: “One day Ja`far ibn Yahya rode out and ordered a page of his to carry a thousand dinars, saying to him: ‘I shall pass by al-Asma`i. If he converses with me and you see me laughing, place the dinars in his hands.’ Ja`far then dismounted and went to see al-Asma`i, who proceeded to tell Ja`far all sorts of rare and unusual anecdotes that make people laugh but Ja`far did not laugh, and then departed. Anas ibn Abi Shaikh said to him: ‘I just witnessed something truly strange. You ordered a thousand dinars to be paid to al-Asma`i, then left after he had done his utmost to make you laugh but you did not. It is not your custom to return to your treasury a sum of money once it had left it.’ Ja`far said: ‘Woe to you! A hundred thousand dirhams of our money has reached him already and now I see in his house a broken jar on which is spread a tattered shirt beneath which is a dirty chair. Everything in his house is shabby. I believe that the tongue that acknowledges its blessings is more eloquent than his tongue, and that the favors he has received, if apparent, are more

expressive as praise and blame than the poetry of praise and blame which he recites. So why should I give him more money if its effect is not visible in his house, and if the blessings he has received do not reflect his gratitude?”

2564. Regarding al-Rashid and Ja`far ibn Yahya, a poet recited:

*May al-Rashid enjoy his many caliphates,
And a rule whose covenant has grown weak.
He added another homage to the one he received,
And Ja`far alone took it up.
The Barmakids entrenched him in power,
And ensured homage to his successor.*

2565. Yahya ibn Khalid ibn Barmak was a man of learning and wide knowledge and interested in research and rationalism. He held assemblies at which were gathered many men of research and rationality from among Muslim theologians and other non-Muslim thinkers. One day, Yahya said to these scholars who were attending his assembly: “You have discussed at great length topics such as the concealed (*kumun**) and the apparent (*zuhur*), the eternal and the created, negation and assertion, motion and stasis, the contiguous and the distinct, the existent and the non-existent, the particle and the leap (*tafra*), substances and accidents, omission [of character faults in biography] and inclusion of faults, denial and acceptance of [divine] attributes, capability and act, substance, quantity and mode, the addend (*mudaf*), the cosmos and corruption, the imamate and whether it comes about through designation or popular choice, and all the other sciences you have discussed, both their principles and their branches. Let us now hear you on the subject of passionate love (*`ishq*) but without debating the subject. Rather, let each of you mention what occurs to him on this subject, given the constraints of time.”

2566. The first to speak was `Ali ibn Maitham, an imami in belief and a prominent Shi`ite theologian. He said: “O vizier, passion is the fruit of resemblance, and indicates a mingling of two souls. It is part of an ocean of tenderness, delicacy of character and purity of substance, and cannot be bounded because of its vast expanse. As it increases, the body decreases.”

2567. The second person to speak was Abu Malik al-Hadrami, a Kharijite in belief. These Kharijites are also known as “those who sell their souls to God.” He said: “O vizier, passion is a breath of magic, and is more concealed and hotter than live coals. It can only come about when two souls complement each other and two shapes mingle together. It penetrates into the heart as a downpour of rain penetrates porous sand. It overpowers all other traits of character. Reason submits to it and opinion defers to it, and everything, whether novel or timeworn, is inferior to it and secondary to it in importance.”

2568. The third to speak was Abu`l Hudhail Muhammad ibn al-Hudhail al-`Allaf, a Mu`tazilite in belief and chief of the Basra Mu`tazilites. He said: “O vizier, passion seals the eyes and hearts. Its arena is the body and its pathways lie through the hearts. The one afflicted is constantly changing his mind and his imaginings; nothing is ever grasped in its purity, and no promise is ever properly fulfilled. Afflictions are quick to assail him and he is like one who drinks from the swamp of death and sips from the pool of bereavement. Nevertheless, passion issues from a liberality found in a character and a smoothness found in natural characteristics. The person gripped by passion is generous and does not listen to one who calls on him to desist, nor gives ear to one who censures him.”

2569. The fourth was Hisham ibn al-Hakam al-Kufi, the most prominent Imami of his age and the most accomplished scholar of his day. He said:

“O vizier, passion is a snare set by time through which it ensnares only those who are sincere to one another in times of trouble. When a lover falls into its net, and is stuck fast in its web, consider it most unlikely that he will emerge safe and sound or be rid of it soon. It only comes about through reciprocal correspondence in image, equivalence in manner and similarity in energy. It can strike a fatal blow in the very center of the heart. It makes the eloquent tongue stumble and leaves the master a slave and the ruler a servant, to the point where he submits to the slave of the slave of the beloved.”

2570. The fifth was Ibrahim ibn Sayyar al-Nazzam, a Mu`tazilite in belief and a celebrated Basran polemicist of his age. He said: “O vizier, passion is finer than a mirage and more penetrating than wine. It issues from a perfumed lump of clay kneaded in the bowl of majesty. It is sweet if tasted in moderation but if it becomes extreme it can turn into a fatal madness and a severe illness that no medication can cure. It has a raincloud that pours down on hearts, breeding infatuation whose fruit is adulation. The person who suffers from it is constantly lovesick, breathing heavily, ever attentive to time and constantly deep in thought. When night comes he is sleepless and when day shines upon him he is anxious. He fasts on calamity and breaks his fast on grievance.”

[2571*]. The sixth was `Ali ibn Mansur, an imami in belief, a prominent Shi`ite polemicist of his days and a follower of Hisham ibn al-Hakam. He said: “O vizier, passion is a sickness that has a gentle origin, penetrates and intermingles with the soul, and infiltrates judgment which it then overflows. He who drinks of it does not recover, and he who is made drunk by it cannot awaken. It belongs to the realm of congruence and resemblance in its structure and shape.”

[2572]. The seventh was al-Mu`tamir ibn Sulaiman, a Mu`tazilite in belief and a prominent figure in that movement. He said: “Passion, O

vizier, is the result of similarity in form and is bred by resemblance. It crawls like the crawling of ants. Its prisoner is very tightly bound and whomever it throws to the ground can rarely rise again. It issues from the mutual identification of natural dispositions, bonding between souls, a concordance of the secrets of the heart, and proximity of similarities. The enjoyment of passion can never be complete because separation is always feared when the lovers meet, and because of the caution needed to watch out for informers when the lovers meet. Philosophers have called passion that which puts an end to rational judgment and destroys the bodily constitution.”

2573. The eighth was Bishr ibn al-Mu`tamir, a Mu`tazilite in belief and chief of the Baghdad branch of the movement, and the teacher of their polemicists and theologians such as Ja`far ibn Harb, Ja`far ibn Mubashshir and other Baghdad theologians. He said: “Passion, O vizier, drives away sleep and leads to humble submission. The one afflicted is more despicable than the sheep of Bahrain* even if he is as courageous as a lion. He acts obsequiously to every slave and is captive to every disgraceful covetousness. He is voluble on the subject of his hopes and justifies himself by expressing his cravings. The easiest thing for him to offer to his beloved is to offer her precedence, and to give her the most luxurious living. He is happy to meet with his beloved and follow the road to her residence, and he enjoys the appearance of the beloved in his imagination.”

2574. The ninth was Thumama ibn Ashras, a Mu`tazilite. He said: “Passion, O vizier, is an intermingling of the substance of souls, bonded by resemblance, affinity, and living in proximity. When this happens, rays of a radiant light are cast forth which illuminate the gazes of reason and at which life’s natural characteristics start to sway. From that gleam

of light issues a pure illumination that attaches itself to the soul and its very essence which is called passion.”

2575. The tenth was al-Sakkak, an Imami in belief and a follower of Hisham ibn al-Hakam. He said: “Passion, O vizier, is the product of mutual gentleness and depends upon resemblance. It is a sign of the spirit of love and a witness to kinship in resemblance. It rushes into a bodily constitution like the rush of intoxication, while he who is passionate has a luminous intellect, a charming nature and exceptional manners. When he engages any of his senses, this can act as a proof for those who observe him, and if he wishes to honor anyone he begins by insulting them.”

2576. The eleventh was al-Sabbah ibn al-Walid, a Murji’ite* in belief. He said: “Passion, O vizier, is a thing the account of which spreads far but not its actual effect. It is not shunned by one whose heart is known for its innocence and for sweetness of form. Passion can only take hold through mutual resemblance, and the passionate person is known for his extreme delicacy.”

2577. The twelfth was Ibrahim ibn Malak, the most prominent jurist of Basra and a man fond of argument. He is not known as having belonged to any party or intellectual movement. He said: “Passion, O vizier, consists of fleeting thoughts that occur to a person, which incapacitate him at certain times and comfort him at others, inflaming his innards with the ardor of his heart.”

2578. The thirteenth was the high priest (*mubidh*) and judge of the Magians. The term *mubidh* comes from Fahlawiyya, which is the language of First Persians. He said: “Passion, O vizier, is a fire blazing in the heart’s blood, and its flames flare up between the outer and inner parts of the body. It comes into existence wherever human beings are found, through the merger of bodies because it originates in certain animalistic motions and material causes. Passion is associated with the

fragrance of youth and may be called the orchard of mutual love and the place where the spirits find rest and relaxation. The elements breed it, the stars produce it and sweet scents pervade it, while the prime movers of heavenly souls give it shape. Then again, passion is a manifestation of certain substances and the nobility of elements, the concord of hearts, the harmony of fancies, the intermingling of souls, the mutual relaxation of bodily forms, the reciprocal sincerity of hearts and the shared recognition of spirits. It can only come about through an ideal image, instinctive intelligence, highly refined feelings, purity of temperament, and evenness in constitution and in make-up because its causes are heavenly. Its inclinations originate in celestial motions while its side effects are determined by bodily emotions and senses.”

2579. Al-Mas`udi said: People both ancient and modern have debated the origins and modalities of passion, and whether it comes into being through reason or through transmission and whether through choice or through predetermination, and why it occurs after its non-existence then disappears after it has occurred, and whether it is an action of the rational soul or of the body and its various temperaments. It is reported that Hippocrates (*Abuqrat*) said: “Passion is the intermingling of two souls and similar to a body of water intermingling with another so that it becomes impossible for one who wishes to separate them to do so, even if the most subtle trick is employed. The soul is finer than water and more delicate in passing. Hence the nights do not remove it, nor does time make it frayed nor can it be prevented by anything. Its path is too subtle to be grasped by fancy and too deeply concealed for eyes to detect its location. Minds are at a loss to explain how it takes hold although it first issues and gains dominance in the heart. Thereafter it branches to other bodily members where a shiver may be observed in the extremities, a yellowness appears in colors, speech becomes mumbling, opinion is

weak, the tongue is heavy, and mistakes and blunders appear to the point where the passionate person seems as if deficient in reason.” Many naturalists and physicians who undertake scientific research argue that passion is a type of greed bred in the heart then grows when elements of cupidity attach themselves to it. The stronger it grows, the more the passionate person increases in agitation, obstinacy, and excessive thinking, hoping, adoration, sorrow, restlessness, cogitation, abstinence from food, corrupt reasoning, dryness in the brain and loss of energy. This is because excess of cupidity burns the blood and when blood is burnt, it turns into black bile. When black bile increases, it distorts thinking and causes heat to increase whereby yellow bile is inflamed, and becomes turbid and corrupt. At that point, it is joined to black bile and becomes a component of it, which in turn grows stronger. Thinking is one of the natural characteristics of black bile. If thinking is corrupted, chemical substances (*kimusat*) are mingled with that corruption resulting in sluggishness and decrease of rationality and craving the unattainable. This process does not reach its end without leading to madness. At that point the lover might kill himself or else die of sorrow and heartache. Again, he might look at his beloved and die of joy, adoration or regret, and may thus utter a loud cry and lose consciousness for twenty-four hours. Thinking that he has died, they may even bury him alive. Again, he might heave such a deep sigh that his blood is confined in the center of his heart whereby the heart retains the blood and does not release it until the person dies. Again, he might feel comfort and longing if he could look at the beloved but suddenly sees her and expires. You may well observe how, when a lover hears his beloved mentioned, his blood recedes and he changes color.

2580. Some philosophers argue that Almighty God, through His subtle wisdom, created each soul to be in the rounded shape of a ball, then

divided it into two halves, placing a half in each human body. Whenever one body encounters another in which the other severed half is found, passion arises between them by necessity because of that ancient complementarity. In this regard, people have diverse reactions, whether strong or weak, depending on their natural temperaments. Those who argue in this manner have much to say on this subject, arguing that souls are composed of an illumined and simple substance that descends from on high into bodies and resides therein. If virtuous, the soul returns to its place of origin. They further argue that souls draw near to one another in accordance with how adjacent they are in the world of souls, and whether they're near or far.

2581. A number of people who pretend to be Muslim also adopt these views, adducing proofs from the Qur'an, Prophetic traditions and what they imagine to be rules of logical analogy. Thus they cite the Qur'anic verse: {O soul at peace! Return to your Lord, well pleased and well pleasing, and enter among my worshippers, and enter my Garden}. They argue that a return can only follow a prior existence. Then they quote the saying of the Prophet, transmitted by Sa'id ibn Abi Mariam>Yahya ibn Ayyub>Yahya ibn Sa'id>'Amra>'A'isha, that the Prophet said: "Souls are like mobilized troops. Whoso among them recognize the others will make peace, and whoso do not, will clash." Some nomadic Arabs also believe in this, such as is found in the verses recited by Jamil ibn 'Abdullah ibn Ma'mar al-'Udhri* about his beloved, Buthaina, where he mentions their condition at creation and when in a state of non-existence before they were brought into existence:

*My soul bonded with hers before we were created,
And before we were weaned and in the cradle.
That bond grew as we did, and became full-fledged,
And once we die it will not break its pledge.*

*Rather, it shall last through all ordeals,
And it shall visit us in the darkness of the grave.*

2582. Galen (*Jalinus*) said: “Love occurs between two rational adults who share common characteristics of reason, but does not occur between two fools who share common characteristics of stupidity because the mind proceeds in an orderly manner. Hence, two individuals might happen to be on the same path but stupidity does not proceed in an orderly manner and it cannot happen that two fools would share the same path.”

2583. Many astrologers and astronomers state that the planets that are primed for passion are Saturn, Mercury and Venus. Saturn is primed to cause covetousness, distress, passionate love, sorrows, madness and melancholy; Mercury is primed for reciting poetry, writing prose epistles, and speech that eases the complexities of passion and makes manifest what is concealed of it. Venus is primed for love, delicacy, moisture, effeminacy and an increase in sexual appetite and lust. Whoso is born under the good influence of Saturn and was of noble birth or in his family was of consistently virtuous behavior, while Saturn faces the mansions of the moon, will excel as a poet of passionate love or as a writer of epistles on that subject. Whoso is born under the corrupt influence of Saturn, which in its declination and orientation, as it returns, is facing an ill-omened horoscope, his poetry will be corrupt and so also his nature. Likewise, if Saturn at the time of someone’s birth rises in a fortunate place in the heavens, the person concerned will be less lustful, but if Saturn is ill-omened, that person’s passion will end in certain death. Venus, likewise, if found in a fortunate place at the time of the lover’s birth, will facilitate his love and his success in passion, and he will have a harmonious love affair, but if Venus is ill-omened, his passion, which inevitably issues from that planet, will be corrupt and confused.

2584. Ptolemy [*Batlimus*] states that there are three classes of friendship: either a concordance of souls, which is a reciprocal passion between people whereby a person cannot help but love his friend. The concordance of souls occurs when the sun and moon at their birth are found in one sign of the zodiac or in trine or in sextile. If this occurs, the two friends are by nature inclined to affection, especially if a good fortune influences both their births and not a bad fortune; the second class of friendship, based on mutual benefit, occurs when, at their births, happiness is found under one sign of the zodiac or in trine or sextile. This results in the fact that both those who were born at that time derive their profit and happiness from one thing. They then profit from each other and this in turn brings about love and friendship. The third class is when the sign of the zodiac is adjacent. If their horoscope is such that they are born under one sign and they are regarded by Good Fortune and are free of Bad Fortune, then they are in a state of both love and sorrow, and do not last in one single condition.

2585. It is reported from a nomadic poet that he divided love in his verse in roughly the same manner as in the following line:

*There are three kinds of love: a love of devotion,
A love of obsequiousness, and a love which is fatal.*

2586. A group of Sufis and others, Baghdadis and others, who expound theories of love that differ from association and dissociation, state that Almighty God tested mankind through love in order to accustom themselves to obeying their beloved so that the beloved's displeasure is difficult for them to bear while his pleasure brings them contentment. God thus wishes them to deduce from this test their ability to obey the Almighty, who has no counterpart and no equal, for it was He who created them but without needing them, and who at first provides them with livelihood through His benevolence. Thus, if they bind themselves

to obey other than God, He is more worthy for them to seek His contentment. Sufis of an esoteric persuasion and other symbolists have much to say on this topic. Plato [*Aflatun*] is reported as having said: “I do not know what love is, but I do know that it is a divine madness. Love is neither to be praised nor blamed.” A smart state secretary once wrote to a friend: “In you I have encountered the substance of my own soul. So I am not to be praised for submitting to you without a rope, since souls follow one another.”

2587. People both ancient and modern have had much to say on passion, its essence, modality, occurrence and meaning, accompanied by a wide divergence of opinions. There are for instance the views of philosophers, both divine and natural; the views of Dualists and Manicheans and kindred groups such as the Daysaniyya and Marqiyuniyya; the views of various Muslim groups such as Sufi theologians, rhetoricians, belles-lettrists, and Arabian nomads. We recounted all their views, as well as the arguments advanced by each group, in our book, *Akhbar al-Zaman*. We have digressed from the topic we were treating, namely the history of the Barmakids, when we came to the topic of passion. Our discussion led us to cite examples of what has been said about that subject, so let us now turn back to their history and how their days passed in good fortune and right order, then how these days were overturned and ended in calamity.

2588. Some experts on Barmakid history state that when Yahya ibn Khalid ibn Barmak and his two sons Ja`far and al-Fadl, as well as other members of the family, had gained the power they did, attained their position of leadership and settled affairs in their favor, to the point where it was said that their days resembled a wedding party and a permanent joy that could never end, al-Rashid said to Ja`far: “Woe to you, Ja`far! There is no face on earth with which I feel more comfortable, or am drawn to more, or enjoy their company more, than to see you. My sister `Abbasa

also has a place in my heart not inferior to yours. I have thought about the two of you, and find that I can hardly endure not to have you or her with me. I see that my good fortune is lacking something and my happiness is incomplete without you when I am with her, and the same is true when I am with you but she is absent. I have therefore devised a solution that would complete my joy and multiply my delight and my amusement.”

Ja`far replied: “May God bring you success, O Commander of the Believers, and may He guide you aright in all your affairs.” Al-Rashid said: “I have decided to marry the two of you but in such a manner that you can relax in her company, gaze at her and meet together in any gathering where I am present with you, but nothing else.”

2589. So he married Ja`far to `Abbasa after some protests from Ja`far, and employed as witnesses a few royal servants and intimate clients. He then made Ja`far swear an oath of great gravity that he would not sit with her or be closeted with her or be in the same house with her unless al-Rashid was present. Ja`far swore, was content with that oath, and bound himself to observe it. So that was how they used to meet. Throughout these gatherings, Ja`far would avert his eyes and face from her, out of awe of al-Rashid and in compliance with the oath he took as stipulated by al-Rashid.

`Abbasa fell in love with him and determined in secret to play a trick on him. She wrote a love letter to him but he expelled her messenger, cursed him and threatened him. She did this again but he again acted in a similar fashion. `Abbasa, who was neither firm in resolution nor intelligent, grew desperate, so decided to approach Ja`far's mother, winning her over with gifts, acts of kindness,

precious jewels, much money and similar gestures of benevolence to which kings resort. Once she determined that the woman would obey her like her own slave and be as sound in advice and as compassionate as a mother, she broached part of the object of her desire with her, and informed her that if her wish was fulfilled the consequences would be admirable for her, while her son would win great glory by becoming the brother-in-law of the Commander of the Believers. She led her to believe that if this was to happen, it would ensure her security and that of her son, and guarantee that her blessings would not end and her high status would be maintained.

2590. Ja`far's mother complied with `Abbasa's wishes and promised that she would scheme to achieve her purpose, and would use subtle means to bring them together. So one day she said to Ja`far: "Son, a royal slave woman in a palace, bred by kings, has been described to me as possessing such a degree of high manners, learning and charm together with stunning beauty, a lovely figure and praiseworthy qualities as have never been seen before. I am determined to buy her for you, and I am about to conclude a deal with her master." Ja`far liked what he heard, his heart became attached to the woman, and he looked forward to meeting her. Meanwhile, his mother kept putting him off until his longing and his lust grew greatly and he kept insisting that his mother should act quickly and fulfill her promise. When she knew that he could no longer remain patient and had become very agitated, she said: "I shall present her to you as a gift on such and such a night." She then sent word to `Abbasa informing her of the arrangement.

2591. So `Abbasa decked herself out in the manner that ladies of her rank are accustomed to do, and went that night to Ja`far's mother. Meanwhile, Ja`far that night left al-Rashid, and was intoxicated only to the degree that served his purpose. Entering his house, he asked about the slave woman, and was told where she was. She was then brought in to a youth who was drunk enough not to recognize her face or shape, and he proceeded to copulate with her. When he finished, she said to him: "What do you think of the trickery of royal princesses?" He said: "Which princesses do you mean?" thinking she must be a Byzantine princess. She said: "I am your mistress, al-`Abbasa, daughter of al-Mahdi!" He leapt up in terror, his intoxication vanished, and now completely sober, said to his mother: "You have sold me for a trivial price and caused me no end of troubles! Just observe what will happen to me!"

2592. `Abbasa departed, having conceived, then delivered a boy. She entrusted him to one of her servants called Riyash, and to a nanny called Birra. When she feared that the news would spread, she sent the child to Mecca with the two servants and ordered them to bring him up. Meanwhile, Ja`far's days grew long and he, his father and his brothers came to dominate the affairs of the realm.

2593. Zubaida, mother of Ja`far* and wife of al-Rashid, was held in such high esteem by al-Rashid that none of her rank enjoyed. Yahya ibn Khalid, the Barmakid, was in charge of the affairs of al-Rashid's womenfolk, and would prevent them from employing servants. So Zubaida complained to al-Rashid, who in turn asked Yahya: "Father, why is Umm Ja`far complaining about you?" He replied: "O Commander of the Believers, am I to be questioned about your

womenfolk and how to run the affairs of your palace?” “No, by God!” said al-Rashid. Yahya said: “Do not accept her word against mine.” Al-Rashid said: “I will not speak to you again on this subject.” So Yahya became even more strict and severe in his actions. He used to lock the gates of the women’s quarters at night, and take the keys home with him.

2594. Zubaida became excessively annoyed by his behavior, so went one day to see al-Rashid and said to him: “O Commander of the Believers, why is Yahya still acting the way he does, preventing me from having access to my servants and not treating me as I should be treated?” He answered: “Yahya in my view is not to be questioned where my womenfolk are concerned.” She said: “If so, he should have prevented his son from committing the act that he did.” “What was that act?” She related to him the story of al-`Abbasa and Ja`far. He was perplexed and said: “Have you any proof or witness?” She replied: “What better proof than a child?” “Where is this child?” he asked. She replied: “He was here but when she became afraid of exposure, she sent him to Mecca.” “Does anyone else other than you know about this?” She answered: “Every single slave woman in your palace knows the story.” He fell silent and determined upon a course of action.

2595. Al-Rashid then announced that he would go on pilgrimage, and took Ja`far with him. Al-`Abbasa wrote to her servant and her nanny commanding them to take the boy to the Yemen. Arriving in Mecca, al-Rashid instructed some people he trusted to investigate about the servant, the nanny and the child, and discovered that the story was true. Having completed his pilgrimage and returned, he

secretly determined to strip the Barmakids of their privileges and bring about their downfall. He remained in Baghdad for a short while then moved to al-Anbar. When the day arrived on which he had decided to kill Ja`far, he summoned al-Sindi ibn Shahik and ordered him to go to Baghdad and seize their mansions and the mansions of their secretaries, children and kinsmen. This was to be done in secret and he was not to tell anyone until he arrived in Baghdad, where he was to inform only those he trusted among his family and aides. Al-Sindi carried out these instructions.

2596. Al-Rashid then sat with Ja`far in a spot in al-Anbar called al-`Umr, and spent the day in the best and most delightful manner.

When Ja`far left him, al-Rashid came out with him to bid him farewell until he mounted. Al-Rashid then returned, sat on a chair and ordered all that was set before him to be taken away.

Meanwhile, Ja`far went home, slightly intoxicated, called for Abu Zakkar, the singer, called al-Tunburi, and Ibn Abi Shaikh, his secretary. A curtain was hung, and his slave girl sat behind it beating drums and singing, as Abu Zakkar sang the following verses to him:

What do people want from us?

Why don't they close their eyes and forget us?

All they care about

Is to expose what we have concealed.

2597. Al-Rashid then immediately summoned his servant Yasir, known as Rikhla, and said to him: "O Yasir, I am entrusting you with a task which I do not believe that either Muhammad or `Abdullah or al-Qasim [i.e. his sons] is ready or fit to carry out, whereas I believe you would perform it energetically. So fulfill my

expectations and beware not to go against my commands. This would cause me to demote your rank and would destroy your standing with me.” He answered: “O Commander of the Believers, were you to order me to drive a sword into my stomach and pull it out from my back, here and in your presence, I would do so. So command me and you will see me rushing to obey you.” He asked: “Do you know Ja`far ibn Yahya al-Barmaki?” Yasir replied: “O Commander of the Believers, how can I not know him? Is someone like him a nonentity?” “Did you see me when I walked out with him when he departed?” “Yes,” he replied. He said: “Go out to him at once and bring me back his head, whatever he might be doing.” Yasir was speechless and shook with fear, unable to answer. Al-Rashid said: “Did I not already instruct you not to disobey me?” “Yes, by God, but the matter is of very grave import and as for what the Commander of the Believers has instructed me to do, I wish I could die before performing it.” Al-Rashid said: “Stop this chatter, and go and do what I ordered.”

2598. Yasir went on his way and entered upon Ja`far whom he found in the midst of his amusements. He said to him: “The Commander of the Believers has ordered me to do such and such to you.” Ja`far replied: “The Commander of the Believers plays all sorts of pranks on me so I believe this is one such prank.” Yasir said: “By God, I saw he was very serious.” Ja`far said: “If so, then he must have been drunk.” Yasir replied: “No, by God! I did not detect any loss of reason in him nor has he drunk any date wine today, for I saw him devoting himself to God.” Ja`far said: “You owe me favors which I cannot ask you to return at any better time than the present.” “I will

respond at once, provided I do not contravene the orders of the Commander of the Believers.” “Then go back to him and tell him you have carried out his orders. If he repents, I would owe my life to you and my favors to you would be renewed. If not, you can carry out his order the following day.” Yasir answered: “There is no way I can do this.” Ja`far said: “Then I will go with you to where the Commander of the Believers is camped, and I will stand where I can hear the two of you conversing. If you give him some excuse but he is not convinced unless you bring him my head, then you can come out and cut off my head, for I shall be standing nearby.” “Yes, this is possible,” said Yasir.

2599. The two of them then went to where al-Rashid was encamped, and Yasir went in and said: “I have his head, O Commander of the Believers, and it is right here.” “Bring it to me or by God I will have your head before his.” Yasir left and said to Ja`far: “You heard what he said?” He answered: “Yes, and you are free to do what you’ve been ordered.” He then pulled out a small napkin from his sleeve, tied it around his eyes and stretched forth his neck. Yasir struck it off and carried the head in to al-Rashid. When the head was placed before him, al-Rashid began to remind him of his transgressions then said to Yasir: “Go and bring me so-and-so and so-and-so.” When he brought them, al-Rashid said: “Cut off Yasir’s head, for I cannot bear to look at the man who executed Ja`far.”

2600. Al-Asma`i is reported as having said: “That night al-Rashid summoned me and when I went in, he said: ‘O Asma`i, I have composed some verses which I’d like to recite to you.’ ‘Let’s hear them, O Commander of the Believers.’ He then recited:

*Had Ja`far feared the ways of death,
He would have escaped with his life, like a fast and noble horse,
And, wary of death, would have been in a place,
Where no hardy falcon can hope to reach.
But when his time ran out,
No astrologer could save him from his destiny.*

When I headed homewards, I had hardly arrived before everyone was talking about the murder of Ja`far.”

2601. The morning after the murder of Ja`far and the downfall of the Barmakids, the following verses were discovered, written in an attractive hand, on the gate of the palace of `Ali ibn `Isa ibn Mahan*:

*Those poor wretches, the Barmakids, were lashed
With the ever-changing twists of time.
There is a lesson for us in their tale,
So let the owner of this palace learn his lesson.*

2602. Al-Mas`udi said: The political dominance of the Barmakids and their radiant and prosperous days lasted, from the homage paid to Harun al-Rashid to the murder of Ja`far, seventeen years, seven months and fifteen days. Poets wrote many elegies about them and their days, among which the following poem by Ibn Abi Mu`adh is generally well regarded. These verses are from a longer poem:

*O you who are deluded by Time,
And Time is ever-changing and treacherous,
Do not trust Time and its arbitrary fluctuations,
And be on your guard against it.
If you don't know its vicissitudes,*

*Just look at the man crucified by the bridge.
In him there is a lesson, so learn that lesson,
O you who are smart and rational.
Take from this world its unalloyed days,
And keep pace with Time as it passes.
He was the vizier of the master of the age, the one pleasing to God,
And was a man of intellect, virtue and wide reputation.
All the world's regions belonged to him,
Both land and sea.
He ran the kingdom as he saw fit,
And his orders were everywhere obeyed.
Then, one Friday night, as Ja`far
Sat in his kingdom, in a place called `Umr,
Flying through the world with his wings,
And hoping for eternal life,
Time caused him to stumble:
God save us from the stumbling of Time!
His sandals made him slip,
A slip that broke his back.
The wretch departed life the night of Saturday:
He was murdered at dawn.
When morning came, al-Fadl ibn Yahya
Was unaware that his father had been arrested.
The father, Yahya, and his sons,
Were now all in chains and all were imprisoned,
Both the Barmakids and their followers,
Whether abroad or in the capital.*

It was as if they were summoned to an appointment,

Like the appointment of mankind on the Last Day.

So they turned into a cautionary tale for people:

Glory be to Him who possesses supreme authority and power!

2603. Another highly regarded elegy of them was composed by

Ashja` al-Sulami. The following verses are from a longer poem:

Now that we have come to rest and our caravans have stopped,

*And the camel driver [reading man yahdi] has finished calling to his
camels,*

Tell your mounts: You can now dispense with night travel,

And journeying across deserts, one wilderness after another.

Say to gifts, now that Fadl is gone,

Be no more, and say to calamities: renew yourselves every day.

Before you lies a Barmakid Indian sword,

Broken by a Hashimite Indian sword.

2604. Another excellent elegy was pronounced by Salm al-Khasir in
which he pays them a lavish tribute:

The starry gifts have fallen down, the arm of generosity is paralyzed,

And after the Barmakids, the oceans of liberality have run dry.

The stars that belonged to the sons of Barmak have fallen,

By which the night traveller used to recognize the right path.

2605. Another excellent elegy of the Barmakids was composed by
Salih al-A`rabi where he says:

Time has acted treacherously with the sons of Barmak,

But which kings were not deceived by their times?

Was not Yahya the master of the whole earth,

But ended like one whom the graves of that earth concealed from view?

2606. Yet another excellent elegy was composed by Abu Hazra al-A`rabi, but attributed also to Abu Nuwas:

Time did not act kindly to the Barmak clan

When it threw at their realm an extraordinary projectile.

Time that did not do justice to Yahya,

Will surely not act justly with the Rabi` clan.*

Another poet composed the following splendid elegy:

O family of Barmak, I weep for you,

And for your days that were to come.

While you were in it, the whole earth was like a bride,

But today it is a bereaved widow.

2607. Ashja` al-Sulami also composed the following elegy about them:

The Barmak family departed this world,

And were one generation of mankind to succeed another, the world would not increase in merit.

It was as if all their days,

Were feast-days for the people of this earth.

Another poet composed the following verse:

So joyful were their days that they resembled

Seasons of pilgrimage, feast days and Fridays.

2608. Mansur al-Nimri composed the following verse:

Announce the death of the Barmakids to an earth

That weeps for them in every valley.

The earth was once their bride,

But today it is in mourning.

Among other excellent elegies is the one composed by Di`bil al-Khuza`i:

*Have you not seen how Time dealt with the Barmakids,
And with Ibn Nahik*, in ages past?*

*They were as firmly rooted in their power as palm trees,
But were harvested as one harvests beans.*

Ashja` further composed the following verses:

*Time swept away the Barmakids,
Leaving no trace of them behind.*

*They were the providers of benevolence and its source,
But benevolence has been lifted from the face of the earth.*

2609. When Ja`far was executed, and Yahya and al-Fadl were arrested and imprisoned under very harsh conditions, their sufferings grew more severe and their calamities multiplied. Al-Fadl recited the following verses, where he mentions their hardships:

*We address our complaint to God for what we have undergone,
For relief from harm and distress lies in His hands.*

*We have departed this world, though still among its inhabitants,
And in it we are neither living nor dead.*

*When the jailer comes to see us for some reason,
We are amazed and tell ourselves: this fellow came from the world
of the living!*

2610. Following the downfall of the Barmakids, al-Rashid would often recite:

*The disgrace of a downfall,
Is proportionate to the elevation of rank.*

And if an ant grew wings and flew away,

Its downfall would soon follow.

2611. Muhammad ibn Ghassan ibn `Abd al-Rahman al-Hashimi, the leader of prayers in Kufa, said: “I once entered upon my mother on a feast day and found with her a woman of great dignity and eloquence but wearing tattered clothes. My mother asked me: ‘Do you know this lady?’ I said: ‘No.’ She said: ‘This is `Abbada, mother of Ja`far ibn Yahya [the Barmakid].’ I turned towards her, showed her great respect and we conversed for a while. Then I asked her: ‘Mother, what is the strangest thing you have ever experienced?’ ‘Son,’ she replied, ‘I once spent a feast day, like this one, with four hundred servant girls at my beck and call, and yet considered that my son had not been dutiful enough towards me. I am now spending this feast day wanting nothing but the skins of two sheep, to lie on one and cover myself with the other.’ I gave her five hundred dirhams and she almost died of joy. She continued to visit us until death intervened.”

2612. It is said that an uncle of al-Rashid went to see Yahya ibn Khalid, after al-Rashid had changed his attitude towards him but before the downfall of his family, and said to him: “The Commander of the Believers is now fond of amassing wealth and his children have increased in number. He wants to provide them with estates. You and your friends have, in his view, amassed much wealth. If you look into these estates and wealth, and hand them over to the sons of the Commander of the Believers, seeking thereby to draw him closer to you, you might then hope to be safe from what he might do to you, and he might even restore your earlier relationship

with him.” Yahya replied: “By God, I’d rather lose my own blessings than strip these blessings from people for whom I was once the very source of those blessings.”

2613. Al-Khalil ibn Haitham al-Sha`bi, whom al-Rashid had appointed to be in charge of the imprisonment of Yahya and al-Fadl, said: “One day, Masrur, the royal servant, came to see me with a group of servants, one of whom was carrying a napkin in which some object was wrapped. I imagined that al-Rashid had felt some compassion towards them and had sent them some agreeable gift. Masrur said: ‘Bring out al-Fadl ibn Yahya.’ When the latter stood before him, Masrur said to him: ‘The Commander of the Believers says the following to you: I had commanded you to pay me the alms-tax on your wealth and you claimed you had done so.

However, I know for a fact that you still own vast wealth, and I have instructed Masrur to lash you two hundred lashes if you do not reveal the whereabouts of all that wealth.’ Al-Fadl replied: ‘Then I’m as good as dead!’ Masrur said: ‘O Abu’l `Abbas, I advise you not to value your wealth above your own life, for I cannot guarantee that if I carry out my orders, I will not kill you.’ Al-Fadl raised his head and said: ‘O Abu Hashim, I did not lie to the Commander of the Believers. If I owned the whole world and was then given the choice between leaving it all behind or be beaten just once, I’d choose to leave it. The Commander of the Believers knows, and you know too, that we used to protect our honor with our wealth, but how is it that today we protect our wealth from you with our own lives? If you’ve been ordered to do something, go ahead and do it.’ Masrur ordered the napkin to be unwrapped and a whip with knots

fell out. So he had the servants with him whip him two hundred lashes. They whipped him very hard on his bare back, almost killing him, and we were afraid he would die.

2614. “ Al-Khalil ibn al-Haitham said to his deputy, a man called Abu Yahya: ‘There is a man here, who was once in jail, and is knowledgeable about curing similar injuries, so go to him and ask him to treat him [al-Fadl].’ When I [Abu Yahya] went to see him he said: ‘Perhaps you want me to treat al-Fadl ibn Yahya for I heard what was done to him.’ I said: ‘That’s correct.’ The man said: ‘Take me to him to treat him.’ When he saw him he said: ‘I estimate he received fifty lashes.’ I replied: ‘No, he received two hundred.’ He said: ‘This is false. These are only the marks of fifty lashes. But he needs to lie on a knitted mat so I can step on his chest.’ Al-Fadl was alarmed but then obeyed, so the man kept stepping on his chest, then grabbed his hands and pulled until he detached him from the mat, with much flesh from his back sticking to it. He then proceeded to visit him regularly and apply his cure until, one day, he looked at his back and fell in prostration to God. I said: ‘What’s the matter with you?’ He said: ‘O Abu Yahya, Abu’l `Abbas is now cured. Come closer and I’ll show you.’ So I came closer and he showed me some new skin growing on his back. Then he said: ‘Do you remember what I had said earlier that these were the marks of fifty lashes?’ I said: ‘Yes.’ He said: ‘By God, had he received a thousand lashes their marks would not have been worse than these, but I said this in order to raise his spirits, which then helped me to cure him.’

2615. ‘When the man who cured him had left, al-Fadl said to me: ‘O Abu Yahya, I need ten thousand dirhams. Go to the man called al-

Sana'i and tell him I need them.' I delivered the message and the man ordered the money to be sent to al-Fadl, who then said to me: 'O Abu Yahya, I would like you to take this money and give it to that man [i.e. the one who cured his back], apologize to him and ask him to accept the money.' So I went and found him sitting on a mat on the floor with a mandolin hanging on the wall, with crocks containing date wine and some shabby furniture. He said: 'What do you want, O Abu Yahya?' I began by apologizing on behalf of al-Fadl, mentioned his straitened circumstances and told him what he had sent him. He became angry, and snorted to the point where I was frightened. He said: 'Ten thousand dirhams?!' and kept repeating that phrase. I did my very best to get him to accept the money but he refused. So I returned to al-Fadl and told him what had happened. He said: 'By God, he must have thought it was a meager sum!' He then asked me to go back to al-Sina'i and tell him he needed another ten thousand and then take the twenty thousand and pay it to the man. So I obtained another ten thousand from al-Sina'i and returned with the money to the man, and explained the situation. Once again, he refused to accept the money and said: 'I treat a noble man for a fee?! Get away from me! By God, I would not accept it even if it were twenty thousand dinars.' So I went back to al-Fadl and told him what happened. He said to me: 'O Abu Yahya, tell me the best example you ever witnessed or heard about regarding our actions.' I began slowly to recount these to him. He said: 'Never mind all these! By God, what this man has done is superior to anything we ever did throughout our days of power.'

2616. Ja`far ibn Yahya was executed aged forty-five, or less in other versions, while Yahya ibn Khalid died in al-Raqqa in the year 189 [805], as mentioned above.

2617. Charming stories and examples of conduct are related of al-Rashid which we recounted in our earlier works under the history of Byzantine kings who lived after the appearance of Islam, together with his contacts with Nikephoros, mentioned earlier in this work.

2618. Charming tales are also told of the Barmakid family, their acts of benevolence, liberality and generosity, as well as their other curious history and conduct, all of which we set out clearly and in detail in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In this work we cite briefly such items of history which we did not cite in our earlier works. In these earlier books we recounted how their history began before the coming of Islam where they were custodians of the temple of Nubahar, a fire temple in Balkh mentioned earlier in this book. We also explained the meaning of the term *Barmak* and the story of the oldest Barmak with the king of the Turks, as also their history after Islam, and their history during the Umayyad period and especially in the days of Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik and others, then also their history in the days of al-Mansur. In this work, we thought it sufficient to mention only glimpses of their history and their past. God knows best.

Chapter 113

An account of the caliphate of Muhammad al-Amin

2619. Muhammad ibn Harun received homage the day Harun al-Rashid died in Tus, that day being Saturday, the fourth of Jumada I, in the year 193 [March 25, 809]. Homage was obtained on his behalf by Raja', the

royal servant, while the man in charge of his homage was al-Fadl ibn al-Rabi`. Muhammad's patronymic was "Abu Musa." His mother was Zubaida bint Ja`far ibn Abi Ja`far al-Mansur. He was born in al-Rusafa and was killed aged thirty-three years, six months and thirteen days. His body was buried in Baghdad while his head was carried to Khurasan. His caliphate lasted four years and six months, but in other versions nine months or else eight months and six days, depending on the divergence of dates that we found. It is also stated that he acceded to the caliphate aged twenty-two years, seven months and twenty-one days. He was six months younger than al-Ma'mun. From the moment he was deposed until the moment he was killed, he was besieged for a period of one and a half years and thirteen days, during two days of which he was imprisoned.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

2620. When al-Rashid died, al-Ma'mun was in Merv. Salih ibn al-Rashid dispatched Raja', the royal servant, to Muhammad al-Amin, Raja' being a client of Muhammad, and he brought him the news in twelve days to the City of Peace. This was on Thursday, the middle of Jumada II.

2621. A number of historians and experts on Abbasid history such as al-Mada'ini and al-Utbi, state that Zubaida saw a dream the night she conceived of Muhammad in which three women entered upon her while she sat in a reception hall. Two of them sat to her right and one to her left. One of them drew near, laid her hand on Zubaida's stomach then said: "An imposing king, very generous, heavy to bear and with an unhappy history." The second did the same then said: "A king who lacks good fortune, has a broken sword, a turbulent life, whose judgments are prejudiced and whose days fail him." The third did the same and said: "A king who ruptures and shatters much, is constantly in conflict and rarely fair."

2622. Umm Ja`far said: “I woke up terrified. The night I delivered Muhammad, they came to me while asleep and in the same manner as before, sat by my head, looked into my face and one of them said: ‘A verdant tree, a flourishing aromatic plant and a flowering orchard.’ The second woman said: ‘A gushing spring that does not last long, is quick to dry up and will fast disappear.’ The third said: ‘An enemy to himself, whose blows are weak, who is easily deceived and who will be deposed from his throne.’ I woke up terrified, and informed a housekeeper of mine who said: ‘This is just some dream that comes to a sleeper and a silly trick played by a *jinni*.’

2623. “When he was weaned I went to sleep one night with Muhammad in his cradle near me. The three of them came, stood at my head, turned to him and one of them said: ‘A tyrannical king, wasteful, foolish in his speech, has a widespread impact, and is quick to stumble.’ The second one said: ‘He is challenged when he speaks, he is defeated when he fights, he is denied what he desires, and he is wretched and distressed.’ The third said: ‘Dig his grave, cut out his resting place, prepare his shrouds, and get him ready for burial, since his death is preferable to his life.’ I woke up troubled and fearful for his sake, and asked dream interpreters and astrologers. Every one of them informed me that he would lead a happy and long life, though in my heart I doubted this. Then I spoke harshly to myself, saying: ‘Can compassion or caution or alertness forestall destiny? Can anyone drive away fate from those whom one loves?’

2624. In the year 193, Abu Bakr ibn `Ayyash al-Kufi al-Asadi died, aged ninety-eight. He died eighteen nights after the death of al-Rashid.

2625. When al-Amin was about to depose al-Ma`mun, he consulted `Abdullah ibn Khazim who said: “For God’s sake, O Commander of the Believers, do not become the first caliph to break his oath and covenant

and treat his vows with levity.” He said to him: “Be silent, may God close up your mouth! `Abd al-Malik ibn Salih had a better opinion than yours when he said: ‘No two adult male camels can be found together in a herd of female camels.’ Al-Amin then summoned his military commanders and consulted them. Reaching Khuzaima ibn Khazim, the latter said to him: “O Commander of the Believers, he who lies to you will not give you sound advice, and he who tells you the truth will not deceive you. Do not encourage your commanders to get used to depositions for they will depose you, and do not force them to break their covenants for they will break their covenant with you. The traitor will be defeated and the breaker of oaths will be left in the lurch.”

2626. `Ali ibn `Isa ibn Mahan entered to see Muhammad al-Amin who smiled when he saw him and said: “Ah yes! This is the chief of our call and the fang of the state, one who does not go against his imam nor is he lax in his obedience.” He then elevated him to a rank he had not elevated him before. `Ali ibn Mahan was the first commander to obey him in his desire to depose al-Ma`mun. So al-Amin dispatched him with a large army to Khurasan. Approaching Rayy, he was told that Tahir ibn al-Husain was stationed there. Imagining that Tahir would not be able to withstand his assault, `Ali ibn Mahan said: “By God, Tahir is a mere thorn on one of my boughs and a tiny spark in my conflagration! Can someone like Tahir be put in charge of an army? Between him and death lies a mere glance at your vast numbers. Lambs cannot last when faced with the goring of the rams nor can foxes stand up to lions!” His son said to him: “Send out some scouts and choose a spot for your soldiers to take up battle stations.” He answered: “Tahir is not someone whom one ought to guard himself against through ambush or to be on one’s guard and exercise caution when facing him in battle! He has only two alternatives: he can either fortify himself inside al-Rayy, in which case its people will

rise against him and spare us the effort of dealing with him, or he can abandon the city and retreat when our cavalry is near.” The son said: “But the spark might ignite a conflagration!” He answered: “Be quiet! Tahir is no match for us in this spot. Men exercise caution only when they meet their match.”

2627. `Ali marched on. When his soldiers were near al-Rayy and `Ali saw how well Tahir had disposed his troops, prepared for battle and brought the wings of his army close, `Ali veered off the main road towards some village of al-Rayy where he camped, and his soldiers spread out. Tahir came up with about four thousand cavalymen, overlooked `Ali’s army, ascertained their number and arms, knew he was no match for them, so told his intimate followers: “Let us fight in the open.” He then arranged his cavalry in battle squares and took his stand in the center with about seven hundred Khwarizmian and other Khurasani knights. From the opposing center al-`Abbas ibn al-Laith, client of al-Mahdi and a noted knight, came out against him. Tahir rode out to meet him and grabbed his sword with his two hands and al-`Abbas fell off his horse. A man called Dawud ibn Siyah then came upon `Ali ibn Mahan in the thick of battle, struck him a single blow and killed him. The two armies now merged. `Ali at the time was mounted on a dark, saddled [reading *arhal*] and heavy horse. So men crowded around `Ali’s body and fought over his ring and head, which was cut off by a man called Tahir ibn al-Raji. Another man got a tuft of his beard while yet another got his ring. The blow that Tahir had struck al-`Abbas with both his hands was the reason for the defeat of that army. From that day on, Tahir was known as the “Man with the Two Right Hands” because of the manner in which he grabbed his sword.

2628. Ahmad ibn Hisham, a prominent military commander, said: “I went to see Tahir in his tent. He thought I had been killed in battle. With me

was a page of mine carrying `Ali's head in a bag, and the head was placed before Tahir. Then his body was brought in, hands and legs tied as is done with dead animals. Tahir ordered it thrown into a well, then wrote the following message to al-Fadl ibn Sahl,* the "Man who held Two Commands", informing him of what had happened, as follows: "May God grant you a long life and may He repel your enemies. I write to you with the head of `Ali ibn `Isa lying in front of me and with his ring in my finger. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds!" Al-Ma'mun was pleased, and from that moment in time received homage as caliph.

2629. Umm Ja`far [Zubaida] could not conceive from al-Rashid, so he consulted a scientist who attended his assemblies and complained to him. The scientist advised him to seek another woman, explaining that Abraham, when he had Sarah, could not make her conceive from him, but when Hagar was given to him she conceived Isma`il. Sarah then became jealous and conceived Isaac. So al-Rashid bought the mother of al-Ma'mun and, when closeted with her, she conceived al-Ma'mun. Umm Ja`far then grew jealous and conceived Muhammad.

2630. Al-Mas`udi said: In an earlier part of this work, we recounted the dispute regarding the stories of Abraham, Isma`il and Isaac, and the arguments advanced in proof of the fact that it was Isaac that Abraham was ordered to sacrifice, as also the arguments of those who said it was Isma`il, and what each group adduced as evidence for their views. This has been a point of dispute among both ancients and moderns. An example is what took place between `Abdullah ibn `Abbas and his client `Ikrimah, author of the Qur'an commentary. `Ikrimah is reported to have said to Ibn `Abbas: "Who is the one whom Abraham was commanded to sacrifice?" "Isma`il," responded Ibn `Abbas, who then used as proof the following Qur'anic phrase {And after Isaac, of Jacob}, adding: "Don't you see that God brought Abraham glad tidings of the birth of Isaac, so

how can he command him to sacrifice him?" `Ikrimah responded: "I will cite to you the passage in the Qur'an which shows that the one to be sacrificed was Isaac," then quoted the following verse: "{Thus will your Lord choose you and teach you the interpretation of reports, and perfect His grace upon you and upon the family of Jacob, as He perfected it upon your ancestors before you, Abraham and Isaac.} His blessings upon Abraham was to save him from the fire while his blessings upon Isaac was to ransom him from being sacrificed." `Ikrima the client of Ibn `Abbas died in the year 105. His patronymic was "Abu `Abdullah." He died on the same day as Kuthayyir `Azza, so people said: "The greatest of jurists and scholars and the greatest of poets have died." Al-Sha`bi also died in that year.

2631. Yusuf ibn Ibrahim, the state secretary, said: "I was told the following story by Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi: 'I was summoned by Muhammad al-Amin while he was besieged, so I went to see him and found him seated inside a wooden dome made of aloes and sandalwood, measuring ten by ten, and Sulaiman ibn al-Mansur with him. Al-Amin had that dome lined on the inside with all sorts of silken cloths and green brocade embroidered with red gold and other kinds of silk. Before him was a cup of studded crystal holding a drink which was slowly being consumed and weighing some five *ratls*. I greeted him and sat next to Sulaiman. I was brought another cup like the first, holding five *ratls*, and another like it was placed before Sulaiman.

2632. "Al-Amin then said: 'I summoned you here because I have heard that Tahir ibn al-Husain has reached al-Nahrawan, together with all the reprehensible and vicious acts he has committed against us. So I asked you to come here in order to be comforted by your company and your conversation.' So we proceeded to talk to him and to comfort him until his mood changed and he became happy. He then summoned one of his

most intimate slave girls called Da`f [weakness]. I found her name to be ill-omened given the situation we were in. He said to her: ‘Sing to us.’

She placed the oud in her lap and sang:

I assert that Kulaib had more supporters,

And was less determined than you, and was smeared with blood.

He found the song a bad omen and said to her: ‘Be silent, may God do this and that to you!’ He then relapsed to his earlier mood of dejection and glowering. So we once more talked to him and amused him until his mood changed and he laughed. He then turned to the same slave girl and said: ‘Let us hear what you have.’ She sang:

They killed him in order to take his place,

As once the commanders of Chosroes acted treacherously towards him.

He again told her to shut her mouth, scolded her and reverted to his earlier mood.

2633. “We amused him until he laughed again, so he told her for the third time to sing, and she sang:

It was as if, between al-Hajun and al-Safa,

There never existed an amiable friend, and no one had ever spent the night in revelry in Mecca.

Yes, indeed, we were its inhabitants but we were swept away

By the ever-changing nights and by misfortunes.

In another version of that story, she is said to have sung:

By the Lord of stillness and movement,

The fates are full of snares.

Al-Amin said: ‘Get out, and may God do this and that to you!’

2634. “As she rose to leave, she stumbled and broke the cup set before him, spilling the drink. It was a moon-lit night and we were on the banks of the Tigris in his palace known as al-Khuld when we heard someone reciting the Qur’anic verse: {The issue is settled upon which you seek my

legal opinion.}. Ibn al-Mahdi added: ‘I rose when I saw al-Amin had leapt up and heard someone singing from the side of the palace these two verses:

*Do not marvel at these marvels,
Something has come that will drive away all marvels.
A truly momentous affair has arrived,
That will cause all who marvel to marvel.*

That was the last time we sat to converse with him before he was killed.” 2635. Al-Amin was much taken by Nuzm, a manumitted slave who was the mother of his son Musa, known as the “Speaker of Truth.” It was his intention to depose al-Ma’mun and to make Musa his heir. When Musa’s mother died, he was stricken with grief, and when his mother Zubaida heard of this she said: “Carry me to see the Commander of the Believers.” When they did so, he met her and said: “O my lady, Nuzm is dead!” In reply, his mother recited:

*My life is ransom for you! Let not your grief kill you.
Your life when it lasts continues what has come before.
You have been recompensed with Musa, and all calamities are
insignificant,
There can be no grief for any female that dies now that Musa is here.”*

2636. Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi recounted the following story: “One day I requested admission to see al-Amin. This was a time when the siege [of Baghdad] had grown very severe from all directions. They refused to admit me but I persevered and entered. I found him gazing out at the Tigris through a net. In the center of the palace was a large pool with a watercourse to the Tigris and in that course was placed an iron net. I greeted him but he was busy with the watercourse while his servants and pages were spread out searching the water in the pool. He looked like a person passionately in love. Having repeated my greeting, he said: “O

uncle, you cannot imagine what has happened. My ear-ringed fish fell into the pool and was carried to the Tigris.” That fish had been caught for him. It was small in size and he had it pierced with two golden earrings from which were hung two pearls, or rubies in another version. I left, despairing he would ever come to any good and said to myself: Had there been any time for him to abandon his frivolity it should have been that moment.”

2637. Muhammad [al-Amin] was an extremely strong, tough, courageous, radiant and beautiful person. However, he was incompetent, weak in judgment, and thoughtless. It is recounted that one day, he woke up and had a morning draught. Men carrying clubs and spears and riding on mules---these were wild beast hunters---were out to hunt a panther that they heard was roaming the area of Kutha and the palace [of Ibn Hubaira]. They tricked the panther until they brought him in a wooden cage on a Bactrian camel. The cage was placed at the palace gate, then brought into the palace court. Al-Amin, who had drunk his morning draught, said: “Remove the door of the cage and let him go.” He was told: “O Commander of the Believers, he is a terrifying and violent black beast.” He said: “Release him.” So they removed the door of the cage and a black beast emerged, with much hair like a bull. He roared and struck the ground with his tail, and the people ran away and closed all doors. Al-Amin was the only one left, and remained in his seat, taking no notice of the beast, which now advanced towards him. Al-Amin picked up an Armenian cushion and protected himself with it. When the beast stretched his paw forward towards him, al-Amin pulled the paw, grabbed the base of the animal’s ears, squeezed and shook him, then pushed him backwards, and the animal fell dead on his haunches. People rushed up to al-Amin and found that his fingers and wrists had been dislocated. A bonesetter was summoned who reset his fingers, while al-Amin resumed

his seat as if he'd done nothing. When they cut open the belly of the animal, they found that his gall bladder had been severed from the rest of his internal organs.

2638. It is said that al-Mansur sat in his assembly one day as the Hashimites and other members of his family entered into his presence. With a happy face he said to them: "Don't you know that to Muhammad al-Mahdi was born yesterday a son whom we have called Musa?" When they heard this they became silent and apprehensive, as if ashes had been thrown into their faces, and made no reply. Al-Mansur looked at them and said: "This is an occasion for prayers and congratulations and I see you've fallen silent." He then pronounced the pious formula "We belong to God, and to Him we shall return," and added: "It seemed to me as if you were depressed when I told you that we called him Musa. But the person called Musa ibn Muhammad, over whom conflicts will arise, blood will be shed, treasuries will be plundered, the realm will be shaken, and Musa's father, the one deposed from the caliphate, will be killed, is not *this* Musa, nor is this his time of appearance. By God, even the grandfather [Harun al-Rashid] of *that* Musa hasn't been born yet." So they prayed for his welfare and congratulated al-Mahdi. The Musa in question was al-Hadi, brother of al-Rashid.

2639. The covenant drawn up by al-Rashid between al-Amin and al-Ma'mun, which was deposited in the Ka'ba, stipulated that whoever acted treacherously towards the other will forfeit the caliphate, which would then pass to the one who was the victim of treachery.

2640. Yasir, the royal servant and intimate of Zubaida, reported that when al-Amin was besieged on all sides, Zubaida went in to see him, weeping, and he said to her: "Stop it! It is not through the terror of women that royal crowns have been won, and the caliphate requires

certain policies which cannot be grasped by the breasts of women who suckle! Go away! Go away!”

2641. It is said that Tahir considered Muhammad al-Amin a weakling. As Tahir was in his orchard, a letter arrived from Muhammad, written in his own hand, which read as follows: “In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate. O Tahir, you need to know that ever since we [Abbasids] came to power, no rebel ever opposed us who was not punished by the sword. So look to your own self or else abandon this rebellion.” Al-Amin was keen to know how that letter had affected Tahir. When Tahir returned to Khurasan, he showed the letter to his intimates and said: “By God, this is not the letter of a weakling, but of one who will surely be abandoned.”

2642. No previous caliph, and right up to the present, which is the year 332, had a Hashimite father and mother except `Ali ibn Abi Talib and Muhammad ibn Zubaida. Concerning him, the poet Abu'l Ghul recited:
*He is a king whose father and mother come from a fire-stick
From which was lit the glowing lantern of the community.
That stick had imbibed the waters of prophecy from the heights of Mecca,
Water with which nothing else was mixed.*

2643. In the year 194, al-Amin began to plot treachery against al-Ma'mun.

2644. In the year 197, `Abd al-Malik ibn Salih ibn `Ali died in al-Raqqa, in the days of al-Amin. He was the most eloquent of the Abbasids of his time. It is reported that when al-Rashid was passing through the territory of Manbij, in al-Sham, he saw an imposing palace and an orchard totally covered in fruit trees, so said to `Abd al-Malik: “To whom does this palace belong?” He answered: “It is yours, O Commander of the Believers, and mine because of you.” Al-Rashid asked: “How is the palace built?” He answered: “Less well than your palaces but better than

the mansions of commoners.” He asked: “How is your town?” “Its waters are sweet, its climate is cool, its soil is hard, and its diseases are few.”

“How are its nights?” “Entirely magical.” One day he said to him: “O Abu `Abd al-Rahman, how beautiful is your country!” He answered:

“How can it not be so when its soil is red, its spikes of grain are yellow, its trees are green, its meadows sweet-smelling, its mountains white with snow, lying amidst fragrant grasses and plants?” Al-Rashid turned to al-Fadl ibn al-Rabi` and said: “To be lashed with a whip is easier for me than to bear such eloquence!”

2645. When al-Amin called his son Musa “The Speaker of Truth”, al-Fadl ibn al-Rabi`, his vizier, obtained homage as heir for him. This was at a time when Musa could hardly speak any word or tell truth from falsehood, and needed someone to take care of him day and night, awake or asleep, sitting or standing. Al-Amin put him in the care of `Ali ibn `Isa ibn Mahan. Concerning this, a blind poet of Baghdad called `Ali ibn Abi Talib recited:

*The vizier’s fraud, the imam’s sinfulness and the counsel of counselors,
Have laid waste the caliphate.*

But this is nothing but the path of delusion,

And the worst of all paths is to follow delusion.

The actions of the caliph are astonishing,

And more astonishing are the actions of the vizier.

Most astonishing of all is that we are to pay homage,

To a child amongst us,

A child who doesn’t know how to wipe his nose,

His back not yet removed from the lap of a nanny.

All this happens thanks to an aggressor and a tempter,

Who wish to abrogate a perfectly clear covenant.

But these two men, were it not for the changes of time:

Would they have anything to do with such matters?

But these are mere mounds that resemble mountains,

Whereby the humble and the low are raised high.

2646. When Tahir ibn al-Husain killed `Ali ibn `Isa ibn Mahan, he marched on, reaching Hulwan, a journey of five days from the City of Peace. People were amazed at how fast his strength had grown and how quickly the adherents of al-Amin had fled or been defeated. They became convinced that Tahir would be victorious and al-Ma'mun would win against al-Amin. That same blind poet who was an adherent of al-Ma'mun and inimical to al-Amin and his mother Zubaida, and was a resident and native of Baghdad, recited:

I am astonished that some people hope for success,

In some endeavor, but such endeavors do not succeed.

How indeed can they succeed in their plotting and planning,

When their plan itself is built on iniquity?

A tempter called out to them to lead them astray,

A demon, whose promises are all false.

He uses them for his assaults and plays with them in every way,

Just as wine plays with those who drink it.

They practiced deceit against the truth, and against al-Ma'mun,

But a deceiver will never prosper.

Matters will no doubt turn out to his detriment,

As set forth in our religious law and in the Psalms.

He will reign for forty months, and these will end,

Thereby concluding his new moons and months.

So practice all your wiles,

But your wiles against him [al-Ma'mun] will only give him pleasure.

2647. When al-Amin was informed that Tahir's power had grown greatly, he summoned his military commanders and intimates to consult with

them. He said: “Let me have some useful advice from you, just as Khurasan offered useful advice to `Abdullah [al-Ma’mun]. The situation is now as described in the verse of A`sha Rabi`a:

Then they feared not, but put at their head,

A hero in battle, who when he meets the enemy, gores them.

By God, the history of ancient nations has been read out to me and I have read the books of their wars and biographies of the founders of states, but never found in all this a report about any man---I swear by my father--- who resembles this man [Tahir] in his bravery and his strategies. He now marches towards me, is insolent towards me, enjoys the support of a vast concourse of soldiers, and of a group of commanders well experienced in warfare. So let me hear what you have to say.” They answered: “May God preserve the life of the Commander of the Believers, and may He spare him, as He spared other caliphs before him, the outrage of earlier rebels.” When the armies of al-Amin were defeated by Tahir and could not recover from their defeat, Sulaiman ibn al-Mansur said: “May God curse that traitor [al-Amin]! What has he brought upon this community through his treachery and unsound views? May God drive him far away from the normal practice of men of virtue! How quickly has God come to the aid of al-Ma’mun through that hero from the East!”---meaning Tahir.”

2648. Concerning this matter, a poet recited:

May evil befall that sinful and irreligious man!

What led him to commit such a terrible wickedness?

What made him act treacherously towards that virtuous, pure and pious man,

That wise and trustworthy leader [al-Ma’mun]?

*A man who is the ornament of the caliphate, of the imamate and intellect,
Of liberality and overflowing generosity?*

If you act treasonously and violently against the heir of Ahmad [the Prophet]

And the heir of all who are guided aright and are successful,

God will be al-Ma'mun's most worthy supporter,

As also of that noble and generous Lord, the hero of the East [Tahir].”

2649. When al-Amin was besieged from both east and west, with Harthama ibn A`yun* camped near Nahrawan and close to the Khurasan Gate and three other gates, and Tahir on the western side near al-Yasiriyya, the Muhawwal Gate and al-Kunasa, al-Amin summoned his military commanders and said: “God be thanked, for it is He who through His might elevates or abases whomever He wishes; God be thanked for it is He who gives to, or withholds from, whomever He wishes; God be thanked who curbs or releases, and to whom we all return; I thank Him for the calamities of time, the desertion of helpers, the confusion of the situation and the dejection of mood. May God bless and grant peace to His Messenger Muhammad and his family.” He spoke a great deal in this vein then said: “I leave you with a heavy heart, a sorrowful spirit and great distress. I shall see how I can save myself and shall ask God to grant me His gracious aid.”

2650. He then wrote the following letter to Tahir: “To proceed. You are but a slave under orders. Your advice was sought and you gave it. You fought a war and were granted victory. But the victor may yet be defeated and the successful person may still meet with failure. I find the right course of action to be to help my brother and abdicate my power in his favor, for he is more worthy and more entitled to it than I. So give me an assurance of security for myself, my children, my mother, my grandmother, my servants, retinue and helpers, and I will come out to you and abdicate in favor of my brother. If he decides to fulfill the safe-conduct you have given me, well and good. Otherwise, he is more worthy

and entitled to do as he pleases.” When Tahir read the letter, he said: “He writes this letter, now that the grip around his throat has tightened, his power has collapsed and his dissolute helpers have been defeated?! No! I swear by Him who holds my soul in His hand, I will not be satisfied until he places his hand in mine and accepts my judgment!” Al-Amin then wrote to Harthama asking him to accept the offer of safe-conduct.

2651. The deposed caliph [al-Amin] had equipped some of his men of mixed ancestry and others whom he trusted, to defend him against the troops of al-Ma'mun. But these went over to Harthama. Tahir ibn al-Husain had been sending reinforcements to Harthama and Harthama was therefore not meeting with significant opposition. When the above mentioned group went over to Harthama's camp, and the army of al-Amin was led by Bishr and Bashir, two men from the Azd, Tahir sent a message threatening them. They were not sure they could resist his assaults since he was about to win victory, so they abandoned their army, which then dispersed. Tahir was meanwhile camped at an orchard known as Bab al-Kannas al-Tahiri.

2652. Regarding this matter, a common criminal [*`ayyar*] who had been in a Baghdad jail, recited:

*There will be a battle between us and Tahir,
Of great significance and moment,
A battle in which we shall overcome,
With our helpers, that dog, Harthama.
At our hands, Abu'l Tayyib shall meet
With a day truly horrid.
There will come to him every cut-throat and burglar,
Who bores holes into the walls of houses,
And every naked man who bears on his sides
The marks of flogging.*

*If he appears from the east,
We come to him from the west.”*

Money was brought to al-Amin who distributed it solely among his latest commanders, giving each five hundred dirhams and a bottle of precious musk but nothing to his old commanders. Tahir's spies informed him of this, so he wrote to these old commanders, giving them promises and raising their expectations. He further encouraged the junior commanders to disobey their seniors, until the latter were angered and were stirred up against al-Amin. This happened on Wednesday, the sixth day of Dhu'l Hijja, in the year 196 [August 18, 812].

2653. One of the men who were stirred up against al-Amin recited:

Tell the man who thinks he is God's trusted one:

It was musk that dispersed your soldiers,

While Tahir---and I sacrifice my soul to him---

With his messengers and his abundant resources,

Now holds the reins of the kingdom in his hand,

Opposing the wicked side.

O you who broke his oath and whose treachery has let him down:

Your faults were obvious from the very beginning.

The lion has come raging at you, with his assaults,

And, with him, other violent lions.

So run away, though from him no refuge is possible

Except to the Fire or to the Pit of Hell.”

2654. Tahir then moved from al-Yasiriyya and camped at the Anbar Gate, besieging the inhabitants of Baghdad. He fought battles both morning and evening until both sides were exhausted. Buildings were destroyed, ancient monuments were erased and prices increased steeply. This took place in the year 196. Brothers killed brothers and sons killed fathers,

being split between the pro-Amin and pro-Ma'mun factions. Houses were destroyed, edifices were burnt to the ground and property was plundered.

2655. Regarding this, the blind poet `Ali ibn Abi Talib recited:

*Kinships among clans have been rent asunder,
And men of piety and perspicacity have let them down.
The vengeance of God fell upon His creatures,
For having committed these terrible acts.
We neither showed any repentance for our iniquities,
Nor did we reform our wicked hearts.
We paid no attention to any preacher or mentor,
So that we might benefit from one who admonishes us, ordering or
prohibiting.
So now we cry for the religion of Islam, its sphere shattered,
And war against it waged [reading arha harbuha] by every unbeliever.
Today people kill each other,
And are either humiliated and defeated or else victorious.
The true chief can barely fend for himself,
And every wily and nasty fellow is now a chief.
No wicked person respects the sanctity of a pious person,
And no pious person can protect himself from the wicked.
You will see one who openly calls for a barbarous act,
Another who lays down the law for another.
You will see them like wolves who saw blood,
And went after it, caring nothing for any who try to restrain them.
If the enemy undertakes to destroy one house,
They undertake to destroy the others.
Booty, ready to hand in their houses,
Urged them to seize it with sharp and cutting swords.
The iniquitous tribesmen,*

*Attack their own kinsmen with daggers.
We weep for the dead: for a friend here, a noble brother there,
Or for a compassionate neighbor.
There stands a mother, crying for her son,
And every bird, in pity, weeps with her.
She stops her weeping, through seemly patience,
But her tears are not as patient.
A married woman is bereaved of her husband,
And cries for him with passionate tears,
Saying to him: "You were my glory and my support,
But today my glory and support have vanished."
I cry for homes burnt down and destroyed,
For murders and the plundering of ornaments and valuables.
I cry for women once in seclusion, led out with heads uncovered,
Coming out without their veils or garments.
You see them utterly perplexed, not knowing where to turn,
Dispersed, like a flock of scattered gazelles.
It is as though neither religion nor common decency,
Prevented them from violating the sanctity of free women,
Or as if Baghdad was not the most beautiful sight that pleases the eye
Of any onlooker who wishes to be delighted by looking at it.
Yes, Baghdad was indeed so, but its beauty has vanished,
And its inhabitants have been dispersed by the decree of fate.
Upon them fell what has befallen other people before them,
And now they are merely the talk of nomads and city men.
O Baghdad, you capital of kings, you site where all hopes gather,
You station of all pulpits,
You earthly paradise, you source of wealth,
You provenance of all money made by commerce,*

*Reveal to us those whom you used to know:
 Are they settled in some other prosperous way of living?
 Where are kings passing in pageants,
 Similar in beauty to shining stars?
 Where are the judges passing verdicts on their own authority,
 Solving cases of diverse kinds?
 Where are all those who spoke words of wisdom?
 Where is the eloquence of an orator or a poet?
 Where are the gardens, admirable in their loveliness,
 And where are the palaces on river-banks among magnificent edifices?
 And where are the resorts of kings that I used to know,
 Studded with all sorts of precious stones,
 Whose floors were watered with musk and rose-water,
 Where the fragrance of aloes-wood could be smelt from afar,
 Where night companions gathered each evening,
 To entertain some generous and noble patron?
 Where are the singing girls whose singing was answered,
 By the yearning notes of the flutes?
 What is it with those glorious kings of the Hashimites,
 And their adherents: Were they not satisfied with what they achieved?
 They conduct themselves in power,
 As though they are running some tribal clan.
 Their great men ignored what had befallen them,
 So, through their injustice, they fell victim to small men.
 I swear: Had kings supported one another,
 The necks of tyrants, in fear, would have submitted to them.”*

2656. Harthama ibn A`yun then dispatched Zuhair ibn al-Musayyab al-Dabbi from the eastern side who camped at al-Matir, near Kalwadha, and imposed a tax of ten percent on all ships loaded with merchandise coming

to Baghdad from Basra or Wasit, then set up mangonels aimed at Baghdad. He then moved to the Raqqa of Kalwadha and al-Jazira, and people suffered much harm from him. Opposing him steadfastly were bands of criminals (*`ayyarun*) and former prisoners, who fought in the nude. Around their waists they wrapped short skirts and belts, and on their heads they wore a headdress made of palm leaves which they called helmets. They carried shields made of palm leaves and woven mats stuffed with pebbles and sand.

2657. Every ten of them were led by a prefect (*`arif*), every ten prefects were led by an intendant (*naqib*), every ten intendants were led by a commander (*qa'id*) and every ten commanders were led by an emir (*amir*). Each of these officers had people upon whose shoulders he would mount in proportion to the number of fighters under his command, apart from the fighters themselves. The same held for the intendants, commanders and emirs. They would mount on naked men around whose necks were tied bells, red and yellow woolens, a rope specially made for them, together with bridles and tails made of brooms and fans. A prefect would then advance riding on a naked man with ten fighters marching ahead, wearing their helmets of palm leaves and carrying shields of woven mats, and the intendants, commanders and emirs would advance in a similar manner. People would then gather around to gaze at such men fighting against troops mounted on splendid horses, wearing coats of iron mail, cataphracts, swords, spears and Tibetan shields. One side was naked while the other was armed as we have described them.

2658. At first, the naked ones defeated Zuhair, but when reinforcements arrived from Harthama, the naked ones fled, tossed to the ground by their human mounts. They were surrounded and put to the sword, and many of them, and of the bystanders, were killed.

2659. The blind poet describes bombardment by mangonels, and the slaughter of bystanders and the naked in the following verses:

*Do not come anywhere near a mangonel and its stone projectile,
For I have seen a man die when struck by it.
He went out early so as not to miss watching events,
But ended up dead, and himself an event.
He wished not to miss some event that someone said had happened,
But knew not what event destiny held in store for him.
He longed for something other than what he was destined for,
But how ludicrous to believe that mere longing can overcome destiny!
O You who operates the mangonel: have you not done enough,
Your hands leaving nothing standing, nothing in your wake? [last four
lines reversed]*

2660. When it became very difficult for al-Amin to pay the salaries of his troops, he ordered his silver and gold plate to be melted in secret in order to pay his men. The Harbiyya quarter and other quarters near the Gates of al-Anbar, Harb and Qutrabull went over to Tahir, and the war moved to the center of the western side of the city. The mangonels were active on both sides, regarding which the blind poet recited:

*All you who operate the mangonel,
None of you has any pity.
You do not care if it's a friend you're hitting,
Or one who's not a friend.
Woe to you! Do you know whom you're targeting?
Passers-by!
Many a coy and lovely maiden,
Resembling a branch in leaf,
Who never could tell the difference between the center of her house
And a valley where sheep bleat,*

*Was led out by force from the shade of a life,
Full of comforts,
And could do nothing about it,
But was then exposed to view when the great fire broke out.*

2661. Fires and destruction increased in Baghdad, in the Karkh quarter and elsewhere, and on both sides until the beauties of Baghdad vanished. Matters grew ever worse, and those who lived in the alleys and narrow streets kept moving from place to place, as fear spread everywhere and grew more intense. A poet recited:

*Who cast an evil eye on you, O Baghdad?
Were you not for so long all that the eye might desire?
Were you not inhabited by people whose neighborliness
And whose houses were unique ornaments?
Time screamed at them to depart, and they were extirpated,
And much have I suffered from the distress of leave-taking.
I entrust to God's keeping people whom, whenever I recall them,
Tears pour down from my eyes.
They existed once, but Time dispersed and put an end to them,
And Time puts an end to all friendships.*

2662. The war raged on for fourteen months between the pro-Ma'mun and pro-Amin factions. Baghdad was no longer able to accommodate its inhabitants, the mosques were deserted, communal prayers ceased, and the city experienced calamities such as it had never experienced since the days when it was first built by al-Mansur. In later times, the population of Baghdad suffered something similar during the war between al-Musta'in and al-Mu'tazz, when the criminals known as *'ayyarun* once more reappeared and waged war. Some rode on horses and appointed themselves emirs, adopting names like Ninawayh and Khalawayh and such. One of them would ride on a *'ayyar* and march off to war with fifty

thousand naked men. However, the population of Baghdad did not experience any war more destructive than the war between al-Ma'mun and the "Deposed" al-Amin.

2663. The people of Baghdad have regarded the events that befell them in this present year, i.e. 332, as truly momentous. This was when the caliph Abu Ishaq al-Muttaqi li'llah abandoned the city and the events that took place before that, such as the conflict between the Baridis*, Ibn Ra'iq and Tuzun the Turk. They mention the panic they felt when Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn Abi'l Hayja `Abdullah ibn Hamdan, known as Nasir al-Dawla, and his brother `Ali ibn `Abdullah, known as Sayf al-Dawla, rebelled. But this is because they have forgotten the earlier destruction because of the passage of time and lapse of years, and because they no longer remember those earlier ordeals and the destruction wrought by the criminals (*`ayyarun*) of former times.

2664. The war grew more intense between the Ma'mun party and the "naked ones" and other followers of the "Deposed" al-Amin. The latter was besieged in his palace known as Salih, on the western side. One day, a battle took place in which many from both sides were killed. A poet called Husain, and known as the "Libertine", who was one of the buffoons of that period, recited:

O you who are trusted by God [Amin Allah], trust in God,

And you will be granted perseverance and victory.

Place the matter in God's hands,

And may the Almighty keep you safe.

Victory is ours, with God's help,

And ours the assault, not the flight.

For your sacrilegious enemies, may it be

A day of evil and rout,

And a cup that brings death,

Hateful and bitter of taste.

They made us drink it, and we made them drink it,

But their end is near.

Such is war: sometimes we lose,

At others we win.

2665. Al-Amin and his followers were now hard pressed, and the people of Baghdad split into two factions. There was a major battle between them on the western side in a location called Dar al-Raiq, where a great many perished. The killings grew intense on the roads, streets and alleyways, some calling for al-Ma'mun, others for the "Deposed," thus slaughtering each other. Houses were plundered and set on fire, and destruction became widespread. The greatest victory and joy was won by whoever was able to escape with his life, along with whoever escaped with them, whether man or woman, commoner or grandee, and joined Tahir's camp, where those who escaped procured safety for themselves and their property.

2666. A person who witnessed that major battle recited:

My eyes cried for Baghdad,

Having lost my life of ease and comfort.

Our joys turned into sorrows,

And our plenty turned into straitened circumstances.

We were stricken by the evil eye of those who envied us,

And the mangonel decimated the people of the city.

Some were deliberately burned in a fire,

While women mourned for those who were drowned.

One woman would scream: "O my companions!"

While another would cry: "Where can I find one who pities me?"

There stood a woman with beautiful eyes, shedding tears,

Reared in comfort, her under-shirt smeared in perfume,

*Crying for a brother, but no brother answered,
Both brother and friend having been lost.
Here's a group, driven out from a sheltered life,
With their property being sold in every market,
And there lies a foreigner, his homeland far away,
Headless on the side of the road.
Uninvolved he was in all that fighting,
And not knowing one faction from another.
No son attended to his father,
And friends escaped from one another.
Whatever I might forget of the past,
I will always remember the battle at Dar al-Raqiq.*

2667. A Khurasan commander came to join Tahir, saw the “naked ones” fighting without real weapons, and finding them contemptible, turned and said: “How can such as these be any threat when they have no proper weapons, and especially when fighting against men of bravery and valor, well armed and well equipped?” A naked fighter saw that commander as he stretched his bow, notched his arrow into the bowstring and strode out from among his followers. The naked fighter carried in his hand a shield made of mats, and under his armpit a sack containing stones and pieces of brick. Every time the Khurasan commander let fly an arrow at him, he would raise his shield and the arrow would lodge in his shield or nearby. He would then remove the arrow and place it in a section of his shield, prepared for the purpose, and shaped like a quiver. He repeated this manoeuver until all the commander’s arrows were exhausted at which point the commander charged the naked fighter to strike him, but the latter took out a stone from his sack and flung it at him, hitting him in the eye. He flung another stone which almost dislodged the Khurasan

commander from his horse had he not evaded it. His helmet fell off, so he retreated saying: “These people are not humans but demons!”

2668. Regarding the incidents mentioned above, a poet called Abu Ya`qub al-Khuraimi, who was a supporter of al-Amin and inimical to al-Ma`mun, composed an exceedingly lengthy poem in which he described that civil war and the battles in Baghdad. The following are extracts:

*The markets of al-Karkh are in ruin,
Now inhabited by criminals in swarms.
War brought out from among its riffraff,
Lions of the thicket and victorious shooters.
Their shields are made of woven mats,
And their helmets, when they gather together, are made of palm leaves.*

2669. In further support of our account of these events, here is what `Ali the blind poet recited:

*These wars have created men,
Who belong neither to Qahtan nor to Nizar.
A group they are with woolen coats of mail,
Who march into battle like ferocious lions.
Upon them are helmets of palm leaves and shields of mats,
To protect them from the blows of swords.
They don't know what flight means,
When heroes take to flight from piercing spears.
A single naked man among them, not wearing a waist-wrapper,
Will charge two thousand.
As that youth delivers his blow, he says:
“Take this, from the criminal youth!”
How many a noble person has that war buried in oblivion!
How many a gambler and cutpurse has it elevated!*

2670. Each day the fighting grew more intense. The two sides fought steadfastly. The “naked ones” with their palm-leaf helmets and matted shields, were now the bodyguards and soldiers of the “Deposed.” Tahir kept up the pressure on them, taking one Baghdad street after another, and turning the inhabitants of every quarter he captured into helpers in his war. Destruction was increasing in areas not under his control. He then began to dig trenches between his forces and those of the “Deposed” where once houses and mansions had stood. Tahir’s forces grew in strength and success, while the followers of the “Deposed” grew weaker and suffered more reverses. As Tahir’s forces destroyed the buildings in their path, the followers of the “Deposed” would remove from these houses any wood or clothes or other possessions they could find.

2671. Regarding this, a pro-Amin and anti-Ma’mun man recited:

*Each day we suffer a loss that we cannot make good,
And they grow more successful in their aims while we decrease in
strength.*

When they destroy a house, we remove its roof,

And wait until another house is destroyed.

They have reduced our wide territories,

And in them they now have supporters who are well entrenched.

They stir up the hunt with drums,

And if they glimpse a prey nearby they hunt it.

They have deprived us of territory in both east and west,

And we do not know where to turn.

If they come to battle, they speak of what they can see,

And if they find nothing objectionable, they tell a lie.

You will see some famous hero who, in every battle,

When he sees a naked man, turns tail.

Our Qur’an readers have judged it licit to fight them,

*And only he who is allowed to do so kills people.
He will sell you a boy's head for a dirham,
And if he says: "I am selling him short", he is sold cheaply.
You will see him when he calls out for single combat,
He will signal to us at one time, and single a person out at another.**

2672. When Tahir realized how resolute were the followers of the "Deposed" in the face of fighting, destruction, fire, mangonels and slaughter, he cut off their food supplies from Basra, Wasit and other directions. As a consequence, bread was sold in Ma'mun-controlled areas of Baghdad for twenty *ratls* a dirham, whereas in another street controlled by al-Amin one *ratl* was sold for a dirham. People could not bear it any longer and despaired of relief. Hunger increased, and whoso ended up in areas controlled by Tahir considered himself fortunate, whereas those who remained in areas controlled by the "Deposed" were full of regret.

2673. Concerning these circumstances `Ali the blind poet recited:

*People live amidst destruction and uprooting,
And are now subject to rumor.
O you who asks how people are faring,
What you see will suffice you from asking that question.
Their cries of "God is great!" were once addressed to the All-Merciful,
But today that cry summons them to battle.
Cast your eye upon their crowds,
Wait for relief and count the nights.
There remains in Baghdad only a person,
Who is fortunate to be poor, and with plenty of children,
Or a man who escaped from prison,
Neither an Arab nor a client.
There is no mother to protect her sacred trust,*

Nor a maternal uncle to do so, or anyone else other than an uncle.

Why are we being slaughtered for the sake of our religion,

Glory be to you, O God, possessed of majesty?

2674. One day, Tahir at the head of his troops advanced into several quarters and headed to the Kannas Gate. The fighting was fierce, people rushed to take up weapons, the sword and fire were everywhere, and the two sides persevered, but the slaughter was more general among the adherents of the “Deposed”, who fell victim to drowning or the fire. A very large number of the “naked ones” perished, that is, those who carried sacks of stones and brick, wore helmets of palm leaves and matted shields, sported spears made of reeds, carried banners made of rags, and pipes made of reed and horns of bulls. That battle took place on a Sunday.

2675. Regarding this, the blind poet recited:

The battle on Sunday,

Will be talked about for ever.

How many a body I saw,

Strewn about, how many!

How many an onlooker,

Whom death stalked!

An arrow from some unknown shooter struck him,

Penetrating the center of his heart.

How many were those who cried “O father!”

And how many, bereaved, who cried “O son!”

How many a drowned man, floating on water,

Who once was hardy and steadfast!

No one missed him,

Except for the girls of the city.

And there was another man, fired with zeal,

*Like a raging lion,
Who struck camp in an open space,
And did not move, like a tent-peg.
A person would say: "They killed a thousand"
But did not add to that number,
While another said: "They killed many more;
Indeed their numbers are countless."
To a man suffering from a wound,
That did not kill him,
I said: "Who are you? Woe to you, you wretch,
From the anger of Muhammad!"
He replied: "I neither have a close kinship,
Nor do I belong to any town.
Nor did I fight for a righteous cause,
Or for one that is unrighteous.
I only fought for the sake of a quick payment
Which I could hold in my hand."*

2676. When al-Amin's situation grew worse and the siege became more severe, he ordered one of his commanders called Zurayj, to investigate people of wealth who possessed property or precious objects, and anyone else whom he suspected of affluence among the inhabitants of the city or others, and attached to him another commander called Hirsh. The two of them would break in upon people on mere suspicion, and thus collected large amounts of money. Many escaped, pretending they were going on pilgrimage, and the wealthy fled from Zurayj and Hirsh. Concerning this, the blind poet recited:

*They pretended they were going on pilgrimage, but had no intention of
doing so,
And simply wished to escape from Hirsh.*

*How many there were who woke up in joy,
When the night before had threatened them with death.
Everyone whose house was visited by Zurayj,
Experienced humiliation and was visited by perdition.*

These verses are from a longer poem.

2677. When calamities spread wide among people living a sheltered life, the merchants of al-Karkh decided to write to Tahir to say that they were prevented from leaving to join him and they were helpless and could not protect their property, adding that the naked ones and market sellers and riffraff were the cause of their great distress. Some merchants said: “If you write to Tahir, you cannot be sure that al-Amin will not revenge himself upon you. So leave them alone and God will destroy them.” A poet from that group recited:

*Ignore these street gangs, for soon
The paws of the raging lion will get to them.
It will tear the veils of the hearts of mighty men,
And they will soon find their way to the grave.
God shall do away with all of them,
Because of their rebelliousness and sins.*

2678. One day, the “naked ones”, numbering some one hundred thousand, surged forth with their spears, reeds, and helmets of papyrus. They blew on their pipes of reed and horns of bulls and, with other pro-Amin forces, advanced from many points towards the Ma'mun forces. Tahir sent against them several commanders from many directions and the fighting and slaughter grew in intensity. This was on a Monday, and up until noon the naked ones were winning. Then the Ma'mun troops counterattacked the naked ones and the other al-Amin forces. These latter were defeated and about ten thousand of them were either drowned, killed or burnt in the fire.

2679. Regarding that battle, the blind poet recited:

*On Monday morning they woke us up,
With their calls to attack the commander and Tahir ibn al-Husain.
At night they massed their forces and called to one another:
Today seek your revenge for al-Husain!**
*They beat their drums, and to them rushed,
Every man strong in body and arms.
You, naked one, lying dead on the riverbank,
Trampled by the horses of both sides,
What position would you have gained,
Had the warriors made peace: would you have been made a vizier or a
commander?
But you are as far away from these positions as the stars of Ursa Major.
How many a man, possessed of two eyes, went out to see what was
happening,
And came back with one eye.
They do not miss their intended targets,
Aiming solely at the eyes.
If you ask me about them, I'll tell you:
They are the worst men I've ever seen, by which I mean none other than
the two sides.
An evil crowd that shall remain and an evil crowd that is passing away:
Such as I have ever encountered, among both humans and jinn.*

2680. Matters grew worse for the “Deposed” and he secretly sold the contents of his treasuries to pay those who remained with him, so he no longer had any money to give them, while his troops in turn kept pressing him to be paid. Meanwhile, Tahir, who camped at the time in an orchard at the Anbar Gate, was tightening the siege. Al-Amin said: “By God, my wish is for God to kill both sides, for everyone is my enemy, both those

with me and those against me. These want my money and the others my life.” He then recited:

Disperse and leave me alone, you who support me.

All of you have faces of many colors.

I hear nothing but lies,

And ludicrous hopes.

I no longer own anything:

Just ask my treasurers.

Woe to me from what shall befall me

From the fellow camped in the orchard!

By the ‘fellow in the orchard’ he meant Tahir.

2681. As matters grew ever worse for the “Deposed”, with Harthama ibn A`yun now on the eastern side and Tahir having taken over most of the western, al-Amin was confined to the original city built by Abu Ja`far al-Mansur. He sought the advice of the intimates who still remained with him as to how to save himself, and each expressed a different view or plan. One of them said: “Write to Tahir and swear an oath to him that he can trust to the effect that you will hand over your kingship and power to him, and he might then respond positively to you.” Al-Amin said to him: “May your mother be bereaved of you! I was wrong to ask for your advice. Don’t you see that Tahir is no traitor to his lord? Had al-Ma`mun done his best and ran this campaign on his own, do you imagine he would achieve one tenth of what Tahir has achieved on his behalf? I made secret inquiries and investigations and found that he merely seeks to demonstrate his noble ideals, and establish for himself a high reputation for loyalty. So how can I possibly tempt him with money or hope that he would turn traitor? If he came to obey me and took my side, and the Turks and Dailam came against me, I would not care for their hostility. I

would recite, as Abu'l Aswad al-Du'li recited about the Azd tribe when they gave refuge and safe conduct to Ziyad ibn Abihi:

*When he saw them coming after his chief helper,
And saw them marching against him, after a long delay,
The Azd came, and he feared for him no other tribe but this,
And the opinion that won the day was Ziyad's.*

*They said to him: "A warm welcome to you! You spoke the truth,
So make peace or war with anyone you wish."*

*So he became one who feared no enemy among all mankind,
Even if they came against him with the strength of `Ad.*

By God, I wish he would accede to my wishes for I would give him the run of my treasuries and delegate all my authority to him and be simply content to live under his authority. Nor would I abandon him, even if I possessed a thousand souls." Al-Sindi said: "You have spoken the truth, O Commander of the Believers! Even if you were his own father al-Husain ibn Mus`ab, he would not spare you." Al-Amin said: "So how can we save ourselves with Harthama {but there was no time for escape}?" 2682. He then wrote to Harthama and tried to win him over. Harthama promised him all that he wished, and that he would protect him from anyone who would kill him. Tahir heard of this and was furious.

Harthama then promised he would come to him in a fast boat, meet him at the dock near the Khurasan Gate, and convey him and whomever else he wished to his camp.

2683. When al-Amin was about to escape that very night, which was the night of Thursday, five days remaining from the month of Muharram, in the year 198 [September 25, 813], there entered into his presence some paupers and brigands from among his followers, youths of mixed descent and sons of soldiers, and said to him: "O Commander of the Believers, those who are with you are not giving you sound advice. We are seven

thousand fighting men, and in your stables are seven thousand horses. Let each of us mount on a horse, break through some city gate and go out this very night. We will ride through the night and none will intercept our progress until we reach al-Jazira and Diyar Rabi`a. There, you will collect the taxes and men, advance into the middle of al-Sham and enter Egypt. In Egypt, your troops and money will increase, and your state will resume its power as it was when new.” He answered: “This, by God, is the right advice.” Convinced of this scheme, he then determined to carry it out. Among the intimates of the “Deposed” Tahir had planted pages and servants who reported the news to him hour by hour. Tahir immediately heard about that scheme of escape, and was anxious, knowing that this was sound advice were al-Amin to follow it. So he sent word to Sulaiman ibn al-Mansur, Ibn Nahik and al-Sindi ibn Shahik, all of whom were among the retinue of al-Amin: “If you do not change his mind about this scheme, I will demolish your lands and estates, put an end to all your privileges and kill you!” Accordingly, they went in that very night to see al-Amin and prevailed upon him to change his mind.

2684. Harthama then arrived by boat at the Khurasan Gate. Al-Amin called for his horse, called al-Zuhairi, black with white legs and clipped tail, then called for his two sons, Musa and `Abdullah, hugged them, smelt them, wept and said: “God is my successor in caring for you. I do not know whether I shall ever see you again.” He was wearing white clothes and a black Persian turban, with someone carrying a lantern before him. Arriving at the dock by the Khurasan Gate, he found the boat was there, so he dismounted, hamstrung his horse, and went on board the boat where Harthama received him and kissed him between the eyes. Tahir had learnt of his departure, so he dispatched to the river-bank men from Harawiyya [from Herat] and others, together with sailors in boats, and the boat carrying al-Amin and Harthama was stopped. Harthama did

not have many men with him. Then some naked divers employed by Tahir dived under the boat and overturned it, and everyone in it was pitched into the river. Harthama was concerned with saving himself, so clung to one of the boats, climbed in from the water and headed back to his camp on the eastern side of the city. Al-Amin shed his clothes and began to swim until he came to the river bank near al-Sarat, where there was a military camp under the command of Quraish al-Dandani, one of Tahir's officers. A stable groom smelt the musk and perfume on him so brought him over to Quraish. Quraish requested permission from Tahir to bring him over, and he obtained that permission while still on the road, so he was carried to Tahir. He was killed while screaming: "We belong to God and to Him we shall return! I am the cousin of the Prophet of God and the brother of al-Ma'mun!" Blows from many swords fell upon him until he grew still, then his head was cut off. It is said that this event took place on the night of Sunday, five days remaining from the month of Muharram of that same year, i.e. the year 198 [September 25, 813].

2685. Ahmad ibn Sallam, who was with al-Amin on that boat when it capsized, reported that he swam, and was then arrested by one of Tahir's men who wanted to kill him. He tempted him by promising to give him ten thousand dirhams by the following morning. He added: "I was led into a dark chamber. While there, a naked man wearing only waist wraps and a turban which he wrapped around his face, and with a rag on his shoulder was led into prison with me. The people in the house were then ordered to keep a close watch on us. When the man sat down, he removed the turban from his face and I recognized al-Amin. I shed some tears and in silence pronounced the pious formula "We belong to God, and to Him we shall return." He looked closely at me and said: 'Who are you?' I answered: 'I am your servant, Lord.' 'Which of my servants?' 'I am Ahmad ibn Sallam,' I answered. He said: 'I knew you in different

circumstances. You used to come and see me in al-Raqqā?’ ‘Yes,’ I replied. He then said: ‘O Ahmad!’ ‘Here I am, my lord,’ I answered. He said: ‘Draw close to me and hug me. I feel extremely lonely.’ So I hugged him closely and found his heart pounding very fast. He said: ‘Tell me, is my brother al-Ma’mun still alive?’ I replied: ‘For whose sake, then, is all this fighting taking place?’ He said: ‘God damn them! They told me he had died.’ I replied: ‘Rather, may God damn your viziers for getting you into this mess.’ He said: ‘O Ahmad, this is no time to blame anyone. Speak only good of my viziers. It’s not their fault, and I’m not the first person to aim for something and fail to attain it.’ I said: ‘Wear my waist wrap and throw that rag away.’ He replied: ‘Anyone in my condition would consider what I’m wearing more than enough.’ He then added: ‘I am certain they will now convey me to my brother. Do you suppose he’ll kill me?’ I said: ‘No! Your family tie will make him forgive you.’ He said: ‘I wish it were so! Kingship is barren and does not issue from a womb.’ I said: ‘The safe-conduct issued by Harthama is the same as a safe-conduct issued by your brother.’ I then instructed him in mentioning God and asking for His forgiveness.

2686. “As we were conversing, the door was opened and an armed man entered upon us. He looked intently at al-Amin to make sure it was him, and when he was certain, he left and closed the door behind him. The man was Muhammad ibn Humaid al-Tarhariyy so I knew that al-Amin would be executed. I was then performing my prayers and I still needed to make my prostrations odd in number [*witr*] so I was afraid I’d be killed with him without completing that odd number, and stood in order to perform the required prostration. He said to me: ‘O Ahmad, stay close to me and pray by my side for I feel terribly lonely.’ I drew near and soon we heard the hooves of horses and knocking on the door. When it was opened, a group of Persian soldiers came in wielding drawn swords.

When al-Amin sensed their arrival, he stood up and said: ‘We belong to God, and to Him we shall return! I shall be killed in the cause of God. Is there no plan that can be resorted to? Is there none who can save me?’ The soldiers came and stood by the door and hustled each other, each saying to the other: ‘You go first!’ Muhammad grabbed a cushion and said to them: ‘I am the cousin of the Prophet of God! I am the son of Harun al-Rashid! I am the brother of al-Ma’mun! Fear God in shedding my blood!’ One of them, a client of Tahir, finally advanced and struck him a blow with his sword on his forehead. Al-Amin hid his face with the cushion he was holding, and bent over him to remove the sword from his hand so the man cried out in Persian: ‘He’s killing me!’ The others entered and one of them drove his sword into his waist, flooring him. They cut his head from behind, and took his head to Tahir.”

2687. Other versions of how al-Amin was killed are also found, and we discussed at length these divergent accounts in our book *al-Awsat*.

2688. Al-Amin’s favorite servant, called Kawthar, was captured, and with him were found the ring, cloak, sword and rod.* When morning came, Tahir ordered al-Amin’s head to be exposed on a gate of Baghdad called the Hadid Gate, facing Qutrubull, on the western side, keeping it there until noon. His body was buried in an orchard in that quarter. When al-Amin’s head was placed before Tahir, he recited the Qur’anic verse: {O God, possessor of all power! You grant power to whomever You wish, and wrest power away from whomever You wish; You exalt whomever You wish and You abase whomever You wish. In Your hands lies all bounty. You are Omnipotent!}

2689. The head was then carried to al-Ma’mun, in Khurasan, wrapped in a soft cloth, and in cotton soaked in wine. When he saw the head al-Mam’un pronounced the formula “We belong to God and to Him we shall return,” wept, and was much moved by the sight. Al-Fadl ibn Sahl

said to him: “God be thanked, O Commander of the Believers, for this outstanding blessing! Muhammad had longed to see you exactly where God has made you see him.” Al-Ma’mun then ordered the head to be raised on a stick in the central hall of the palace, distributed salaries to his troops and ordered each soldier, once he received his pay, to curse the head. A soldier would then come forward, receive his pay and curse the head. A Persian soldier, having received his pay, was told he had to curse the head so he said: “A curse upon it, and a curse upon his parents and what they begat, and may they enter the such and such of their mothers!” He was told: “But you have thereby cursed the Commander of the Believers!” Al-Ma’mun was sitting where he could hear that exchange so smiled and pretended he’d heard nothing. He then ordered the head removed and that no mention be made of the “Deposed.” He had the head perfumed, placed in a small casket, and returned to Iraq, where the head was buried alongside his body. God thus took pity on the people of Baghdad, saving them from the siege, the famine and the slaughter.

2690. A number of poets wrote elegies for al-Amin. His mother, Zubaida, recited:

*He who did not spare people has destroyed your amicable presence,
So let your heart despair of ever encountering your beloved, now dead.
This was when I saw the arrows of death,
Had struck the center of his heart and head.
I went to my bed, dejected, waiting for the stars to disappear,
And imagining that in the night his head was a target,
That death was coming near to him and he was deeply troubled,
Until death gave him that fatal cup to drink.
He who dies will never be restored to us,*

Until people who died before are restored.

I was bereaved of him after having held him up as an ideal before all men,

And after having built him up as my pillar of strength for all time.

2691. His wife, Lubaba bint `Ali ibn al-Mahdi, also wrote the following elegy, although their marriage had not yet been consummated:

I weep for you, but not for any bliss or joy I might have obtained,

But solely for the sake of nobility and prowess with sword and shield.

I weep for a knight of whom I was bereaved,

Who made me a widow before our wedding night.

O king, whose body lies abandoned in a wilderness,

Let down by his bodyguards and attendants.

Many elegies were composed about him by poets.

2692. When al-Amin was killed, a servant of Zubaida entered to see her and said: "Why are you sitting doing nothing now that the Commander of the Believers is killed?" She replied: "Woe to you! What should I be doing?" He answered: "You rise in rebellion to demand vengeance for his blood, as did `A`isha when she called for revenge for the blood of `Uthman." She replied: "Hold your tongue, motherless may you be! What have women to do with seeking revenge and fighting heroes?" She then ordered her clothes to be dyed in black, wore a garment of haircloth, called for an inkstand and paper and wrote the following verses to al-Ma'mun:

This is addressed to the best Imam, descended from the best pedigree,

The best who ever mounted the steps of a pulpit,

Heir to the knowledge of the ancients, and their glory,

To the king al-Ma'mun, from Umm Ja`far.

I write to you my cousin, with tears pouring from my eyes,

My eyelashes and eyelids.

*I was bereaved of one who was closest to you in kinship,
 One who was removed from my heart, so my patience could not endure.
 Tahir came, and may God not sanctify Tahir,
 For Tahir's act was impure [tahir=pure].
 He forced me to come out in public, unveiled,
 Plundered my property and burned my houses.
 Harun [al-Rashid] would have detested what I have suffered,
 And what I was subjected to by a one-eyed, immoral person.
 If what he did was in obedience to an order you gave him,
 I will submit to the command of one powerful and revered."*

When al-Ma'mun read these verses, he wept then said: "O God, I will only say what the Commander of the Believers `Ali said when he heard of the death of `Uthman: 'By God, I neither killed him, nor ordered his killing, nor was I pleased when I heard of it.' O God, wrap Tahir's heart in sorrow!"

2693. Al-Mas`udi said: There are other stories and reports of conduct that pertain to the "Deposed" which we dealt with in detail in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, making it unnecessary to repeat them here. In God is success.

Chapter 114

An account of the caliphate of al-Ma'mun

2694. Al-Ma'mun, whose name was `Abdullah ibn Harun and whose patronymic was "Abu Ja`far," or else "Abu'l `Abbas," received homage when twenty-eight and two months old. His mother was from Badghis [in NW Afghanistan], a former slave called Marajil. He died in Badhandun, at a spring there called `Ayn al-`Ashira, from which issues the river known as Badhandun. It is said that its Greek name is Raqqa. His body was carried to Tarsus and buried to the left of the mosque. His death occurred in the year 218 [833], and he was forty-nine years old. His

caliphate thus lasted twenty-one years, of which fourteen months were spent fighting his brother al-Amin, as mentioned above, or two years and five months in another version. Throughout these wars, the Khurasanians greeted him as caliph and his name would be mentioned on mosque pulpits in major cities, in Mecca and Medinah, in smaller towns, and on plains and mountains, wherever Tahir had conquered territories in his name. Al-Amin was acknowledged as caliph only in Baghdad.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

2695. Al-Ma'mun fell under the influence of al-Fadl ibn Sahl to the point where the latter competed with him in the matter of a slave girl that al-Ma'mun wanted to buy, so he had him killed. Some claim that al-Ma'mun sent someone in secret to murder him. Thereafter, the viziers came forward to greet him, among whom were Ahmad ibn Abi Khalid al-Ahwal, `Amr ibn Mas`ada and Abu `Abbad. All these he officially appointed as viziers. `Amr ibn Mas`ada died in the year 217, and he seized his wealth though not the wealth of any other vizier. Towards the end of his caliphate, he fell under the influence of al-Fadl ibn Marwan and Muhammad ibn Yazdadh.

2696. During his caliphate `Ali ibn Musa al-Rida died of poison in Tus and was buried there. He was forty-nine and six months old, though other dates are also given.

2697. Al-Ma'mun wrote some verse denigrating his uncle Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi*, known as Ibn Shikla. Al-Ma'mun professed he was pro-Shi`ite while Ibn Shikla professed he was pro-Sunnite, so al-Ma'mun recited:

If it pleases you to see a Murji'ite

Die at once and before his appointed time,

Repeat in his hearing the mention of `Ali

And call down blessings on the Prophet and his family.

Ibrahim answered thus:

*If a Shi`ite whispered indistinctly while speaking,
And you wished him to reveal his secret intent,
Call down blessings on the Prophet and his two Companions*,
His two viziers, and his neighbors in his grave.*

Charming stories are told about Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi and al-Ma'mun which may be found in *Kitab al-Akhbar* by Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi.

2698. Abu Dulaf al-Qasim ibn `Isa al-`Ijli went in to see al-Ma'mun who said to him: "O Qasim, how well you describe war in your verse, how much you enjoy it, and how ascetic you are where singing girls are concerned!" He said: "Which verses do you mean, O Commander of the Believers?" He replied: "Where you recite:

*With swords drawn and battle-ranks breached,
Dust stirred up and heads being struck.*

He added: "What else do you say in this poem, O Qasim?"

He replied:

*And the confusion of dust clouds, and banners fluttering,
Reveal to you the ropes of death on the points of spears,
As the bride of death bares her sharp fangs,
In between the firebrands.*

*That bride comes forth sauntering with her sons,
As though upon them the sun was about to rise.*

*Silent she is but speaks if she's asked to speak,
Violent and capricious towards whomever is violent.*

*If her hand is asked in marriage, she demands as her dowry,
Severed heads falling among heads.*

*All this is more delicious to me and more desirable than singing girls,
And the drinking of wine on a rainy day.*

I am the son of the sword, the friend of the clamor of battle,

The evil accidents of time and the approach of death.

2699. Al-Qasim continued: “O Commander of the Believers, this is my joy: to fight your enemies, to show my strength in support of your followers and to stretch my strong arm to defend you. If some find pleasure in wine-drinking, I incline more to battles and wars.” Al-Ma’mun said: “O Qasim, if this kind of poetry is what you practice and your pleasure subsists in this, what have you left to that sleeper whom you left behind, showing him only a little of what you kept secret from him?” “Which of my verses are you referring to, O Commander of the Believers?” Al-Ma’mun answered: “Where you recite:

O you who sleeps and keeps my eyes awake,

Sleep on in joy and pleasure.

God knows that my heart is about to die,

From what your eyes have committed against it.

2700. Al-Qasim said: “O Commander of the Believers, that was merely a passing thought following a night which overwhelmed me. My other poetry is the result of an ancient vow, but this is just a late and passing thought.” Al-Ma’mun said: “O Qasim, how well did the poet of these two lines of verse express himself:

I reproach those nights that separate us,

And these nights that keep us apart have no excuse to offer.

If lovers do not visit,

And have nothing to mention except the past, all thoughts of love vanish.”

Abu Dulaf said: “Well expressed indeed, O Commander of the Believers!

This is the true Hashimite lord and Abbasid king.” Al-Ma’mun said:

“How were you able to deduce without any doubt that I am the author of these two verses and without any misgivings?” He replied: “O

Commander of the Believers, poetry is a woolen mat. Whoso mixes hair with pure wool, the excellence of the wool becomes apparent when

closely examined, and its light shines forth when the two substances are brought together.”

2701. Among the sayings of al-Ma'mun are the following: “A king will forgive anything except impugning kingship, revealing secrets and violating sanctity.” He also said: “Delay battle as long as you can, but if you find it inevitable, wage it at day’s end.” This last is said to have been spoken by Anushirwan. He also used to say: “A crisis seems impossible to solve when it arrives and cannot be made to disappear but, when it disappears, it becomes impossible for it to return.” When kingship finally came to al-Ma'mun and was well established he said: “This is a body but it is doomed to death. This is kingship but is followed by death. This is pleasure but is succeeded by delusion. This is a day, if only its morrow can be trusted.” Among his other sayings is the following: “A cheerful countenance is pleasant to behold, and a luminous trait of character. It wins over the hearts and is a site of familiarity. It spreads wellbeing and is like a simple expression of thanks. It is like a free gift to free men and a welcoming hand. It is the primary act of charity and a means of access to high honors. It is the most praiseworthy of character traits, a means of gaining the approval of the subjects and a key to unlock the love of hearts.” He also used to say: “The lords among people in this life are the generous, and their lords in the life to come are the pious. A vast income possessed by one who does not enjoy it is like food placed on the gutter pipe of miserliness: had it been a road I would not follow it, and had it been a shirt I would not wear it.”

2702. One day, al-Ma'mun attended the marriage ceremony of some of his family members. A person attending the ceremony asked him to speak so he said: “Praise be to God, the Praiseworthy, and to The Chosen One, his Messenger. The best guide to action is the Book of God. The Almighty says: {Marry the unwed among you and the virtuous among

your slaves, male and female. If they are poor, yet God shall enrich them from His bounty, and God is All-Encompassing, Omniscient.} If, regarding marriage, there was no clear verse from the Qur'an nor a Prophetic example one should follow except the divine intention to bring together him who is far to him who is near, all rightly guided and successful people, and all wise and rational people would not hesitate to contract marriage. This groom is a person you know well, and his pedigree is also well known to you. He has come to you asking for your daughter so-and-so's hand in marriage, and has offered such and such a dowry. So accept his offer and give him that bride in marriage, and speak words of piety for which you will be praised and rewarded. I say this and I seek God's forgiveness for me and you."

2703. Thumama ibn Ashras recounted the following story: "We were once attending the assembly of al-Ma'mun when Yahya ibn Aktham entered. He had resented the fact that I had risen in al-Ma'mun's estimation. We were discussing some topics in jurisprudence when Yahya said the following about a topic being discussed: 'This is the view of `Umar ibn al-Khattab, `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, Ibn `Umar and Jabir.' I said: 'They are all mistaken and have missed the relevant evidence in such a case.' Yahya was outraged. He said: 'O Commander of the Believers, this fellow dares to call all these Companions of the Prophet mistaken!' Al-Ma'mun said: 'God be praised! Is this true, Thumama?' I said: 'This fellow does not care what he says or what insults he directs at people.' I then turned to Yahya and said: 'Do you not maintain that the truth can be arrived at by one person in the sight of the Almighty?' 'Yes,' he answered. I said: 'So you claim that nine people can be mistaken while the tenth hits the mark, whereas I say the tenth is mistaken, so why do you object?' Al-Ma'mun looked at me, smiled and said: 'Abu Muhammad [Yahya] didn't know you would answer him thus.' Yahya

said: 'Explain yourself.' I said: 'Do you not maintain that the truth can be arrived at by one person?' He said: 'Yes.' I said: 'Would the Almighty deny this right to someone from the Prophet's Companions?' 'No,' he answered. 'But is it not your view that whoever advances an opinion contrary to him has missed the truth?' 'Yes,' he said. I said: 'You have thereby committed the same error that you earlier found objectionable and contradicted yourself while calling my view objectionable. I on the other hand have advanced a better proof, since I called them apparently mistaken, while all of them have attained the truth in God's sight. As a matter of fact, I called them mistaken in argument since the rules of evidence led me to adopt the view of some of them, thus calling those who opposed my view mistaken. You on the other hand called those who apparently opposed you mistaken in God's sight.'*

2704. A delegation from Kufa once came to Baghdad and asked to be received by al-Ma'mun, but he turned them away. An old man among them said: "O Commander of the Believers, your hand is the most worthy hand to be kissed because of its elevated virtues and its remoteness from all sin. Your forgiveness is wide enough to embrace sinners, and whoso means to do you harm, God turns them into a crop harvested by your sword, exiled from fear of you and humbled by your power." He said: "O `Amr*, their orator is admirable. Satisfy all their requests." This was done.

2705. Thumama ibn Ashras recounted the following story: "Al-Ma'mun once heard about ten heretics in Basra who believed in the Manichean doctrine of Light and Darkness, so he ordered them to be sent over to him after all their names had been mentioned to him. When gathered together for departure, an idler looking at them thought to himself: "These people could only have gathered together for some profitable purpose." So he intruded himself into their midst and went along with them, not knowing

what they were about. When their minders led them to a ship, the intruder said to himself: “This must undoubtedly be a picnic!” So he went on board ship with them. Soon chains were produced and the group along with the idler were chained, so the idler said to himself: “My idle curiosity has led me to be chained!” He then turned to the elders of the group and said: “May I be your ransom! Who are you?” They replied: “Rather, who are you and which one of our brothers are you?” He answered: “I swear to God I don’t know who you are. I’m just an idle intruder who left my house this morning and met you, saw a pretty sight, attractive signs and clear indications of wealth, and said to myself that such a group of the elderly and the youthful must have gathered together for a sumptuous meal. So I insinuated myself into your ranks and tagged along as though I was one of you. When you went aboard this ship and I saw it furnished and furbished as it is, and saw tables laden with food, provision bags and baskets, I said to myself that you were headed for a picnic to some mansion or orchard, and thought it was my lucky day, and I was delighted. Then, when this custodian came up and put you in chains, chaining me along with you, I felt I was losing my mind. So tell me what all this is about.”

2706. They laughed and smiled and found him very amusing, then said: “Now that you are counted as one of us and you are in chains, let us tell you that we are a group of Manicheans who were reported to al-Ma’mun. We will be led into his presence and he will ask us about our situation, investigate our beliefs, and call upon us to repent and abandon our beliefs by subjecting us to a number of tests. These include showing us pictures of Mani and asking us to spit on them and to declare ourselves quit of him. He will further test us by asking us to cut the throat of a bird called the francolin. Whoso consents to all this will have his life spared; whoso does not will be executed. When you are summoned for interrogation, tell

them who you are and what you believe in, in accordance with whatever logic leads you to such belief. You claim you are an idle intruder, and idle intruders normally have a stock of anecdotes and stories, so help us pass the time of this trip to Baghdad by telling us stories and gossip.”

2707. Arriving in Baghdad, they were led in to see al-Ma'mun. He would call upon them by name, one after the other, ask them about their beliefs, and be told that they were Muslims. Al-Ma'mun would then test them by asking them to recant, showing them pictures of Mani, asking them to spit on them and call on them to declare themselves quit of him. Refusing to do so he would put them to the sword. Having finished with all ten of them, it was finally the turn of the idle intruder. Al-Ma'mun turned to the guards and asked: “Who is this fellow?” They answered: “By God we don't know! We just found him with the others so we brought him along.” Al-Ma'mun then asked him: “So what's your story?” He replied: “O Commander of the Believers, let my wife be divorced if I know anything about their beliefs! I am just an idle intruder.” He proceeded to tell his story from beginning to end. Al-Ma'mun laughed, then Mani's image was produced and the man cursed it and declared himself quit of it, adding: “Give it to me and I'll shit on it! By God, I don't know if Mani was a Jew or a Muslim.” Al-Ma'mun said: “Let him be disciplined for his idle curiosity and for endangering his life.”

2708. Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi was present when that incident took place so said: “O Commander of the Believers, let me take upon myself the guilt of this fellow and I will tell you a strange story about idle curiosity that happened to me.” Al-Ma'mun said: ‘Speak, Ibrahim.’ Ibrahim said: “One day I went out for a stroll in the streets of Baghdad until I reached a locality where I smelled spices coming from the wing of a high mansion, and cooking pots whose scent had spread wide. I was drawn to this, stopped at a tailor's shop and asked: ‘To whom does this mansion

belong?’ ‘To a silk merchant,’ said the tailor. I asked what his name was and he said so-and-so. I looked up at that wing of the house and saw a latticed window and glimpsed a palm and a wrist sticking out more beautiful than anything I had ever seen before. Their beauty made me forget the scent of the cooking pots. I stood there, lost in thought and utterly bewildered. I then asked the tailor: ‘Does he drink date wine?’ He answered: ‘Yes, and I guess he has a party today. He only consorts with merchants like himself who lead sheltered lives.’ As I stood there, two grandees on horses approached from the top of the alleyway, and the tailor said: ‘These are his two boon companions.’ I asked him: ‘What are their names and patronymics?’ and he said: ‘So-and-so and so-and-so.’ So I egged my mount onwards until I was riding between them and said: ‘May I be your ransom! Abu So-and-so [i.e. the host], may God honor him, reckons you are late.’ I conversed pleasantly with them until we reached the door of the house. They let me go first and entered behind me and when the master of the house saw me he had no doubt I was connected to them in some way. So he welcomed me and seated me in the place of honor. Soon, O Commander of the Believers, the table of food was brought in with clean bread and the various kinds of foods were served, more tasty than their scent. So I said to myself I’d already eaten and there remains only the palm and wrist I had glimpsed. The food was then removed, we washed our hands, then moved to the reception hall which I found to be the most luxurious in its seating and furniture. The master conversed very kindly with me addressing himself to me, while the other two men had no doubt that I was connected to him in some way. In fact, he acted thus towards me because he imagined that I was connected to them. Having drunk some cups, a slave girl came in, swaying like a willow tree. She entered, greeted everyone without embarrassment and a cushion was prepared for her. A *oud* was brought in

and placed in her lap, and she tuned it. I could tell she was very skillful from the manner in which she did so.

2709. She then began to sing:

*My eyes regarded her intently, and this colored her cheeks,
And my glances left their mark where I had stared.
My heart accosted her, but the palm of her hand gave her pain,
And the feel of my heart left a scar on her fingers.
A passing thought in my heart wounded her,
Though I've never seen anything wounded by a thought.*

I swear, O Commander of the Believers, she caused great excitement in my heart, and her singing and skill entranced me. Then she resumed:

*I made a sign to her: Have you recognized my love for you?
She replied by a wink that she was faithful to our love.
I preferred not to make my love obvious, to protect her secret,
And she too preferred not to declare her love openly, also to protect my secret.*

“Enough, please!” I cried. I was so enchanted by her singing that I could not bear it any longer. She resumed:

*Is it not strange that in a house which holds us both,
We cannot be alone or speak in private?
Nothing but eyes which complain of love through their lids,
And innards quivering and burning over a fire,
And mouthing words, and eyebrows moving,
And eyelids twinkling, and a heart that sends greetings.*

By God, O Commander of the Believers, I envied her skill and knowledge of singing and how well she had expressed the intent of the poem, and how she maintained her very high standards throughout. So I said to her: ‘One thing only remains for you to do.’ She became angry, struck the floor with her *oud* and said: ‘Since when do you invite such

disagreeable people to your parties?’ I regretted what I had said, and noticed that the guests had changed their attitude towards me so I said: ‘Is there a *oud* somewhere?’ ‘Yes, lord,’ they replied, and a *oud* was brought to me. I tuned it and sang:

*Why do these campsites not answer a grieving man?
Are they deaf, or has time grown long and they lie in ruins?
They departed at night, a departure well remembered,
If dead, then they’re dead, and if alive, then they’re alive.*

2710. I had hardly finished singing it well when the singing girl came out, fell on my legs and began to kiss them saying: ‘By God, my sincere apologies to you, master! I never heard anyone singing that melody like you!’ Her master and all the others got up and followed her example. The group was enchanted and began to drink from large bowls. I then continued:

*I ask you to swear by God: do you go to sleep and forget me,
When my own eyes have shed blood while remembering you?
To God I address my complaint: her miserliness and my liberality.
I offer her honey and she responds with colocynth.
To God I address my complaint: she is no relation of mine,
And I will love her as long as I live in honor.
So cure the man afflicted in his heart, whom you have slain,
And do not leave him bereft of reason, and lovelorn.*

The group were so entranced that I feared they might lose their reason. So I stopped singing for a while until they had calmed down, then sang my third song:

*Here is your lover, wrapped up in sorrow,
His eyes pouring tears down his body.
One of his hands is raised to beg God to relieve him,
The other hand rests on his heart.*

*Has anyone seen a lover who regrets nothing,
And whose death lies in his eyes and hand?*

The singing girl, O Commander of the Believers, started screaming:

‘Enough! O master, this indeed is true singing!’

2711. “The assembled guests were inebriated and delirious. The master of the house could hold his drinking well while his two companions were less able to do so. Accordingly, he ordered his pages and theirs to take care of them and convey them to their homes and he and I were now alone. We drank some more cups and then he said: ‘Master, all my former days have passed in vain as long as I do not know your name. Who are you, master?’ He kept insisting until I told him. He rose, kissed my head and said: ‘Master, such manners can only be possessed by one like you! Today I am in the company of the caliphate and do not know it?’ He then asked me about my story and how I had done what I did, and I told him about the scent of the food, the palm and the wrist. So he summoned a slave girl and instructed her to bring out all his slave girls, one after the other. I would look at the palm and wrist of each and say: ‘This is not her.’ Finally he said: ‘There remains only my mother and my sister and I shall ask them to come.’ I was amazed at his liberality and his broad-mindedness. I said: ‘May I be your ransom! Begin with the sister before the mother for she might be the one I saw.’ He agreed and when I saw her palm and wrist I said: ‘Yes, that’s her!’

2712. “He at once ordered his pages to summon ten of his most distinguished and elderly neighbors and they were admitted. Two purses were then produced, holding twenty thousand dirhams. To the assembled group he said: ‘This is my sister so and so, and I ask you to witness that I have given her in marriage to my lord, Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi. I have paid her a dowry of twenty thousand dirhams on his behalf.’ I accepted the marriage, gave her one purse and distributed the other among the group

of old men, saying to them: ‘Forgive me, but this is all I have at this moment.’ They took the money and left. He then said: ‘Lord, let me prepare a chamber for you where you can lie with your wife.’ I was truly embarrassed, O Commander of the Believers, by his generosity and open-mindedness, so I said: ‘Rather I shall bring a covered carriage and take her to my house.’ He consented, so I ordered a carriage to convey her to my house. I swear, O Commander of the Believers, I received a trousseau so extensive that my own rooms could barely hold it.”

2713. Al-Ma’mun was amazed at the man’s generosity. He released the idle intruder and gave him a rich reward, then ordered Ibrahim to summon the merchant who later became a close companion of al-Ma’mun and one close to his heart, remaining long with him as an intimate companion and on the best of terms.

2714. Al-Mubarrad and Tha`lab both reported the following incident: “Kulthum al-`Attabi was once standing by the door of al-Ma’mun when Yahya ibn Aktham* came along so al-`Attabi said to him: ‘Could I ask you to inform the Commander of the Believers that I am standing at his door?’ Yahya said: ‘I am not a door-keeper.’ Al-`Attabi replied: ‘I know you’re not, but you are a decent man, and a decent man is one who helps others.’ Yahya said: ‘You have taken me out of my normal path.’ Al-`Attabi said: ‘God has favored you by granting you a high rank and great benefactions. These will continue to increase if you express thanks to God and will shrink if you withhold due thanks. Today, I stand to be of more benefit to you than you yourself, for I ask you to do what will increase your favors while you refuse to do so. Everything has an act of charity attached to it, and the charity attached to a high reputation is to extend help to one who seeks it.’ Yahya entered and told al-Ma’mun that al-`Attabi was waiting at the door.

2715. “Al-`Attabi was then admitted. In the chamber sat Ishaq ibn Ibrahim al-Mawsili. Al-Ma'mun ordered al-`Attabi to sit down and started to ask him about his life and how he fared. Al-`Attabi answered eloquently, so al-Ma'mun found him amusing and began to speak playfully to him. Al-`Attabi, a venerable old man, thought he was making fun of him so said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, the she camel must be softly cuddled before she is milked.’ The meaning of this saying was not clear to al-Ma'mun so he looked at Ishaq, winked at him, then said: ‘Bring me a thousand dinars.’ The money was brought in and placed before al-`Attabi. Al-Ma'mun then went back to conversing with him and encouraged Ishaq to trifle with him. Ishaq proceeded to contradict every view that al-`Attabi put forward and to amplify it. Al-`Attabi, not knowing who he was, was amazed and said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, would you permit me to ask this man his name and pedigree?’ ‘Go ahead,’ replied al-Ma'mun. ‘Who are you and what is your name?’ asked al-`Attabi. Ishaq replied: ‘I am just a human being and my name is “*Kul Basal*” [Eat onions].’ Al-`Attabi said: ‘Your pedigree is well known but your name is very odd and not at all common.’ Ishaq said: ‘How unfair you are! What about your own name “*Kul Thum*” [Eat garlic]? And onions are more delicious than garlic.’ Al-`Attabi said: “Damn you, how witty you are! I’ve never encountered one so funny! Would the Commander of the Believers permit me to hand over my gift to him? He has truly vanquished me!’ Al-Ma'mun said: ‘Your gift will remain as is and we’ll order a like gift for him.’ So Ishaq went home and al-`Attabi sat and amused al-Ma'mun for the rest of that day.”

2716. Al-`Attabi was originally from the territory of Jund Qinnasrin and al-`Awasim who had settled in al-Raqqa, in Diyar Mudar. His knowledge, learning, literary accomplishments, erudition, epistolary skills, eloquence, extensive memory, subtlety of composition, glibness in speech, skill in

exposition, refinement of conversation, proficiency in letter writing, charm of address, excellence in calligraphy and brilliance of intellect were all such as were not possessed by many people of his age. He is reported to have said: “A man’s scribe is his tongue, his chamberlain is his face and his intimate companion is the whole of him.” He composed the following verses on this topic:

The tongue of a youth is his secretary,

And his chamberlain is his face.

His intimate companions are the whole of him,

And each part of him has his proper duty to perform.

2717. He is reported to have said: “If you are appointed to an official post, be careful whom you appoint as your secretary. Your true worth is only known to a stranger by means of your secretary. Make sure your chamberlain is a man of reason, for delegations coming to see you would judge you by your chamberlain before they enter into your presence. Make sure your intimate companions are noble and amusing, for a man’s merit is measured by his friends.”

2718. A state secretary and a boon companion once boasted to one another. The secretary said: “I am a helper and you are a burden. I deal with serious matters and you deal with frivolities. I am needed in a crisis and you are needed for entertainment. I am fit for war and you for peace.” The boon companion replied: “I am meant for comfortable living and you for anger and vengeance. I am chosen for my good graces but you are chosen to practice a craft. You come and go whereas I remain. You need to be respectful whereas I entertain. You are tireless in serving my needs and are unhappy in what makes me happy. I am a partner and you are a mere aide. I am an equal and you are a servant. I am called a boon companion [*nadim*] because of the regret [*nadam*] felt at my departure.” To al-`Attabi are attributed charming stories and excellent works of

literature but if we recount them all we would be diverging from our purpose and the path we are pursuing. We mentioned all these reports about him because we drifted in our discussion, which in turn led us to mention these reports.

2719. Al-Jawhari>al-`Utbi>`Abbas al-Dairi, who said: “A man once submitted a petition to al-Ma’mun and asked permission to enter into his presence and listen to it in person. Permission was granted and al-Ma’mun said: ‘State your purpose.’ The man said: ‘I wish to inform the Commander of the Believers that the calamities of time, the prodigies of life, and the catastrophes of existence have been visited upon me and removed all that this world once granted me. I no longer possess a single estate. Every canal I dug is now breached, every house has tumbled into ruin, and all wealth is gone. I own neither little nor much. My debts are considerable. I have a family, both children and infants. I am an old man whose age prevents him from pursuit of work or gain. I am in need of the Commander of the Believers’ care and kindness.’ As he finished speaking, he farted, so he said: ‘This too, O Commander of the Believers, is a prodigy and a calamity of time! I swear to God that nothing like this has ever issued from me except in its proper place.’ Al-Ma’mun said to his companions: ‘I never encountered a firmer heart, a more self-possessed person or one less dismayed than this fellow!’ He then ordered that fifty thousand dirhams be immediately paid to him.”

2720. Abu’l `Atahiya said: “One day al-Ma’mun summoned me and I entered to find him with head bowed, troubled and deep in thought. I refrained from drawing near while he was thus, but then he lifted his head up and waved to me to draw near. I did so, he bowed his head again then raised it and said: ‘O Isma`il, it is natural for the spirit to grow bored and to seek entertainment, and one can as well find comfort in loneliness as in company.’ I replied: ‘Yes, O Commander of the Believers, and I

composed a line of verse on this subject.’ He asked: ‘What is it?’ and I recited:

*Nothing soothes the spirit when troubled,
More than shifting from one mood to another.*

‘How right you are! Recite some more.’ I said I could not, but I kept him company for the rest of that day, he ordered a sum of money to be paid to me, and I departed.”

2721. It is reported that al-Ma’mun once ordered one of his intimate retainers to go out at night and bring back any person he meets, high or low. The retainer brought back a commoner. With al-Ma’mun was his brother, al-Mu`tasim, Yahya ibn Aktham and Muhammad ibn `Amr al-Rumi, and each had cooked a meal in a cauldron. Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Tahiri said to the commoner: “These are all intimate companions of the Commander of the Believers who are gathered here, and you are to answer all their questions.” Al-Ma’mun asked him: “Why did you go out at this time of night when there still remain three hours of darkness?” He answered: “I was fooled by the moon, and I heard a mosque imam calling out ‘God is great!’ so I had no doubt it was the call to prayer.” Al-Ma’mun said to him: “Sit down.” They conversed pleasantly with him until he felt at ease. Then al-Ma’mun said: “Each one of us has prepared a meal in a cauldron and a portion of each will now be served to you. So taste each portion and tell us what is good about it and how you find its taste.” The man answered: “Fine. Present the food to me.”

2722. The food was then served in a large tray, with each prepared meal placed on it without distinction, but each cook had placed his own specific mark on it. The man began by tasting a meal that al-Ma’mun had prepared and said: “Excellent!” eating three mouthfuls. He then said: “This meal is like musk. The fellow who cooked it is wise, clean and

witty.” Tasting the meal cooked by al-Mu`tasim, he said: “By God, this is almost as if prepared by the same hand, and cooked with equal skill.”

Tasting the meal of Muhammad ibn `Amr al-Rumi, he said: “This, by God, is a meal prepared by a cook, son of a cook, who has done his job well.” When he tasted the meal prepared by Yahya ibn Aktham, the judge, he turned his face away and said: “Yucch! The fellow who cooked this replaced the onions with shit!” The group laughed uproariously. So he began to make them laugh and to amuse and entertain them, and they found him agreeable. When dawn arrived, al-Ma`mun said to him: “Do not reveal what we were doing this night,” after having realized that the man had recognized them. So he gifted him with four thousand dirhams and ordered each of the others who had prepared the meals to pay him a sum in proportion to their ranks. Al-Ma`mun then said to him: “Beware of ever leaving your house again at such a time of night!” He answered: “May God never deprive you of cooking and may He never deprive me of leaving my house!” They asked about his trade and found out where he lived, and he was inducted into the service of al-Ma`mun and of all the others, becoming part of all their retinues.

2723. Abu `Abbad, the state secretary and an intimate of al-Ma`mun, recounted the following story: “One day al-Ma`mun said to me: ‘I was never lost for an answer except when answering three people. I went to see the mother of al-Fadl ibn Sahl, to pay my condolences for the death of her son, and said to her: ‘Do not grieve and sorrow for his loss, for God has substituted me as a son who will take his place. Whatever you used to find easy to ask of him, do not withhold this from me.’ She wept and said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, how can I not mourn a son who made me gain another son like you?’

2724. ‘One day, a man was led into my presence who claimed he was a prophet. I asked him his name and he answered: ‘Musa ibn `Imran.’ I

said: 'Woe to you! Musa performed miracles and signs by which his status was established. For example, he threw his rod down and it turned into a serpent which counteracted the tricks of the magicians. He pulled out his hand from his pocket and it turned white.' I kept enumerating his prophetic signs and miracles then said to him: 'Perform a single one of his miracles or signs and I'll be the first person to believe in you. Otherwise I will have you executed.' He answered: 'You are right. However, I performed these signs when Pharaoh said: {I am your highest god}. If you yourself say this, I will perform the same miracles I performed for him.'

2725. 'The third time was when the people of Kufa came in a body to complain about a governor whose conduct and policies I thought admirable. So I sent the following message to them: 'I know well the conduct of this governor and I've decided to sit in an assembly the day after tomorrow to listen to your case. So choose a man from among you who can argue the case on your behalf, because I know you are very garrulous.' They answered: 'The only person we find suitable to present our case before the Commander of the Believers is a slightly deaf person. If the Commander of the Believers can bear up with him, he would be doing us a great favor.' As he stood before me I ordered all of them to sit then said to him: 'What is your complaint against your governor?' He replied: 'O Commander of the Believers, he is the worst governor on earth. In his first year as governor we had to sell our furniture and houses. In his second year, we sold our valuables and estates. In his third year we were forced out of our city. So we have appealed to the Commander of the Believers to pity us and favor us by dismissing him from our city.' I said to him: 'You lie, motherless may you be! Rather he is a man whose policy, conduct, piety and governance I find admirable, and chose him as your governor, knowing full well your propensity to complain about your

governors.’ He said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, you have spoken the truth and I have lied. But this governor whose piety, trustworthiness, decency, sense of justice and fairness you so admire---why did you single us out to have him govern us all these years to the exclusion of other cities that God entrusted you to care for their affairs as He entrusted you to care for ours? Let him now govern other cities so that his fairness and justice can spread among them as these were spread amongst us.’ I said: ‘Get up, and may God not protect you! I have dismissed him.’”

2726. Yayha ibn Aktham is reported to have said: “Al-Ma’mun used to sit and partake in debates on the subject of jurisprudence every Tuesday. Once the jurists and others who debated with him from diverse schools of thought had assembled, they would be led into a furnished room and asked to remove their shoes. Food would be brought in and they would be told: ‘Help yourselves to food and drink and repeat your ablutions. If anyone finds his shoes are bothering him he may take them off. The same goes for your caps.’ When they were done, censors would be brought in where they would perfume themselves with incense, then leave. Al-Ma’mun would then ask them to draw near and debate them in the most seemly and fairest manner and one furthest removed from debates with tyrants. He would continue to do so until sunset, when the food would be brought in again, and they would eat and then leave.

2727. “One day, as he was sitting, his chamberlain `Ali ibn Salih entered and said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, there’s a man at the door wearing thick tucked-up white garments requesting admission in order to debate.’ I [Yahya] knew he was a Sufi and wanted to signal to him not to admit him but al-Ma’mun quickly said: ‘Let him come in.’ A man entered with tucked garments and carrying his shoes in his hands, stood at the edge of the carpet and said: ‘Peace upon you and the mercy and blessings of God.’ Al-Ma’mun answered: ‘And upon you peace.’ The man said:

‘Will you permit me to draw near?’ Al-Ma’mun allowed him to do so then told him to sit down. When he did so, he asked: ‘May I be permitted to speak to you?’ Al-Ma’mun answered: ‘Speak about what you know will be pleasing to God.’ The man said: ‘Tell me about this position that you occupy: did it come about through the consensus and contentment of Muslims or through overcoming them by force of your royal power?’ Al-Ma’mun said: ‘I gained this position neither through consensus nor through force. The affairs of the Muslims were run by a ruler before me whom the Muslims put up with, either willingly or unwillingly. He then delegated supreme authority to me and to another [al-Amin] by an act of homage offered by Muslims in attendance upon him. All pilgrims who were present at God’s Holy Sanctuary offered their homage to me and to that other person with me, and they did so either willingly or unwillingly. The other person who was offered homage with me went his way. When I succeeded him, I knew that I needed to obtain the consent of all Muslims in east and west and that they should be content with me. Then I thought carefully and concluded that were I to abandon to Muslims the running of their affairs, Muslim unity would be deeply disturbed, their government would fall into chaos, the frontiers of their realm would be vulnerable, people would riot and plunge into civil war, and violence would spread. In such a situation, the laws of God would be suspended, none would be able to go on pilgrimage to God’s Holy Sanctuary, fighting for the sake of God would cease, there would be no ruler to unite and guide them, roads would be cut and the innocent would have no recourse against the unjust. So I decided to take up this position of power in order to protect the Muslims, wage war against their enemies, secure their roads and to rule them until the Muslims all agree on a man and are content for him to rule them. At that point, I will turn over my authority to him and become just another ordinary Muslim. Meanwhile, you shall be my messenger to

all Muslims: ‘Once they all agree on a man and are happy with him, I will hand over my power to him.’ The man said: ‘Peace be upon you and the mercy and blessings of God,’ and departed.

2728. “Al-Ma’mun then ordered `Ali ibn Salih, his chamberlain, to send some people after that man and find out where he was heading. He did so and returned to report the following: ‘O Commander of the Believers, I dispatched someone who followed the man to a mosque where there were fifteen people dressed exactly like him. These said to him: ‘Did you meet the man?’ ‘Yes,’ he answered. ‘What did he say to you?’ He answered: ‘Nothing but what is good. He mentioned that he took over the running of the affairs of the Muslims in order to safeguard their roads, enable the pilgrimage to proceed, fight the enemies of the Muslims, protect the innocent from the unjust, and safeguard the laws. If the Muslims were to agree on someone else, he would hand his power over to him and abandon his authority in his favor.’ They all said: ‘We see nothing wrong with what he said,’ and dispersed.’ Al-Ma’mun turned to me [Yahya] and said: ‘We were spared any trouble these people might cause with the easiest of discourses.’ I said to him: ‘O Commander of the Believers, I thank God for the way in which he inspired you to speak and act with reason and success.’”

2729. Al-Mas`udi said: Yahya ibn Aktham had been judge of Basra before his close connection to al-Ma’mun had been established. The people of Basra complained a great deal about him and al-Ma’mun was informed of his pederasty and how he had corrupted the youth of Basra with his incessant pederasty. Al-Ma’mun said: “Had they complained of his legal judgments I would have accepted their complaints.” The Basrans said to him: “O Commander of the Believers, his vile indecencies and his committing major sins have become flagrant. It was he who composed that famous verse where he describes youths and their ranks and classes.”

Al-Ma'mun said: "What verses are these?" The poem was shown to him which contained a summary of what he had been accused of, and what was related about him. It ran as follows:

*Four youths there are with captivating looks,
And their lover's eye is sleepless.
One whose world is in his face,
A hypocrite, who cannot expect a next world.
Another whose world is open,
His behind a substantial next world.
The third has won both worlds,
Combining this world with the next.
The fourth is lost among them,
Having neither this world nor the next [akhira].*

[akhira= next world + buttocks]

Al-Ma'mun was shocked and outraged, then asked: "Which one of you actually heard this from him?" They answered: "O Commander of the Believers, these verses are very widely known amongst us." He ordered the Kufans to depart and dismissed Yahya.

2730. Concerning Yahya and his conduct in Basra, Ibn Abi Nu'aym recited:

*If only Aktham had not begat Yahya,
And he had never set foot in Iraq!
He's the most pederastic judge we know of in Iraq.
Which inkstand has he not dipped his pen into?
Which cleft has his snake not penetrated?*

2731. The wheel of time turned, and Yahya became a close companion of al-Ma'mun, who forgave him his many transgressions. One day, al-Ma'mun said to him: "O Abu Muhammad, who composed the following line of verse:

*There's a judge who decrees Qur'anic punishment for adultery,
But finds nothing wrong in pederasty."*

Yahya answered: "That's Ibn Abi Nu`aym, O Commander of the Believers, who also recited:

*Our governor accepts bribes and our judge is a pederast,
And our lord is the worst of all.*

*There's a judge who decrees Qur'anic punishment for adultery,
But finds nothing wrong in pederasty.*

I doubt whether injustice will end,

As long as the nation is ruled by a ruler from the Abbasid House."

Al-Ma'mun hung his head in shame for a while then raised it and said:

"Ibn Abi Nu`aym is to be exiled to Sind."

2732. Whenever Yahya rode out in the company of al-Ma'mun in summer he wore a belt, a tunic, a sword with tassels and a woolen cap. In winter he would ride out in silk tunics, a cap of sable and exposed saddle. His pederasty became so open that al-Ma'mun ordered him to assign to himself a detachment of soldiers who would ride out whenever he did and carry out his instructions, so Yahya choose four hundred hairless and handsome youths, thus exposing his shame.

2733. Concerning this matter, Rashid ibn Ishaq recited the following verses in which he mentioned how Yahya had acted with his detachment:

My two friends, look and be amazed

At the most curious spectacle that ever met my eyes.

Here is a troop of soldiers which can only be joined

By one with smooth cheeks and beautiful eyes,

Or else by a blond "Akthamite" boy,

With a little fluff on his cheeks.

Such a soldier is given preferment over his colleagues,

In proportion to his beauty and sinfulness.

*Leading them into combat is a judge,
Who strikes mightily with a well-straightened spear.
He leads them knowingly and with kindness,
To a battle of peace, not a battle of death.
When a brave one among them witnesses a combat,
He is thrown to the ground on his forehead and hands,
As the old man leans over him, with his powerful organ passing above his
knees.*

*He leaves them prostrate, their chins to the ground,
All of them wounded in their testicles.*

Concerning the same matter Rashid also recited:

*We had hoped to see justice done, and openly,
But our hope was followed by despair.*

*How can the world and its people be set aright,
When the chief judge of the Muslims is a pederast?*

2734. Yahya ibn Akhtham ibn `Amr ibn Abi Rabah was from the city of Marw in Khurasan, and belonged to the Tamim tribe. In the year 215, al-Ma'mun was greatly displeased with him. This took place in Egypt and he was sent back to Iraq in disgrace. Yahya had written books on Hadith and acted as a jurist for the Basrans, like `Uthman al-Batti and others. He is the author of books on jurisprudence, both its principles and its branches. He also authored a book called *al-Tanbih* in which he responds to Iraq jurists, and there exist several debates between him and Abu Sulaiman Ahmad ibn Abi Du'ad ibn `Ali*.

2735. During the caliphate of al-Ma'mun there occurred the death of Abu `Abdullah Muhammad ibn Idris ibn al-`Abbas ibn `Uthman ibn Shafi` ibn `Ubaid ibn `Abd Yazid ibn Hashim ibn `Abd al-Muttalib ibn `Abd Manaf al-Shafi`i.* His death took place in the month of Rajab, the night of Friday, in the year 204 [December/January, 819] the morning that

followed that night. He was fifty-four years old and the governor of Egypt at that time, al-Sariyy ibn al-Hakam, prayed over his body. This is mentioned by `Ikrima ibn Muhammad ibn Bishr, transmitting from al-Rabi` ibn Sulaiman, the caller to prayers. This was also mentioned by Muhammad ibn Sufian ibn Sa`id, the caller to prayer, as well as others, transmitting as well from al-Rabi` ibn Sulaiman. Al-Shafi`i was buried in Cairo, in the midst of the tombs of martyrs in the cemetery of the `Abd al-Hakam clan, and among their tombs. At his head and legs are two large stones. Upon the stone near his head is inscribed: "This is the tomb of Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi`i, trusted by God." What we mention here is well known in Egypt. Al-Shafi`i's lineage joins that of the Hashim and Umayya in `Abd Manaf, since he is descended from al-Muttalib ibn `Abd Manaf. The Prophet said: "We and the Muttalib clan are like these two" and joined his two fingers together. The Quraish had besieged both the Muttalib and the Hashim clans in the valley of Mecca.

2736. Al-Faqir ibn Miskin> al-Muzani informed us of this. Faqir used to transmit traditions from al-Muzani. We heard that report from Faqir ibn Miskin in the city of Aswan, in the Sa`id of Egypt. Faqir said: "Al-Muzani said: 'I entered to see al-Shafi`i on the morning of his death and asked him how he felt and he replied: 'I am about to leave this world, bid farewell to my brothers, and drink the cup of death. I do not know whether my soul is headed to paradise so as to congratulate it or to hell-fire so as to console it.' Then he recited:

When my heart grew hard and the ways before me grew narrow,

I made my hope for Your forgiveness a ladder to You.

My sins have grown great in my sight, but when I joined them to Your pardon,

My Lord, Your pardon was found even greater.

2737. The same year in which al-Shafi'i died, that is the year 204, also witnessed the death of Abu Dawud Sulaiman ibn Dawud al-Tayalisi, aged seventy-one. It also witnessed the death of Hisham ibn Muhammad ibn al-Sa'ib al-Kalbi.

2738. Al-'Umari related the following story: "A man in Basra during the days of al-Ma'mun claimed to be a prophet so he was put in chains and taken to the caliph. When the man stood before him, al-Ma'mun asked him: "Are you a prophet sent by God?" He answered: "At this moment I am in chains!" Al-Ma'mun said: "Woe to you! Who tempted you?" He said: "Is this how you address prophets? By God, if I had not been tied up I would have ordered the angel Gabriel to punish you most severely." Al-Ma'mun said: "But what about a man in chains? Aren't his prayers answered?" The man responded: "Prophets in particular, when chained, are unable to transmit their prayers to God." Al-Ma'mun laughed and said: "Who put you in chains?" He said: "That fellow standing before you." Al-Ma'mun said: "We shall untie your chains and you are then to order Gabriel to punish us all most severely. If he obeys you, we will believe in you and accept you as a true prophet." The man said: "God has spoken truly where He says: {They will not come to believe until they see the grievous torment}. If you wish, I will do so." Al-Ma'mun ordered him to be unchained, and once the man felt safe and relaxed he said: "O Gabriel—and he drew out the word---send as a messenger whomever you wish, for I have nothing to do with you. Someone else has the wealth and I own nothing. None seeks your help except a pimp!" Al-Ma'mun ordered him to be freed and to be treated with kindness.

2739. Thumama ibn Ashras recounted the following story: "I was once at an assembly of al-Ma'mun when a man was brought in who claimed he was Ibrahim [Abraham] the Friend of God. Al-Ma'mun said: 'I never heard of one more disrespectful towards God than this fellow!' I

[Thumama] said: ‘Would the Commander of the Believers allow me to interrogate him?’ He said: ‘He’s all yours.’ I said: ‘You there! Abraham performed certain miracles.’ ‘Such as?’ the man asked. I said: ‘A fire was started and he was thrown into it but the fire was {cool and comforting}. We will start a fire and toss you into it, and if it turns out for you as it did for him we will believe in you and testify that you are truthful.’ He said: ‘Let me have something easier.’ I said: ‘What about the miracles of Moses?’ ‘Such as?’ he asked. I said: ‘He threw down his rod {and, behold, it turned into a serpent, swiftly crawling} which then swallowed the magicians’ tricks. He also used his rod to strike {the sea, and it split open}. There is also the way he pulled his hand out and it turned white but without doing him harm.’ He said: ‘That’s even harder but let me have something easier.’ I said: ‘How about the miracles of Jesus?’ ‘Like what?’ he asked. I said: ‘He raised the dead.’ But he interrupted my account of the miracles of Jesus and said: ‘I will bring about the {Great Calamity}. Let’s forget about this fellow’s miracles.’ I said: ‘But miracles are absolutely necessary.’ He said: ‘I do not possess any of these powers. In fact I said to Gabriel: “You are sending me to demons, so give me a powerful sign which I can use. Otherwise, I am not going.” Gabriel was angry with me and said: “You have come at a most evil hour! Go first and find out what these people will say to you.” Al-Ma’mun laughed and said: ‘He’s one of those prophets who would make a good boon companion.’”

2740. In the year 198 [813-4], al-Ma’mun divested his brother al-Qasim ibn al-Rashid from succession. In the year 199, Abu’l Saraya al-Sariyy ibn Mansur al-Shaibani rose in rebellion in Iraq, and grew in strength. With him was Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Isma`il ibn Ibrahim ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, known as Ibn Tabataba. In Medina, Muhammad ibn Sulaiman ibn Dawud ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan

ibn `Ali declared a rebellion, may God have mercy on them all. In Basra, `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali and Zaid ibn Musa ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali rebelled and took over Basra. In that same year, Ibn Tabataba, whose cause Abu'l Saraya was championing, died, so Abu'l Saraya set up in his place Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Zaid ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali. In Yemen, too, and in that same year, namely 199, Ibrahim ibn Musa ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali also rose in rebellion.

2741. In the days of al-Ma'mun, and in Mecca and the Hijaz, Muhammad ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali also rose in rebellion. This was in the year 200 [815-16]. He called for his own imamate, and the group known as al-Shumaitiyya from among the Shi`a advocated his imamate. This group then split: some adopted extremist views while others retracted and rejoined the other Imami Shi`ites. We mentioned all this in our book entitled *Al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat* and in our *Akhbar al-Zaman*, under chapter 30, where we recounted the history of the Abbasid caliphs and the Talibids who rose in rebellion in their days.

2742. It is said that the above mentioned Muhammad ibn Ja`far, when he first began his revolt in earnest, called for the imamate of Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Tabataba, the one championed by Abu'l Saraya. When Ibn Tabataba died, he called for his own imamate and styled himself "Commander of the Believers." Among the family of the Prophet and of those who rose in revolt to re-establish justice, none before or after that Muhammad ibn Ja`far ever styled himself "Commander of the Believers" except him. He used to be called "Beautiful Face" because of his beauty, grace and perfection of form. In Mecca and its environs, he did certain things as a result of which he was conveyed to al-Ma'mun who was then

in Marw, in Khurasan. Al-Ma'mun offered him safe-conduct and took him along with him. When al-Ma'mun arrived in Jurjan, Muhammad ibn Ja'far died and was buried there. In our work entitled *Hada'iq al-Adhhan fi Akhbar Al Abi Talib* we described the manner of his death and his history as well as the history of other members of the Abu Talib family and the places where they were killed throughout the earth.

2743. In the days of al-Ma'mun also, there rose in rebellion in Medina al-Husain ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali, known as "Ibn al-Aftas." It is said that he at first called for the imamate of Ibn Tabataba but when the latter died, he called for his own imamate. He marched on Mecca and found the pilgrims at Mina. The pilgrimage was led by Dawud ibn `Isa ibn Musa al-Hashimi, who then fled. The pilgrims proceeded to `Arafa then halted at al-Muzdalifa without having anyone from the Abbasid family to lead them in prayers. Ibn al-Aftas had arrived there at night. He then proceeded to al-Muzdalifa where the pilgrims still had no leader, so he led them in prayer then went on to Mina where he offered sacrifices, entered Mecca, and removed the coverings of the Ka`ba, keeping only the white *qabati* coverings.

2744. In the year 200, Hammad, known as Kundghush, captured Abu'l Saraya al-Hashimi and brought him to al-Hasan ibn Sahl, who executed him and crucified him on the bridge in Baghdad. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we recounted the history of Abu'l Saraya, his rebellion and his wars, his killing of `Abdus ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Khalid, together with the commanders of mixed race who were with him and how he ravaged the camp of `Abdus.

2745. Al-Mas`udi said: In the year 200 [815-16], al-Ma'mun dispatched Raja' ibn Abi al-Dahhak and Yasir, the royal servant, to `Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali, known as "al-Rida", with orders to bring `Ali to him. He was then conveyed to al-

Ma'mun with all due honor. In that same year, al-Ma'mun ordered a census of the Abbasid family, to include men and women, the old and the young, and their number came to thirty-three thousand.

2746. `Ali ibn Musa, "al-Rida", then arrived to meet al-Ma'mun who was at that time in the city of Merv. Al-Ma'mun received him most graciously then summoned the intimate members of his family and informed them that he had investigated the progeny of al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib and of `Ali ibn Abi Talib and found none at that moment more deserving of the caliphate than `Ali ibn Musa "al-Rida". He then paid him homage as his successor, had his name inscribed on dinars and dirhams, and married `Ali's son Muhammad to his daughter Umm al-Fadl bint al-Ma'mun. He further ordered all black colors to be removed from clothing and flags and to be replaced with green, and enacted other similar measures. When news of these developments reached the Abbasid family in Iraq, they were shocked and realized that this meant that supreme power would pass away from them. Leading the pilgrimage, and at al-Ma'mun's orders, was the brother of "al-Rida", Ibrahim ibn Musa ibn Ja'far. In Baghdad, the Abbasid family, their clients and retainers held a meeting in which they decided to depose al-Ma'mun and pay homage to Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi, known as "Ibn Shikla". Homage was then paid to him on Thursday, the fifth of Muharram, in the year 202 [July 24, 817], or 203 in another version.

2747. In the year 202, al-Fadl ibn Sahl was assassinated in the bath in the city of Sarakhs, in Khurasan, in the house of al-Ma'mun, and as the latter was journeying to Iraq. Al-Ma'mun was horrified and ordered his assassins to be executed. He then proceeded to Iraq. `Ali ibn Musa "al-Rida" died in the city of Tus after eating grapes in great quantities. It is also said that the grapes were poisoned. His death took place in the year 203, in the month of Safar [August, 818], and al-Ma'mun prayed over his

body. He was fifty-three years old, but forty-nine years and six months in another version. He was born in Medina in the year 153 [770]. Al-Ma'mun had married his daughter Umm Habib to `Ali ibn Musa, so one of the two daughters of al-Ma'mun was married to Muhammad ibn `Ali and the other to his father `Ali ibn Musa "al-Rida".

2748. Baghdad was in turmoil in the days of Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi. A group known as al-Ruwaybida, who called themselves al-Mutawwi`a and were the leaders of the commoners and their followers, were in open revolt. As al-Ma'mun drew near to Baghdad, Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi led the prayers on the Day of Sacrifice then disappeared the following day. This was in the year 203. The people of Baghdad then deposed him. Al-Ma'mun entered Baghdad in the year 204, wearing green, but returned to black when Tahir ibn al-Husain came from al-Raqqqa to meet him.

2749. In the year 204 [819-20], a drought struck the East and there was a plague in Khurasan and elsewhere. In that year too, Babik al-Khurrami* rose in rebellion in the region of Badhdhain, leading the followers of Jawidhan ibn Shahrak. In an earlier section of this work, we described the country of Babik, which was al-Badhdhain, in the land of Adharbaijan, al-Ran and al-Bailaqan, when we discussed the Qabakh mountain, al-Bab wa'l Abwab, the Rass river and its course through the land of Badhdhain.

2750. Al-Ma'mun then sent off his spies to look for Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi in Baghdad, having learnt that he had disappeared in that city. He was captured on Sunday, the thirteenth day of Rabi` I, in the year 207 [August 6, 822]. He was disguised as a woman, and had two other women with him. A black guard arrested him in the alley called al-Tawil in Baghdad. Led into the presence of al-Ma'mun, the latter said: "Eh, Ibrahim! What now?" Ibrahim replied: "O Commander of the Believers, the person entitled to exact revenge is free to specify punishment, and forgiveness is {nearer to piety}. He whom the vagaries of time have tossed and turned,

and he who was overcome by delusion through various strands of wretchedness that were made ready for him, has indeed allowed the adversities of time to dominate him. God has placed you above all who forgive, just as He made every sinner to be a less grievous reprobate than me. If you punish me, that would be entirely within your right, but if you forgive that would be the result of your goodness.” Al-Ma’mun said: “Forgiveness, rather, O Ibrahim.” Ibrahim cried “God is great!” then fell in prostration.

2751. Al-Ma’mun ordered the woman’s head cover that Ibrahim used to disguise himself to be placed on his chest so that people might see the state he was in when captured. He then ordered him to be taken to the royal barracks for a few days where people could see him. He was afterwards turned over to Ahmad ibn Abi Khalid, but then forgave him after having been given into Ahmad’s care. Concerning this, Ibrahim recited the following verses:

*He who divides all good things in life,
Allotted these, of all Adam’s progeny, to the seventh imam [al-Ma’mun].
He who gathers together all hearts has gathered them around you,
And your loving nature embraces every virtue.
In your marvelous acts, you have exerted yourself,
Far above anything that a soul can bear.
You pardoned one for whom no pardon was possible,
And who could not offer you any intercession.*

2752. In the month of Sha`ban, in the year 209 [824-5], al-Ma’mun travelled down to Famm al-Sulh and wedded Khadija bint al-Hasan ibn Sahl*, known as Buran. At that wedding, al-Hasan scattered quantities of money that no ruler had ever distributed before in pre-Islamic or Islamic times. Thus to the Hashim family, the military commanders, the state secretaries and the grandees he distributed purses of fine cloth containing

the names of estates, slave girls, mounts precisely described and other such gifts. When a purse fell into the hands of someone, he would open it, read the slip of paper it contained and find in it whatever good fortune had brought him. He would then go to the superintendent assigned for the purpose and tell him: "An estate called such and such in such and such rural region in such and such countryside, a slave girl called such and such, and a mount described as such and such." Thereafter, he scattered among the other classes of people dinars and dirhams, bags of musk and egg-shaped amber. He spent money on al-Ma'mun and all his commanders and retinue, as also on all his soldiers throughout the days that they remained with him, and this included all his grooms, sailors and porters, and everyone in his camp: officers, privates, mercenaries and so forth. No one in al-Ma'mun's camp had any need to buy any food or any feed for animals.

2753. When al-Ma'mun was about to board ship to go up the Tigris to Baghdad, he said to al-Hasan: "What do you need, Abu Muhammad?" He replied: "Yes, O Commander of the Believers. I ask you to preserve my place in your heart, for I cannot preserve it except through you." Al-Ma'mun then ordered that the land-tax of Faris and the regions of al-Ahwaz be conveyed to al-Hasan for a whole year. Poets composed numerous poems about this and orators made many eloquent speeches on the subject. Among the verses admired on that theme were those recited by Ibn Hazim al-Bahili:

May God bless al-Hasan, and Buran,

In his son-in-law.

O son of Harun, you have won the hand,

Of a daughter, but whose daughter?!

When al-Ma'mun was informed of these verses he said: "I swear to God, I do not know if that poet's intentions are good or evil!"

2754. Sometime after he had been captured, Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi came to see al-Ma'mun who said to him: "These two men are urging me to kill you"---he meant his brother al-Mu'tasim and his son al-'Abbas. Ibrahim replied: "They merely offered you the kind of advice that is appropriately offered to someone like you. But you might want to abandon what you fear to embrace what you hope." He then recited:

*You restored what belonged to me and were not stingy in doing so,
But before restoring my property, you refrained from shedding my blood.
You returned my life to me and I did not return your favor,
Two lives you restored: from death and poverty.
It was your goodness that pardoned me in your sight
For what I'd done, but you neither blamed nor censured me.
Your pardon was like the testimony of a trustworthy witness,
And this acted as my defense before you.*

2755. Delightful stories and poems are related of Ibrahim and how, for instance, he spent his period of hiding in Suwaiqat Ghalib, in Baghdad; how he moved from place to place in that quarter, and the tale told of the night he was arrested. We narrated all this in our above-mentioned works, to which this work is a follow-up and a reminder. Yusuf ibn Ibrahim, the state secretary and friend of Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi, authored several books among which is a work devoted to stories of physicians and kings regarding food, drinks, clothes and so forth. There is also his work entitled *Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi* which is a historical work, in addition to his other works.

2756. Among the choicest of stories relating to the days when he moved around in hiding in Baghdad is the story of him and the cupper. When al-Ma'mun entered Baghdad, as related above in this work, and dispatched spies to hunt for Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi, he set aside a very large reward in money to anyone who revealed his hiding place. Ibrahim said: "I went out

one summer day at noon, not knowing where I was heading, and ended up in a blind alley. I saw a black man standing by a door, went up to him and asked: 'Do you have a place where I can rest for an hour this day?' He said: 'Yes,' and opened his door. I entered and found a room with clean rugs and a clean leather cushion. He left me alone, closed the door facing me and departed. I imagined that he had heard about the reward and that he had gone to reveal my place of hiding. As I waited, he returned with a porter carrying all the kinds of bread and meat that one needs, together with a new cauldron and its implements, a clean jar and clean cups. He said to me: 'May I be your ransom! I am a cupper, and I know that you find my profession dirty, so help yourself to anything that my hands have not touched.' I was very hungry indeed, so I rose and cooked myself a cauldron of the tastiest food I have ever eaten. Then he said: 'How about some date wine?' I made no objection. He did what he had done before with the food, and brought me everything in a clean condition untouched by his hands. When all this was done he said: 'Would you permit me, I beseech you, to sit not far from you and be brought some date wine which I would drink to show my pleasure at having you with me?' I said: 'Do so.'

2757. "Having drunk three cups, he opened a cupboard, brought out a *oud*, and said: 'Master, it is not appropriate for someone of my social rank to ask you to sing, but since you are obligated to show me gratitude, I would hope you might honor your servant by singing to him.' I said: 'Why do you imagine I know how to sing?' Surprised, he replied: 'God be praised! You are too famous for me not to know who you are! You are Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi, and al-Ma'mun has offered a reward of a hundred thousand dirhams to anyone who turns you in.' When he said this, I picked up the *oud* and as I was about to sing he said: 'Master, are you ready to sing what I shall suggest to you?' I consented, and he proposed

three melodies which I sing better than anyone else. I said: ‘Let us suppose you have recognized me, but how do you know about these three melodies?’ He answered: ‘I am a servant in the house of Ishaq ibn Ibrahim al-Mawsili and I have often heard him speak of the great singers and their specific gifts, but I never imagined that I would hear this from you in my house.’ So I sang to him and found him an easy-going and pleasant companion. When it was night-time I left him. I had been carrying a bag of dinars so I said to him: ‘Take this money and spend it on what you need, and, God willing, there will be more where that came from.’ He said: ‘How extraordinary! I swear I was intent on offering you all that I possess and asking you to be kind enough to accept it, but thought too highly of you to offer you what I possess.’ He refused to take anything, walked out with me to point me in the direction I wanted to go, and departed. This was the last time I ever set eyes on him.”

2758. In the year 206 [821-2], and in the caliphate of al-Ma'mun, Yazid ibn Harun ibn Zadan al-Wasiti died, aged eighty-nine. He was born in 117, and was a client of the Sulaim tribe. His father used to serve in the kitchens of Ziyad ibn Abihi, `Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad, Mus`ab ibn al-Zubair and al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. This Yazid is considered by Hadith scholars to be among their most distinguished luminaries. He died in Wasit, in Iraq. In that year, the following personalities also died: Jarir ibn Khuzaima ibn Khazim, Shababa ibn Sawwar al-Mada'ini, al-Hajjaj ibn Muhammad al-A`war, the jurist, `Abdullah ibn Nafi` al-Sa'igh al-Madani, client of the Makhzum clan, Wahb ibn Jarir, Mu'ammal ibn Isma`il and Rawh ibn `Ubada. In it too al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy* also died. His lineage was often impugned, as in the following verse:

*If you attach in lineage a man from `Adiyy to the tribe of Thu`al,
Put the letter 'dal' before the letter 'ayn' in his genealogy [i.e.
da`iyy=one of suspect lineage]*

2759. In the year 209, al-Waqidi died*. His full name was Muhammad ibn `Amr ibn Waqid, a client of the Hashim clan. He is the author of the Prophet's biography and his expeditions, but was considered weak in Hadith. The following was related by Ibn Abi al-Azhar: "I was told by Abu Sahl al-Razi>an unnamed transmitter>al-Waqidi who said: 'I had two friends, one of whom was a Hashimite, and we three were like one person. The Day of the Feast arrived and I found myself in great financial difficulty. My wife said to me: 'You and I can bear hardship and poverty, but these children of ours break my heart as they see the children of our neighborhood all decked out in new clothes for the Feast while they remain in their tattered garments. If only you could find some money to spend on new clothes for them.' So I wrote to my Hashimite friend, asking him to make me a gift of whatever he could, and he sent me a sealed bag which he said contained a thousand dirhams. No sooner was this received than my other friend wrote to me complaining of exactly what I had complained of to my Hashimite friend, so I sent him the money bag as is, went out to the mosque and stayed there all night, too embarrassed to face my wife. When at last I returned to see her, she approved of what I'd done and did not blame me. While thus engaged, my Hashimite friend came to see me, carrying the bag in its original state, and said to me: 'Tell me truthfully what you did with what I had sent you.' I told him exactly what happened and he said: 'You sent me your letter and all I owned in this world I sent to you. So I wrote to our friend asking him to help me out and he sent me that bag with my stamp on it.' So we three friends divided the thousand dirhams in equal shares and I gave my wife a hundred. When the story reached al-Ma'mun, he summoned me and I told him what had happened. He ordered seven thousand dinars to be paid, two thousand to each of us and one thousand to my wife.'" Al-Waqidi died aged seventy-seven.

2760. In that same year, Yahya ibn al-Husain ibn Zaid ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain died in Baghdad. Al-Ma'mun prayed over his body. We narrated his history in our earlier works.

2761. In that same year, Azhar al-Samman, a friend of Abu Ja'far al-Mansur from Umayyad times, died. The two of them had travelled together and heard Hadith. Al-Mansur found his company congenial and respected him. When Al-Mansur assumed the caliphate, al-Samman came from Basra to see him and al-Mansur asked him about his wife and daughters, whom he knew by name. He treated him with kindness and respect and gave him four thousand dirhams, but ordered him not to come back seeking his liberality. A year later, al-Samman went to see him again and al-Mansur said to him: "Did I not order you not to visit me seeking my liberality?" He answered: "I only came to greet you and to renew my allegiance to you." Al-Mansur said: "It is, it seems, as you have mentioned." He then ordered four thousand dirhams to be paid to him and instructed him not to come back if he only wanted to greet him or seek his liberality.

2762. A year later, he returned and said: "I did not come for either of the two reasons you forbade me. I heard that the Commander of the Believers was ill so I came as a visitor of those who are ill." Al-Mansur replied: "My guess is that you came in pursuit of some gift." So he ordered four thousand dirhams to be paid to him. A year later his wife and daughters pestered him saying: "The Commander of the Believers is your personal friend, so go and see him." He said: "Woe to you! I've already told him I came to him as one seeking his liberality, as one greeting him, and as one visiting the sick, so what am I supposed to tell him this time? What excuse can I use?" But his family kept pestering him, so he left, went to see al-Mansur and said: "I did not come for sustenance nor as a visitor nor as one who looks in on the sick. I just came to discuss a Hadith we

both heard in such and such a country from such and such a person, who transmitted it from the Prophet. The Hadith is to the effect that there is one of the names of God, which if one uses to ask anything of God, will have his prayer answered and not be disappointed.” Al-Mansur replied: “Do not take that Hadith seriously, for I have tried it and found that my prayers were not answered. Thus, for example, ever since you first came to see me, I have used it to pray to God not to bring you back to me, but here you come again, repeating that you are not coming to greet me, to visit the sick or to call on me.” He gave him four thousand dirhams and said to him: “I am at a loss what to do with you, so come and see me whenever you like.”

2763. In the year 209 [824-5], al-Ma'mun rode out at night to an underground dungeon and had Ibn `A'isha executed. He was a man from the lineage of al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib, whose name was Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab ibn Ibrahim the imam, brother of Abu'l `Abbas and al-Mansur. With him was executed Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Ifriqi and others. Ibn `A'isha was the first Abbasid family member to be crucified. When he was killed, al-Ma'mun quoted the following verse:

*Though fire among stones may be dormant,
Yet when a fire-lighter stirs it up, it ignites.*

2764. There was a man in Baghdad from the lineage of al-`Abbas ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, possessed of wealth, dignity, power, understanding and eloquence, whose name was al-`Abbas ibn al-Hasan al-`Alawi. Al-Mu`tasim hated him for some incident between them, so he managed to convince al-Ma'mun that al-`Abbas despised him and his state and hated his rule. On the night that al-Ma'mun rode out to the dungeon, al-`Abbas followed al-Ma'mun to the bridge. Al-Ma'mun said to him: “You have been waiting for this to happen.” He replied: “I ask God to protect you, O

Commander of the Believers, but I recalled the words of the Almighty: {It is not fitting for the people of Medina and the Bedouins in their vicinity to fail to aid the Prophet of God, nor to prefer their own selves to his.}" Al-Ma'mun appreciated what he had said, and continued to converse pleasantly with him until he reached the dungeon. When Ibn `A'isha was executed, al-`Abbas said: "Would the Commander of the Believers permit me to speak?" "Speak," said al-Ma'mun. He said: "Let us fear God when we shed blood! If a king gets addicted to bloodshed, he will barely be able to stop, and thereafter he will spare no one." Al-Ma'mun replied: "Had I heard this from you before I set out, I would not have set out, nor shed any blood." He then ordered three hundred thousand dirhams to be paid to him. We narrated the history of Ibn `A'isha, how he planned to assassinate al-Ma'mun and what happened thereafter in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

2765. In the year 211 [826-7], Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna died in Basra. He was a Kharijite in belief. He lived almost to the age of one hundred, and no one attended his funeral, to the point where some men had to be hired to carry his coffin. This is because no person, high or low, ever escaped his vicious tongue. He was the author of fine works on the Battle-Days of the pre-Islamic Arabs and also of other works, such as *Kitab al-Mathalib* in which he mentions the genealogies of the Arabs and their corrupt state, and insults them in a manner very hurtful to people, and too outrageous to mention. Abu Nuwas al-Hasan ibn Hani' would often make fun of him. Abu `Ubaida was in the habit of sitting in the mosque of Basra, leaning against one of its pillars. Once, when Abu `Ubaida was away, Abu Nuwas scrawled two lines of verse on that column:

May God bless Lot and his followers,

And you, Abu `Ubaida, please say: Amen!

*You are in my view, and without any doubt, a remnant of them,
Ever since your adolescence and till the age of ninety.*

When Abu `Ubaida came to sit in his usual place and leant against the pillar, he saw the verses and said: "This is the doing of that buffoon and pederast Abu Nuwas! Wipe these verses off, even though they contain blessings on a prophet."

2766. In that same year, that is, 211, Abu'l `Atahiya Isma`il ibn al-Qasim, the poet, died. He died as an ascetic who wore wool. Charming stories are told about him and al-Rashid, mentioned earlier in this book. Among these stories is that one day al-Rashid ordered that he be brought to him and that no one was to speak to him on the way nor be informed what was to be done to him. While on his way, a person accompanying him scrawled on the ground: "You are to be executed." At once Abu'l `Atahiya replied in verse:

*Perhaps what you fear will not come about,
But perhaps what you hope will.*

*Perhaps what you think is easy will not be so,
And perhaps what you think hard will turn out to be easy.*

2767. On one pilgrimage, he accompanied al-Rashid. One day al-Rashid dismounted from his she-camel and walked for a while then grew tired and said: "What say you Abu'l `Atahiya if we rest in the shade of this slope?" When al-Rashid sat down, he turned to Abu'l `Atahiya and said: "Cheer us up with your verses." Abu'l `Atahiya recited:

Let us suppose the world treats you well:

Will death not come to you?

You who pursue worldly pleasures,

Leave this world to those who defame you.

What can you possibly do with the world,

When the shade of a slope suffices you?

Delightful stories and much poetry is narrated from Abu'l `Atahiya. In earlier sections of this book we cited selections from his poetry and his choicest verses, recorded in this book, when we dealt with the history of the Abbasid caliphs.

2768. Among his widely admired verses are the following:

Ahmad said to me, unaware of my affliction:

Will you truly love `Utba tomorrow?

I sighed and replied: Yes, a love that runs

Through all my veins, one after the other.

I wish I were dead, and so find relief,

For so long as I live I will always meet with rejection from her.

I do not think I shall last long, and he who experiences love's agony

As I did cannot last long.

So reckon my friendship as a reward to you from God and say:

God's mercy upon a friend of ours who died from love.

I am her slave even though I do not gain from her

Any manumission, God be thanked.

Also widely admired are the following lines of verse:

O `Utba, what is it with you and me?

I wish I'd never set eyes on you.

You have come to own me,

So be as violent towards me as you wish.

I spend my nights sleepless,

Watching the stars of heaven.

My bed is made of live coals of the ghada tree,

My cover is made of thorns.

2769. Among his unusual end-rhymes and admired verses are the following:

My two friends, I am grieving but you are not,

*And each person is too preoccupied to bother about his friend's grief.
I found passionate love to resemble live coals of the ghada tree,
But though it burns in the lover's chest, yet it is found sweet.
Passion has wasted my body, bones and strength,
Leaving only my soul and withered frame.
No lover who wins from his beloved a genuine passion,
But is found to be conceited.
I avert my eyes from everyone other than my beloved,
And none other than she do I talk about or find comfort in.
All that remains of my love belongs to her, not to my brethren and those
whom I like,
And all that she does is pardoned.*

2770. Among his choicest verses, widely appreciated, are the following:

*Alas, my soul! What sin have you committed?
What crime do you think she blames me for?
God be blessed! How badly she has acted towards me,
As regards her love! How badly she has behaved!
I went to visit her but she did not fulfill her promise to me
When I arrived, nor laid up a reward for herself with God.
God knows how many debts she owes me,
Which were not paid when they fell due.
She never granted me from her grace any promise,
Without taking back all she had granted.
What good, what benefit can be expected,
From a flirtatious woman, who pours on the ground all she has milked?
May God stand as arbiter between me and she who wrongs me:
I begged to draw near to her but she refused.
What would she lose if she sent me a messenger,
Or wrote a letter?*

*I longed to draw near to her but `Utba abstained,
Declining my longing to be near her.*

2771. Abu'l `Atahiya had an ugly face but his bodily movements were attractive. He recited charmingly and was prone to being entranced by melodies. Among his other excellent verses are the following:

To him who has not tasted the agonies of love I say:

I know all about their taste.

I gave my love a certain reverence,

But this was counted a crime.

O `Utba, you have left neither flesh nor bone on my body!

O `Utba, I am not blind as to what you're doing to me,

But passion is blind.

He who doesn't know what infatuation means,

Let him see its signs on my face.

Abu'l `Atahiya also composed verses that do not conform to any known meter such as:

All that the judge cared for was a house where he could be entertained,

And when the judge was reprimanded he said:

This world contains nothing but sinners.

This is the judge's excuse. So change the subject!

Its meter is *fa`lun fa`lun*, repeated four times. Some say that the Arabs never used such a poetic meter, nor was this meter mentioned by al-Khalil* or others who wrote on prosody.

2772. Al-Mas`udi said: A number of poets have added meters to those described by al-Khalil ibn Ahmad, among which is the meter called *al-madid*, with three feet of the first hemistich (*`arud*) and six feet of the second (*darb*), according to al-Khalil. A fourth foot of the first hemistich and two feet of the second were innovated. The first kind of the four innovated feet occurs in the following verse:

*What is it with my eye, which cannot sleep,
Its tears pouring abundantly?*

The second type of the innovated four feet occurs in the following verse:

*What is wrong with the Bakr tribe? Are they too weak to act?
This is no time for weakness.*

Other examples may be cited of discussions regarding metrics and additions thereto, which we have described in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

2773. Abu'l `Abbas `Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Nashi', the state secretary, from al-Anbar, authored a work on prosody, adding to the work of al-Khalil ibn Ahmad, in which he mentioned several instances where al-Khalil had diverged from Arab traditions and was guilty of arbitrary views. So he constructed arguments in conformity with polemics, confounded his arguments and refuted him. Al-Nashi' composed many fine poems among which is a poem in four thousand lines in a single rhyme and ending in the letter *nun* in the accusative, in which he mentions the holders of diverse views, religions and sects. He also wrote many poems and other prose works on different sciences.

2774. Among the fine poems he composed was the one when he set off from Iraq to Egypt, where he died. This was in the year 293[906], as was mentioned elsewhere. The poem is as follows:

*O habitations of loved ones, is there anyone who can give an answer,
An answer that satisfies the longing of one travelling far?*

No answer was forthcoming, but their silence

Was itself a lesson to those who asked.

*Though these habitations are desolate, yet they once held pleasant
companions,*

And though now empty of them, yet these had once settled there.

We dallied there time after time,

*And sported night after delightful night,
 We drank morning draughts as we frolicked,
 As flutes and strings played their tender tunes.
 All this was amidst roses, narcissus and lavender,
 Violets, lilies and spice,
 And daisies, and all kinds of blossoms,
 A delight to pluck, and flowers of pomegranate.
 The days toppled us over when we were at our happiest,
 Suddenly and unexpectedly.
 Thus we dispersed, when once we had all been together,
 Far-flung we became when once we were neighbors.*

2775. In the year 212 [827-8], the town crier of al-Ma'mun went around announcing: "No one's life is guaranteed safety if he speaks well of Mu`awiya, or gives him precedence over the other Companions of the Prophet, or dabbles in theology and asserts that any part of revelation is created*," together with other matters. People disagreed as to the reason why this announcement about Mu`awiya was ordered, and several stories were current, among which was that one of al-Ma'mun's boon companions related a Hadith from Mutarrif ibn al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba al-Thaqafi. This Hadith was mentioned by al-Zubair ibn Bakkar in his book of history entitled *al-Muwaffaqiyyat*, which he composed for al-Muwaffaq*, and goes as follows: Al-Zubair>al-Mada'ini> Mutarraf ibn al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba, who said: "I went with my father al-Mughira* to see Mu`awiya. My father would go to see him and talk to him, then come back and relate to me how amazed he was by Mu`awiya's mind. One night, my father came back, refused to eat his dinner, and looked very dejected. I kept quiet for a while, thinking we must have committed some error or some mistake in our governorate. Finally, I asked him: 'Why do I see you dejected tonight?' He replied: 'Son, I just came back from the

nastiest of men.’ When I asked him to explain he said: ‘I said to him when we were alone together: ‘O Commander of the Believers, you are you have had enough of us! If only you would show some justice and do some good! For you have grown old, and if you were to show kindness to the Hashim clan and treat them well as kin, I assert, by God, that you have nothing to fear from them any longer.’ He replied: ‘I wish this were true! The man from Taym [Abu Bakr] ruled justly and did what he did but, by God, no sooner was he dead than all mention of him came to an end, except when someone utters the name “Abu Bakr.” He was followed by the man from `Adiyy [Umar] who ruled well and diligently for ten years but by God, no sooner was he dead than all mention of him ceased, except when someone utters the name “Umar.” Then our own relative `Uthman came to rule, a man whose lineage no one else possessed. He did what he did, and there was done to him what was done, but by God, no sooner was he dead than all mention of him and of what was done to him came to an end. As for the man from the Hashim clan [Ali], he is cursed five times a day when the call to prayer is announced and after the phrase “I testify that Muhammad is the Prophet of God”! So, given this state of affairs, what human achievement can ever last? Motherless may you be! Nothing ever remains, by God, but one obliteration followed by another.”’

2776. When al-Ma'mun heard this story, this led him to make the announcement cited above. Letters were sent to all parts of the realm ordering that Mu`awiya be cursed on mosque pulpits. People were shocked and outraged, and the commoners became restless so he was advised to abandon this practice, and he later changed his mind about that order.

2777. During the caliphate of al-Ma'mun, Abu `Asim al-Nabil, whose name was al-Dahhak ibn Makhlad ibn Sinan al-Shaibani, died in the year

212 [827-8]. In that same year also, Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Fariyabi died. In the year 215 [830], still in the caliphate of al-Ma'mun, Hawdha ibn Khalifa ibn `Abdullah ibn Abi Bakra, whose patronymic was "Abu'l Ashhab," died in Baghdad, aged seventy, and was buried in Bab al-Baradan on the eastern bank. In that year also the following died: Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Muthanna ibn `Abdullah ibn Anas ibn Malik al-Ansari; Ishaq ibn al-Tabba`, who died in Adana, on the frontier of al-Sham; Mu`awiya ibn `Amr, whose patronymic was "Abu `Amr", and Qabisa ibn `Uqba, whose patronymic was "Abu `Amir" and who belonged to the tribe of `Amir ibn Sa`sa`a.

2778. In the year 217 [832], al-Ma'mun entered Egypt and killed `Abdus who had usurped power in that country. In the year 218 [833], al-Ma'mun led an expedition against the Byzantines. He had begun to build the town of al-Tuwanah, one of their cities lying on the entrance of the mountain pass, near Tarsus. He then sent word to the rest of the Byzantine fortresses calling on them to embrace Islam, and giving them the choice of either embracing Islam or paying the poll-tax, failing which there would be war. He defeated the Christians, and many Byzantines agreed to pay the poll-tax.

2779. Al-Mas`udi said: Abu Muhammad `Abdullah ibn Ahmad ibn Zaid, the Damascene judge, told me the following story in Damascus: "When al-Ma'mun, upon whom God's mercy, went on his military expedition and camped at al-Budandun, a messenger from the Byzantine king arrived and said to him: 'If you turn back from your expedition, the king is prepared to offer you one of three choices. He can either pay all that you spent on your expedition from your country and up to this locality, or else release every Muslim prisoner in Byzantine territory without a single dirham or dinar for ransom, or he can rebuild every Muslim town ruined by the Christians and restore it to its original state.' Al-Ma'mun rose,

entered into his tent, performed two prostrations, sought God's guidance, came out and said to the Byzantine messenger: 'Tell your king the following. As regards paying my expenses, I have heard the Almighty say in his Noble Book, relating from Queen Balqis: {I am sending them a gift, and will see what the messengers bring back. When the messenger came to Solomon, he said: 'Are you really handing out money to me? What God has provided me with is better than what He provided you. Indeed, you seem happy with your gift!} As regards his offer to set free every Muslim prisoner in Byzantine territory, what you have in your power [reading *biyadika*] is either a man who set out to seek God and the next life and so arrived at his desired destination, or else a man who set out to seek worldly gain, in which case may God never free him from his chains. As for the king's offer to rebuild every Muslim town ruined by the Byzantines, were I to raze to the ground every stone in furthest Byzantium, this would not compensate me for a woman who stumbles in her captivity and cries out "Help me O Muhammad!" So go back to your master and tell him there's nothing between us except the sword. Boy, beat the drum!"

2780. Al-Ma'mun then continued his march and only turned back after he had subjugated fourteen fortresses. On his way back, he camped at the Badandun spring, known as al-`Ashira, as mentioned earlier. He remained there until his envoys returned from the fortresses. Stopping at that spring and source of water, he much enjoyed the coldness, transparency and whiteness of the water, the charm of the spot and the luxuriant greenery. So he ordered long wooden planks to be spread above the spring and a sort of structure made of wood and tree leaves to be constructed above the planks, then sat under the shed built for him with the waters running beneath. An authentic dirham was thrown into the water, and so pure was the water that the inscription on that dirham as it

lay at the bottom of the river could be read with ease. So cold was the water that none could go in. As al-Ma'mun sat there, a fish a *dhira`* long appeared, resembling a silver ingot. So he set a prize for anyone who could catch the fish. One of his domestic servants dived in, caught the fish and brought it out. Reaching the edge of the spring or the planks on which al-Ma'mun sat, the fish wriggled and slipped out of the hands of the servant, falling into the water like a stone and splashing the chest, neck and collar-bone of al-Ma'mun, wetting his clothes. The servant dived once more, caught the fish again and placed it thrashing about in a napkin before al-Ma'mun, who said: 'Fry it at once.'

2781. "Al-Ma'mun then began to shiver and could not move from where he was sitting. He was covered with blankets and quilts as he kept shivering like palm leaves and crying out "I'm cold! I'm cold!" He was then taken to the royal tent where he was wrapped up and covered, and fires were lit all around, but he kept repeating: "I'm cold! I'm cold!" The fish, now fried, was brought in, but he could not taste it, being too taken up with his condition to touch any of it. As his condition grew worse, al-Mu'tasim consulted Bakhtishu`* and Ibn Masawayh* about his condition as he lay near death, what medical science had to say about his illness, and whether there was any chance of his recovery. Ibn Masawayh stepped forward and held one of his hands while Bakhtishu` held the other, and they measured his pulse from both hands, finding it abnormal and a sign of death and dissolution. Their hands stuck to his skin because of a sweat that broke out from all parts of his body, a liquid like molasses or the saliva of some species of serpents. Al-Mu'tasim was informed, and when he asked them about that sweat, they said they had no knowledge of it and could not find it in any of their books, asserting that it indicated the dissolution of the body.

2782. “Al-Ma’mun woke up from his unconscious state and opened his eyes after he had been asleep. He ordered some Byzantines to be brought to him and asked them about the name of that locality and spring. A number of prisoners and guides were fetched and asked for the meaning of the name al-`Ashira, and they replied that it meant “Stretch your legs.” When al-Ma’mun heard this, he was visibly disturbed by what he considered to be an evil omen. He then asked them to ask the Byzantines what the Arabic name was and they said: “Al-Raqqā.” The astrologers had determined when al-Ma’mun was born that he would die at a place called al-Raqqā, so he would often avoid staying in the city of al-Raqqā for fear of death. When he heard this from the Byzantines he knew that this was the place which from his birth was destined to be the place where he was to die. It is also said that the name al-Badandun means “Stretch your legs” but God knows best whether this is so.

2783. “Al-Ma’mun then summoned the physicians, hoping to be saved from his illness. As his condition worsened, he said: ‘Take me out so I can review my troops, look at my soldiers and assess my power.’ It was night time so he was taken out, surveyed the tents and the army, its wide extent and spread, and the fires that were lit and said: ‘O You whose kingship is everlasting, have mercy on one whose kingship is about to end.’ He was then taken back to his bed and al-Mu`tasim had a man sit next to him to make him repeat the confession of faith as he became weaker. The man raised his voice so Ibn Masawayh said to him: ‘Stop shouting for, by God, he no longer can tell the difference between his God and Mani!’ Al-Ma’mun opened his eyes, wide and reddish to an extent never seen before, and tried to strike Ibn Masawayh with his hand and to say something to him but was unable to do so. He then turned his eyes, full of tears, to heaven and managed at that moment to say: ‘O You who does not die, be merciful to him who does.’ He then died.” This

event occurred on Thursday, thirteen days remaining from the month of Rajab, in the year 218 [August 8, 833]. His body was taken to Tarsus and buried there, as stated at the beginning of his history in this work.

2784. Al-Mas`udi said: Charming stories are related about the history, conduct and assemblies of al-Ma`mun, together with fine poems and examples of excellent comportment, the details of which we have recounted in our earlier works, making it unnecessary to repeat them here. Regarding al-Ma`mun, Abu Sa`id al-Makhzumi recited:

*Have you found that the stars had any effect
On al-Ma`mun and his well-established sovereignty?
They left him behind in the two quarters of Tarsus,
As they once left his father behind in Tus.*

Al-Ma`mun himself would often quote the following lines:

*Whoso is a target for the arrows of death,
These will, one day, set him up as a target, propped on cushions.
If they miss him once,
The arrow that missed will soon return.
Though they may go astray and miss him,
Yet they'll return, too fast for him to avoid them.*

Chapter 115

An account of the caliphate of al-Mu`tasim

2786. Al-Mu`tasim received homage on the same day in which al-Ma`mun had died on the spring of Badandun, i.e. on Thursday, thirteen days remaining from the month of Rajab, in the year 218. His name was Muhammad ibn Harun and his patronymic was "Abu Ishaq". Between him and al-`Abbas son of al-Ma`mun a dispute arose concerning succession until al-`Abbas was forced to pay him homage. Al-Mu`tasim was then thirty-eight years and two months old. His mother was Marida bint Shabib. It is said that he obtained homage in the year 219 [834]. He

died in Surra Man Ra'a [Samarra] in the year 227 [842], aged forty-six and ten months, so his caliphate lasted eight years and eight months. His tomb is in the palace of Jawsaq, in Surra Man Ra'a.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

2787. Al-Mu`tasim appointed Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Malik al-Zayyat as his vizier, and he remained in that post to the end of his reign. Al-Mu`tasim fell under the influence of Ahmad ibn Abi Du`ad, the chief judge. Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Malik continued to serve throughout the days of al-Mu`tasim and al-Wathiq and until power passed to al-Mutawakkil, who held a grudge against him and killed him. We will mention his execution in a later section of this work when we come to the history of al-Mutawakkil, although we treated this topic in brief in our book *al-Awsat*.

2788. Al-Mu`tasim was fond of public works and he would say that this activity was beneficial for many reasons, foremost among which was land development, through which the whole wide realm would prosper. For upon this depended the land tax and by means of it wealth would grow, beasts of burden would thrive, prices would decrease, profits would multiply and livelihoods would flourish. He would tell his vizier Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Malik: "If I find a piece of land on which I spend ten dirhams, and a year later it brings me eleven dirhams, do not argue with me about it."

2789. Al-Mu`tasim was a man of courage and strength in body and heart. Ahmad ibn Abi Du`ad, who was an intimate companion, said: "When al-Mu`tasim failed to care for his spirit and strength, I entered one day to see him and found Ibn Masawayh with him. Al-Mu`tasim rose and said: 'Do not leave until I come back.' Turning to Ibn Masawayh, I said: 'Woe to you! I see that the Commander of the Believers has lost color and

strength and his energy has dissipated, but how do you see him?’ He replied: ‘By God, he is a piece of iron, but he holds in his hand an axe with which he strikes that piece of iron.’ ‘How so?’ I asked. He replied: ‘In the past, and whenever he ate fish, he would eat it seasoned with vinegar, caraway seed, cinnamon, rue, smallage, mustard seed and walnuts, and would eat it seasoned in this manner in order to repel the harm of the fish and its damage to the sinews. If he ate sheep heads he would do so with seasoning that repelled their harm and made them more palatable. In most cases he would mitigate the effect of his food and consult me frequently. Today, however, if I object to his diet he contradicts me and says: ‘I will eat this despite the disapproval of Ibn Masawayh.’ So what can I do about it?’”

2790. Ibn Abi Du’ad added; “Al-Mu`tasim was behind a screen and could hear our conversation. I said: ‘Woe to you, Yahya, shove your finger into his eye!’ He answered: ‘May I be your ransom! I cannot force him or be rude to him in any argument.’ When he finished speaking, al-Mu`tasim came out and said to me: ‘What were you talking about with Ibn Masawayh?’ I said: ‘Commander of the Believers, I was arguing with him about your color which I find changed, and your loss of appetite which has shaken my limbs and wasted my body.’ He said: ‘What did he say to you?’ I said: ‘He complained that you used to accept his advice and would accede willingly to his requests, but now you go against what he tells you to do.’ He said: ‘And what did you reply?’ I tried to change the subject but he laughed and said: “Was this after or before he inserts his finger in my eye?’ I was terrified and sweat poured out of me, for I realized that he had heard our conversation. Seeing my terrified state, he said: ‘God forgive you, Ahmad! I was pleased with what I thought had made you sad when you heard him, and I knew it was a kind of joke and playfulness.’”

2791. Al-Mu`tasim enjoyed the company of `Ali ibn al-Junaid al-Iskafi, who had a curious appearance and was a wonderful conversationalist, and possessed the charm of the people of the Sawad region. One day, al-Mu`tasim said to Muhammad ibn Hammad: "Go tomorrow to Ibn al-Junaid and tell him to get ready to keep me company." So Muhammad went to see Ibn al-Junaid and said to him: "The Commander of the Believers commands you to get ready to keep him company, so prepare yourself to get used to the manner in which one keeps the company of caliphs and acts properly towards them." Ibn al-Junaid replied: "How am I to get ready? Should I get me another head other than mine? Should I buy me another beard? Should I make myself taller? I am ready, and more than ready!" Muhammad said: "You don't yet know how one keeps the company of caliphs and acts properly towards them." `Ali said: "How should one act? Let me hear what you know." Muhammad, who was a witty man of culture and was a member of the chamberlain's staff, said: "The necessary requirement in acting properly is to give pleasure in conversation or when one is narrating a story or a discourse. Furthermore, you should not spit or cough or clear your throat or blow your nose. You should precede the ruler in mounting, fearing that he might lean over, and allow him to precede you in dismounting. If the royal companion does not act in this manner he might as well be the lead weight with which a dome is made straight by architects. He must not sleep even when the master sleeps, but must force himself to remain awake and be attentive to those who are with him and what posture he is assuming. This is because if both fall asleep, and one side inclines towards another who is not conscious of this, something might happen which is too obvious for me to reveal." All this while `Ali ibn al-Junaid was staring at him. When Muhammad kept expanding his description and multiplying the conditions that are necessary, `Ali interrupted his flow of words and said,

in the slang of the Sawad region: “My how hot! Go tell him: ‘None can be your companion except the son of an adulterous mother and who is himself a pimp!’”

2792. When Muhammad ibn Hammad returned and reported to al-Mu`tasim what `Ali had said, al-Mu`tasim laughed and said: “Go bring him to me.” When he arrived, al-Mu`tasim said to him: “I send for you to come and keep me company and you refuse to do so?” He replied: “That messenger of yours, that ignorant fool, brought me conditions resembling those of Jassas al-Shashi and Khalawayh the mimic!* He said I shouldn’t spit and shouldn’t do this, and do that instead.” `Ali drew out his words, made crackling noises with his breath and pointed with his hands, adding: “And don’t cough and don’t sneeze. Well, this is not something that suits me or that I can do. If you agree that I should keep you company and I happen to want to fart softly, I will fart in your presence both softly and loudly, and if you should feel so inclined, then you too can fart softly and loudly. Otherwise, there can be no truck between us.”

2793, Al-Mu`tasim laughed so much that he scraped the floor with his legs and couldn’t stop guffawing. Then he said: “Yes, you may keep me company under these conditions.” `Ali said: “Agreed, and with love and honor!” So he rode with him on a mule under a canopy. They rode like this for an hour until they reached the open country. `Ali then said: “My baggage has arrived, O Commander of the Believers, so what say you?” “It’s up to you,” he answered. `Ali said: “Summon Ibn Hammad.” Al-Mu`tasim ordered him to be summoned. When he arrived, `Ali said to him: “Come near so I can say something to you in confidence.” When he drew near, `Ali farted softly then handed him his sleeve and said: “I feel something crawling in my sleeve so look and see what it might be.” Ibn Hammad inserted his head into `Ali’s sleeve, smelt the odor of a privy and said: “I can’t see anything but I didn’t know there was a privy inside

your clothes.” Al-Mu`tasim covered his mouth with his sleeve, giggling uncontrollably. `Ali then began to fart softly and continuously and said to Ibn Hammad: “You told me not to cough or spit or blow my nose, and I have not done so, but I intend to shit on you.” His soft farting kept coming as al-Mu`tasim put his head out of the canopy. Then he said to al-Mu`tasim: “The cauldrons are now boiling over and I need another bout.” Al-Mu`tasim, finding this too much to bear, raised his voice and said: “Woe to you, country boy! I will die immediately!”

2794. One day, `Ali ibn Junaid al-Iskafi went to see al-Mu`tasim, who, having traded jokes and witticisms with him said: “Why don’t I see you here, O `Ali? Have you forgotten our intimacy and affection?” `Ali answered: “You have taken the words out of my mouth. You are nothing but Satan himself.” Al-Mu`tasim laughed, then said: “Why don’t you come to see me?” `Ali answered: “Oh! How many times have I come but couldn’t have access to you. You have become a noble aristocrat, like the Marimma family.” The Marimma family were inhabitants of the Sawad, proverbial for their arrogance among the people of the Sawad. Al-Mu`tasim, pointing to a page standing above his head with a fly whisk, said: “Here’s Sindan the Turk.” He then said to him: “O Sindan, when `Ali comes, you must inform me, and if he gives you a piece of paper or a message, you must deliver it to me.” Sindan replied: “Yes, master.” `Ali then departed.

2795. `Ali was away for some days then came asking for Sindan and was told he was sleeping, so went away. When he came back he was told he was inside the palace and there was no way to reach him, so he left.

When he returned once more he was told that he was with the Commander of the Believers. So he managed by artifice to gain entrance to al-Mu`tasim from some other door. Al-Mu`tasim laughed with him for a while, then reprimanded him, saying: “Do you need anything, O `Ali?”

He replied: “Yes, O Commander of the Believers. When you see Sindan the Turk, greet him for me, please.” Al-Mu`tasim laughed and said: “What about him?” `Ali replied: “Well, the thing is that you have placed between you and me a person, and I have now seen you before seeing him, so I miss him. Please do give him my best.” Al-Mu`tasim collapsed laughing then brought `Ali and Sindan together and instructed the latter in no uncertain terms to give him special treatment, and thereafter Sindan never avoided him.

2796. Al-Mu`tasim was once crossing Samarra from the western side. It was a very rainy day followed by an equally rainy night, so he was separated from his companions. He came across a donkey that had slipped and thrown off its load of thorns, the thorns used in Iraq to heat ovens. Its owner was a weak old man who was waiting for a passer-by to help him with the donkey and its load. When al-Mu`tasim came up he said: “What’s your problem, old man?” The old man replied: “May I be your ransom! My donkey threw off its load and I’ve been waiting for someone to help me with reloading it.” Al-Mu`tasim dismounted and went to extricate the donkey from the mud but the old man said: “May I be your ransom! Will you spoil your fine clothes and the perfume I can smell on you just for the sake of my donkey?” He answered: “Don’t worry.” So he dismounted, held the donkey with one hand and pulled him out of the mud. The old man was astounded and stared in wonder at him, having forgotten all about his donkey. He then tied the reins of his horse around his middle, bent down to the two loads of thorns, carried them and loaded them on the donkey. Then he went to a small brook, washed his hands and mounted back on his horse. The old man, who was from the Sawad, said: “May God be pleased with you!” and added in the ancient and native language of Iraq: “*Ashqol Gharmi Tahutka*” which means “May I be your ransom, young man.” His cavalry then caught up with

him and he said to one of his intimates: “Give this old man four thousand dirhams, and stay with him until he passes the military outposts and reaches his village.”

2797. In the year 219 [834], the following personalities died: Abu Nu`aym al-Fadl ibn Dukayn, client of the clan of Talha ibn `Ubaidullah in Kufa; Bishr ibn Ghiyyath al-Marisi* and `Abdullah ibn Raja' al-Ghudani. In that year too, al-Mu`tasim had Ahmad ibn Hanbal* whipped thirty-eight lashes to force him to say that the Qur'an was created.

2798. In that year, i.e. 219, Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib died. This was on the fifth day of Dhu'l Hijja [December 11, 834]. He was buried in Baghdad on the western side in the Quraish cemeteries alongside his grandfather Musa ibn Ja`far. The future caliph al-Wathiq prayed over his body. He died aged twenty-five and was seven years and eight months old when his father `Ali ibn Musa, “al-Rida”, died, but other dates are also given. It is said that Umm al-Fadl, daughter of al-Ma'mun, when she came with him from Medina to al-Mu`tasim, poisoned him. We mentioned the above facts about him because the Imami Shi`a disagreed about his age at his father's death. We gave a full account of what the Shi`a of the Qatti`iyya sect said about this in our essay entitled *Al-Bayan fi Asma' al-A'imma*.

2799. In that same year, i.e. 219, al-Mu`tasim intimidated and frightened Muhammad ibn al-Qasim ibn `Ali ibn `Umar ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, God's mercy on them. He lived in Kufa and was a man of exceptional faith, asceticism and piety. Fearing for his life, he escaped to Khurasan and moved between many regions such as Merv, Sarakhs, Taliqan and Nasa. He there fought several battles, and there were many incidents, and a large number of people rallied to him and his imamate. Eventually, `Abdullah ibn Tahir captured and sent him to al-

Mu`tasim who had him imprisoned in a specially constructed oblong structure built in an orchard in Samarra. His later fate is disputed. Some say he died poisoned while others maintain that some of his followers from Taliqan came to that orchard, offered to work as farm hands, then erected ladders made of ropes and Taliqan leather, bore a hole through that structure, took him away and departed, but as of today nothing is known of his fate.

2800. Many Zaidi Shi`ites have until the present day, which is the year 332, joined his cause and many among them claim that Muhammad did not die but is alive and will come forth and fill the earth with justice as it was filled with injustice, and that he is the Mahdi of the community. Most of these people live in the region of Kufa, the mountains of Tabaristan, Dailam and many districts of Khurasan. What these people say about Muhammad ibn al-Qasim resembles what the Kaisaniyya group among the Rafida say about Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya and also what the Waqifiyya group say about Musa ibn Ja`far, a group also known as al-Mamura. This is how this group is normally identified among Shi`ite groups. We described their views in our work entitled *Al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat*. In our book entitled *Sirr al-Hayat*, we described the views of their extremists such as al-Mughiriyya, al-Muhammadiyya and all other esoteric sects who believe in transmigration of souls as between humans and dumb beasts, and similar views.

2801. Al-Mu`tasim was fond of acquiring Turks and buying them through his clients, until he collected four thousand of them. He dressed them up in all sorts of silk embroidered uniforms with golden belts and golden ornaments, and made their uniforms distinct from all his other troops. He had also recruited soldiers from the two main groups in Egypt, the Yemen and the Qais, and called them the *Maghribis* [westerners] and further recruited men from Khurasan, from Firghana and Ushrusana. So his army

grew in numbers and the Turks would injure the common people by galloping on their horses through the markets and trampling on the weak and the young. The people of Baghdad would at times rise in anger and kill some of them when they collided with a woman, an old man, a youngster or a blind person. So al-Mu`tasim decided to move them away and settle them in an open space. He first set their camp up at al-Baradan, some four *farsakhs* from Baghdad, but did not find its climate suitable or its expanse wide enough. So he kept moving them from place to place, and exploring each locality on the Tigris and elsewhere.

2802. Finally, he came to a locality known as al-Qatul and found it agreeable. In that locality was a village inhabited by a number of ethnically Persian [*Jaramiqa*] and native population who lived on a canal, known as al-Qatul, which branched off from the Tigris. He built a palace on that site and called on the people from Baghdad to settle there, to the point where Baghdad became almost empty of its inhabitants. A rascal of Baghdad composed the following verse, reprimanding al-Mu`tasim for abandoning them:

*O you who lives in Qatul among the Jaramiqa,
You abandoned Baghdad and its daredevil heroes.*

2803. Those with al-Mu`tasim suffered greatly from the cold climate of that locality and the hardness of the soil, and found it difficult to build on it. A soldier in that army composed the following verses:

*They told us that al-Qatul would be our winter quarters,
And we have high hopes of our master, the servant of God.
People swap opinions amongst themselves,
While God brings us something new every day.*

2804. When al-Mu`tasim found the place noxious and building in it to be difficult, he went out to explore other localities. He reached the site of Samarra, where the Christians had an ancient monastery. When he asked

a monk of that monastery for the name of that site, he was told it was Samarra. Asking what that name meant he was told: “We find in ancient books of earlier nations that it was the town of Sam, son of Noah.” Asking to which region it belonged he was told that the region was called Tirhan of which that place was a part. Al-Mu`tasim looked and found wide spaces where the eye could wander, a pleasant air and good soil, all of which he found most agreeable. He remained there for three days, hunting each day, and found he had a healthy appetite and a desire to eat more than was normal for him, so recognized that this was a consequence of the climate, soil and water. Having found the place most congenial, he summoned the monks and bought their land for four thousand dinars. He then looked for a site on which to build his palace and laid its foundations at a locality known as al-Waziriyya, in Samarra. This locality lends its name to Waziri figs which are the sweetest of all figs, the softest in skin and the smallest in size, and are unequalled by the figs of al-Sham or of Arrajan and Hulwan.

2805. As buildings began to grow, masons and craftsmen were brought from all countries, and to that city were imported all sorts of plants and trees from diverse countries. Al-Mu`tasim laid out for the Turks their own plots of land, adjoining the men from Firghana and Ushrusana, as well as men from other cities of Khurasan, according to how near they were to each other in their native land. To Ashnas the Turk and his Turkish followers he assigned the locality known as Karkh Samarra. To some of the men from Firghana he assigned the place known as `Umari and al-Jisr. The plan of the streets was drawn up, and fiefs, roads and alleyways were delineated. To each craft was assigned a market alley, as also to tradesmen. People then built their houses, and edifices emerged, both houses and mansions. Buildings grew in number, wells were dug and water was ferried from the Tigris and elsewhere. People heard that a

royal capital was being built so they headed there, taking with them all sorts of merchandise and anything of benefit to people or animals which would take too long to enumerate. So livelihoods were created and affluence spread wide. Benefaction and justice were the order of the day, so prosperity grew and the land was fertile. Al-Mu`tasim began this above described project in the year 221[836-7].

2806. Meanwhile, the rebellion of Babik al-Khurrami grew more serious in the land of Arran and Bailaqan. The disorder he created increased in these territories, and his troops marched towards the main cities of these regions. He dispersed his armies, defeated government troops, killed governors and decimated the populations. Al-Mu`tasim dispatched an army against him led by al-Afshin. Following many and continuous battles, Babik was pressed hard in his own land, and his troops disbanded and scattered. He then sought refuge in a mountain called al-Badhdhain, in the land of Arran, which is the home country of Babik and known as such until the present day, i.e. the year 332. When Babik realized the gravity of his situation, he fled from that place in disguise, in the company of his brother, family, children and whoever remained of his followers. He disguised himself in the garb of a travelling trader and caravaner.

2807. Babik then moved and camped in a locality in Armenia, near some waters. The place was in the governorate of Sahl ibn Sunbat, an Armenian patrician. Near where Babik and his group were camping was a shepherd from whom they bought a sheep and tried to buy some provisions. The shepherd, growing suspicious, went off at once to see Sahl ibn Sunbat, the Armenian, and informed him about the group, adding: "He is Babik, without doubt." When Babik had fled from his hiding place and left the mountain, al-Afshin was afraid that he might take refuge in some fortress or some inaccessible mountain where certain

nations in these localities might join him, thus increasing his followers, and where the remnants of his own troops might rejoin him. If this were to happen, he would regain his earlier power and resume his rebellion. So he had the highways watched and wrote to the patricians of fortresses and strong points in Armenia, Adharbaijan, Arran and Bailaqan guaranteeing them rewards for capturing him.

2808. When Sahl heard the shepherd's story, he at once mounted with some of his retinue and went to where Babik was camped, dismounted, drew near to him and greeted him as if he were royalty, then said to him: "Rise, O king, and let us proceed to your palace, presently occupied by your deputy, where God will protect you from your enemies." They went off together and came to the fortress, where he made Babik sit on his own high chair, paid him reverence and put the place at his and his followers' disposal. A table laden with food was brought in and Sahl sat down to eat with him. Babik, a haughty and tyrannical individual who had no conception of the situation he was in or what was in store for him, said: "Is someone like you to eat with me?" Sahl rose from the table and said: "I made a mistake, O king, and you are more worthy to show tolerance towards your servant, for my social status is indeed not such as to permit me to share a meal with kings." Sahl then summoned a blacksmith and said to Babik: "Stretch your legs, O king." He was then chained in heavy irons. Babik said to him: "So you intend treachery?" Sahl answered: "Son of a whore, you are a mere shepherd of cows and sheep, and know nothing about royal authority and the management of political or military affairs!" He then put his followers in chains and sent word to al-Afshin informing him of what had happened, and that the man was in his power.

2809. When the news reached al-Afshin, he dispatched four thousand troops led by his deputy, called Bumada, and they arrested Babik and his followers, and brought him to al-Afshin, accompanied by Sahl ibn

Sunbat. Al-Afshin treated Sahl with great honor, bestowed luxury garments on him, loaded him with gifts, invested him with a turban, allowed him to ride before him and cancelled his land-tax. Homing pigeons were sent with messages to al-Mu`tasim and news of the great victory was relayed to him. When the news reached him, the people were loud in their shouts of "God is Great!" and joy and celebrations were widespread. Messages were then sent to all cities announcing the victory, after Babik had decimated government troops. Al-Afshin then marched to Samarra with Babik and with his troops. This took place in the year 223 [838]. Al-Afshin was met by Harun ibn al-Mu`tasim, the caliphal family and the state grandees, and he camped in al-Qatul, some five *farsakhs* from Samarra.

2810. Al-Afshin was sent the grey elephant which an Indian king had once sent as a gift to al-Ma'mun. The elephant was huge in size, and was covered with silk cloths of green, red and diverse other colors. With the elephant was a large Bactrian she camel also decked out as above. To al-Afshin was also sent a garment of embroidered red silk woven with gold thread, its front studded with rubies and other precious stones, another less elaborate, and a great hooded cap with multi-colored tassels, and with many pearls and precious stones woven into it. Babik was made to wear that precious garment and his brother to wear the one less valuable. The cap was placed on Babik's head and another like it was placed on his brother's head, and the elephant was then brought forward to him and the she-camel to his brother. When Babik saw the elephant he was amazed at its size and asked: "What is this huge beast?" He thought the garment very beautiful and said: "This is an honorable gesture from a great and august king, made to a prisoner who lost his power, has grown humble, and whom fate has let down and made him lose his good fortune, bringing calamity upon him. But here is a joy that matches his sorrow."

2811. He was made to mount on the elephant with his brother behind on the she-camel and to pass between two rows of cavalry and infantry, with arms and swords drawn and carrying pennants and standards, and stretching without a break all the way from Qatul to Samarra. As the elephant sauntered between the two rows with him on top, Babik kept looking left and right, assessing the number of soldiers and equipment, and expressing regret that he had not shed their blood, but caring little for their great numbers. This parade took place on Thursday, the second day of Safar in the year 223[January 3, 838]. No one had ever seen such a spectacle or such pageantry. Al-Afshin then entered into the presence of al-Mu`tasim who raised his status and seated him in a place of honor. Then Babik was brought in and paraded before him. Al-Mu`tasim asked him: "Are you Babik?" He did not answer. He repeated the question several times but Babik remained silent. Finally, al-Afshin turned to him and said: "Woe to you! The Commander of the Believers asks you a question and you remain silent?" "Yes, I am Babik," he replied. So al-Mu`tasim prostrated and ordered his hands and legs to be cut off.

2812. Al-Mas`udi said: I found in a book about the history of Baghdad that when Babik stood in the presence of al-Mu`tasim, the latter remained silent for a while then asked him: "Are you Babik?" "Yes," he replied, "I am your slave and servant." Babik's name was al-Hasan while his brother's name was `Abdullah. Al-Mu`tasim ordered him stripped of his clothes and the servants stripped him of his finery. His right hand was cut off and used to slap his face. The same was done to his left hand then to his legs as he wallowed in a pool of his blood. He had talked a great deal about the wealth he possessed with which he hoped to tempt them, but no attention was paid to his words. So he began to strike his face with the stumps of his hands. Al-Mu`tasim ordered his swordsman to insert the sword between two of his ribs below the heart in order to prolong his

agony, and this was done. He then ordered his head to be struck off and his body members to be tied to his body and then crucified. His head was carried to Baghdad and placed on the bridge, then taken to Khurasan and paraded in all its cities and villages. People had been terrified of him for the great power he had amassed, his numerous troops and the fact that he had come close to destroying a kingdom and changing its religion.

2813. Babik's brother, `Abdullah, was taken to Baghdad and the governor of the city, Ishaq ibn Ibrahim, did to him what was done to Babik in Samarra. Babik's body was strung up on a long cross at the furthest outskirts of Samarra, a place known until the present day as Babik's Cross, even though today Samarra is no longer populated and its people have left it except for a few who live in certain quarters.

2814. Following the execution of Babik and his brother in the manner described above, orators rose in al-Mu`tasim's assembly to deliver speeches of congratulation, as did the poets. That day, Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi recited the following poem instead of a speech:

O Commander of the Believers, God be greatly thanked!

This is victory indeed, and may God always support you.

With aid given you by God, you vanquished your enemy.

Congratulations! God has facilitated for you an eminent triumph,

A triumph whose equal none has ever witnessed.

May al-Afshin, God's servant, be rewarded with goodness and joy.

In al-Afshin, Babik has met {an excruciating day}.

There stands your client [al-Afshin], a man you knew to be patient and steadfast,

Until his sword split open a bright red gash,

A blow that will forever illuminate his face.

2815. Al-Afshin was crowned with a crown of gold studded with jewels and a headband consisting of nothing but precious stones such as red

rubies and green emeralds woven together with gold, and was made to wear two necklaces. Al-Mu`tasim then married al-Hasan ibn al-Afshin to Utrujja bint Ashnas, and she was wedded to him in a ceremony excessively grand and beautiful. She was a woman described as beautiful and perfect in every respect. As the wedding night arrived amidst general rejoicing among the elite and not a few commoners, al-Mu`tasim recited some verses describing the beauty of the newly weds and their union, as follows;

*One bride has been married to another,
The daughter of a general to the son of another.
Which, I wonder, was more impressive to the heart and spirit:
The owner of that ornamented sword,
Or the owner of the two necklaces and pendants?*

2816. In that same year, i.e. 223, the Byzantine Emperor Theophilos (*Tufil*) led an invasion in which he was accompanied by the kings of Burjan, Burghur, Slavs and other neighboring nations, then camped at the city of Zapetra (*Zibatra*) on the frontier of al-Jazira, conquered the city, put its population to the sword, sparing neither old nor young, and drove many into slavery. He then raided the city of Malatiya. The populations of these cities were loud in their calls for help in their mosques and wherever they lived. Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi went in to see al-Mu`tasim and recited a long poem in which he described the calamities described above and urged him on to victory and to jihad. His poem included the following verses:

*O indignation for the sake of God! You have witnessed what happened, so
take revenge!
Revenge for these women, none of whom was guilty!
Suppose the men were killed for crimes committed,
Why were their children captured and slaughtered?*

Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi was the first to use the phrase “indignation for the sake of God” in his poetry.

2817. Al-Mu`tasim rode out at once, wearing a white woolen garment and a turban such as is worn by men going to war, and camped on the western bank of the Tigris. This was on Monday, the second of Jumada I, in the year 223 [April 1, 838]. Pennants were hung up on the bridge, and a call to arms went out to all cities to join the Commander of the Believers. Troops and volunteers poured in from all Muslim countries and al-Mu`tasim appointed Ashnas the Turk as commander of the vanguard, with Muhammad ibn Ibrahim as his deputy. The right wing was commanded by Itakh the Turk, the left by Ja`far ibn Dinar al-Khayyat. The rearguard was led by Bugha al-Kabir with Dinar ibn `Abdullah as deputy. The center was commanded by `Ujayf. Al-Mu`tasim marched through the frontier of al-Sham and entered the pass called al-Salama while al-Afshin entered through the al-Hadath pass, the rest of the army entering through other passes. The army was so numerous that no accurate assessment of numbers was possible. Estimates varied between a maximum of five hundred thousand and a minimum of two hundred thousand.

2818. The Byzantine Emperor met al-Afshin in battle but al-Afshin defeated him killing most of his patricians and notable followers. The Emperor was protected by a convert to Christianity called Nusayr along with his companions. Al-Afshin had failed to capture the Emperor when he escaped from the battle, then said: “He is a king, and kings spare each other’s lives.” Al-Mu`tasim then captured numerous fortresses and marched to Amorium (*`Ammuriyya*) and captured it. The patrician Laon came out of that city and surrendered it to him. In the city itself al-Mu`tasim took prisoner the senior patrician Yatis and killed thirty thousand of its inhabitants. He remained for four days in the city, burning

and destroying, then decided to march on Constantinople, camp on its gulf and devise the means to capture it by land or sea. However disturbing news reached him, changing his mind. This had to do with the affair of al-`Abbas ibn al-Ma'mun to whom some people had paid homage and who was corresponding with the Byzantine tyrant. So al-Mu`tasim turned back, made haste, and imprisoned al-`Abbas and his followers. Al-`Abbas ibn al-Ma'mun died that year.

2819. In the year 225 [839-40], al-Maziyar ibn Qarin ibn Bandar Hurmus, governor of the Tabaristan mountains, was brought to Samarra. Al-Ma'mun had appointed him to that post but he rebelled in the days of al-Mu`tasim. His troops had increased and his army grew in strength. Al-Mu`tasim wrote to him commanding him to appear before him but he refused, so he ordered `Abdullah ibn Tahir to fight him. The latter sent his uncle al-Hasan ibn al-Husain ibn Mus`ab, from Nishapur, who arrived in the town of al-Sariya in Tabaristan. Many battles ensued between the two of them until al-Hasan was brought the news by his spies that Muhammad ibn Qarin, i.e. al-Maziyar, was out hunting with a few followers. Al-Hasan at once attacked him, took him prisoner and sent him to Samarra.

2820. Al-Maziyar then confessed that it was al-Afshin who had urged him to rebel since both were members of a religious sect that united them, it being a sect of the Dualists and Magians. Al-Afshin was arrested one day before the arrival of al-Maziyar, and a secretary of his, called Sabur, substantiated the charge against him. Al-Maziyar was then whipped until he died, after having been paraded in public then placed on a cross next to Babik. Al-Maziyar had, by way of tempting al-Mu`tasim, offered to deliver to him large amounts of money if he were to spare his life, but al-Mu`tasim refused that offer, quoting a line of verse:

When lions of the thicket go to war,

Their concern in battle is with those they slay, not booty.

2821. The wooden plank on which al-Maziyar was exposed leant towards Babik's plank, and their two corpses drew near. Yatis, the patrician of Amorium, had also been crucified on that same spot, and he too leant towards them because his wooden plank had also bent over. Concerning this event, Abu Tammam Habib ibn Aws* recited the following verses from a longer poem:

Minds and hearts were relieved of their distress,

When Babik became the neighbor of Maziyar.

The second of them was high in the sky,

*But the two did not have another when in the cave.**

It was as if they'd leaned towards one another,

To keep Yatis veiled from learning any news.

2822. Al-Afshin died in prison after having been brought face to face with al-Maziyar, who confirmed the charge against him. Al-Afshin's dead body was then crucified at the `Amma Gate. Idols were brought out, which allegedly had been delivered to him, and these were thrown on him. A fire was then lit which consumed everything.

2823. In the year 226 [840-41], Abu Dulaf al-Qasim ibn `Isa al-`Ijli died. He was the chieftain of his tribe and lord of his clan of `Ijl and other clans of Rabi`a. He was a distinguished poet and a victorious warrior. He is the poet who recited the following verses:

You will see me one day on a horse raring to charge,

And firm mountains in fear of me;

Another day you will see me at leisure, quaffing a cup,

With a branch of myrtle behind my ear.

2824. It is reported that Abu Dulaf once struck a horseman with his spear the point of which penetrated into another horseman riding behind, killing

them both. Regarding that incident, Bakr ibn al-Nattah recited the following verses from a longer poem:

They say that he can pierce two horsemen at once,

On the day of battle, nor will you see him tired.

Be not amazed at this: had his javelin been a mile long,

He would have speared a row of horsemen a mile long.

2825. `Isa, son of Abu Dulaf, reported that his brother Dulaf, whose name gave their father his patronymic of “Abu Dulaf”, would often abuse `Ali ibn Abi Talib and cast a slur on him and his followers, accusing them of ignorance. `Isa adds that one day he declared in his father’s assembly, his father being absent at that moment: “`Ali’s followers claim that anyone who abuses `Ali must be irrational. But you all know how conscientious the emir---meaning his father---is in not abusing anyone who deserves reverence. By God, however, I do hate `Ali.” `Isa added: “Abu Dulaf soon appeared and when we saw him we stood up. He said: ‘I heard what Dulaf said. What I am about to tell you is the truth and nothing but the truth. Dulaf was born out of an act of adultery, and with a menstruating woman! I was once sick and my sister sent me a slave girl whom I thought was attractive. I could not help myself and fell upon her while she was menstruating but she conceived. When cleansed of giving birth, my sister gave her to me.’”

2826. Because his father was a Shi`ite in his views, Dulaf’s animosity towards his father and his conflict with him was such that he abused him even after his death. This was reported by Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Quhistani who said: “Dulaf once told me the following: ‘I saw in a dream as if someone had come to me after my father’s death and said: ‘Answer the Emir’s summons.’ I rose up to go with him and he led me into a bleak and desolate house, made me mount a staircase, then we filed into a room whose walls were charred with fire and whose floor had traces of ashes.

There squatted my father, naked, and with his head between his knees. He asked me as if in doubt: ‘Dulaf?’ I answered: ‘Dulaf.’ He recited the following verses:

*Had we, when dead, been left alone,
Death would have been a relief for the living.
However, once dead, we shall be resurrected,
And asked afterwards about everything.*

He then said to me: ‘Do you understand?’ I replied: ‘Yes,’ then woke up.”

2827. In the caliphate of al-Mu`tasim, in the year 224 [838-9], a number of historians and distinguished Hadith scholars died, including `Amr ibn Marzuq al-Bahili al-Basri, Abu`l Nu`man `Arim, whose name was Muhammad ibn al-Fadl al-Sadusi, Abu Ayyub Sulaiman ibn Harb al-Washihi al-Basri, from the Azd tribe, Sa`id ibn Abi Mariam al-Hakam al-Misri, Ahmad ibn `Abdullah al-Ghudani, Sulaiman al-Shadhkuni and `Ali al-Madani.

2828. In the year 227[841-2], the following personalities died: Bishr al-Hafi* in Baghdad, who was originally from Merv; Abu`l Walid Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik al-Tayalisi in Basra, aged ninety-three; `Abdullah ibn `Abd al-Wahhab al-Jumahi and Ibrahim ibn Bashshar al-Ramadi. It is said that Muhammad ibn Kathir al-`Abdi died in that year but the correct date is 223.

2829. Al-Mas`udi said: In the year 227, al-Mu`tasim died in his palace called al-Khaqani, on the banks of the Tigris. This took place on Thursday, the eighteenth day of Rabi` I [January 5, 842], and is said to have occurred at the second hour of that night. He was forty-eight years old, but forty-six in other versions, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. He was born in the palace of al-Khuld, in Baghdad, in the year 180, and in the eighth month of that year. He was the eighth caliph and

the eighth of the progeny of al-`Abbas, and died leaving eight sons and eight daughters.

2830. Charming tales are told of al-Mu`tasim and his conquest of Amorium, as also his wars before acceding to the caliphate in his expeditions to al-Sham, Egypt and elsewhere. Ahmad ibn Abi Du`ad praised his manner of life and good conduct as did Ya`qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi* in an essay entitled *Subul al-Fada`il*. We discussed all these matters in detail in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. What we recount in this work are mere abstracts that refer to what came before, and in order to urge the study of my previous works. In God is success.

Chapter 116

An account of the caliphate of al-Wathiq

2831. Harun ibn Muhammad ibn Harun, al-Wathiq Billah, was then paid homage. His patronymic was "Abu Ja`far". His mother was a manumitted Greek slave called Qaratis. The homage took place the day al-Mu`tasim died, namely on Thursday, the eighteenth day of Rabi` I in the year 227. When he received the oath of homage he was thirty-one years and nine months old. He died in Samarra aged thirty-seven years and six months, so his caliphate lasted five years, nine months and thirteen days. It is also said that he died on Wednesday, six days remaining from the month of Dhu`l Hijja, in the year 232, when he was thirty-four years old. His vizier was Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Malik as already related above under the caliphate of al-Mu`tasim. Their ages and lengths of reign are a subject of dispute, with some increasing and others decreasing these dates.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

2832. Al-Wathiq was a big eater and drinker, a generous patron, kind to his family and concerned for his subjects. As regards his religious views, he followed the opinions of his father and uncle in adhering to the

doctrine of God's justice [i.e Mu`tazilism]. He was greatly influenced by Ahmad ibn Abi Du`ad and by Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Malik al-Zayyat and did nothing before consulting them, nor did he criticize them as regards any of their decisions. He surrendered all his authority and royal power to them.

2833. Abu Tammam Habib ibn Aws al-Ta'i al-Jasimi---the affiliation is to a village called Jasim in the province of Damascus, between al-Urdunn and Damascus and in a locality called al-Jawlan, some miles from al-Jabiya and the land of Nawa which are the pastures of the prophet Job---recounted the following story: "In the early days of the caliphate of al-Wathiq I travelled to Samarra and when I drew near I met a Bedouin and wanted him to tell me news of the camp of the Commander of the Believers, so I said to him: 'From what tribe are you?' He answered: 'From `Amir.' I asked: 'What do you know about the camp of the Commander of the Believers?' He replied: 'He who knows a land well masters its terrain.' 'What do you say about the Commander of the Believers?' 'He put his trust in God, who sufficed him. He overpowered the rebels and broke the backs of his enemies. He acted justly towards his subjects and shunned all sinners.' I asked: 'What say you about Ahmad ibn Abi Du`ad?' 'He is an eminence that is inaccessible and a mountain that cannot be damaged. Against him knives are sharpened, snares are set and traps are laid to the point where it is said 'He's done for,' but he leaps back like a wolf and outwits his enemies like a lizard.' I asked him: 'What say you about Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Malik al-Zayyat?' He replied: 'His evil encompasses those near to him and extends to those who are far. Every day he has a victim upon whom no trace of a fang or a claw may be seen.'

2834. "I asked: 'What say you about `Amr ibn Faraj?' He answered: 'He's a large fellow, has a great appetite and savors the taste of blood.'

People use him as a shield in battle.’ ‘What say you about al-Fadl ibn Marwan?’ ‘He’s one who was dug up after he’d been buried. You can’t count him among the living and he has the stillness of the dead.’ ‘What of Abu’l Wazir?’ ‘You’d imagine him to be the chief of heretics, as generally described. Do you not see how, when the caliph ignores him, he grows fat, eating and drinking as he pleases, but when the caliph shakes him he is rained upon and abounds with pasture?’ ‘What about Ahmad ibn al-Khasib?’ ‘That fellow eats like a glutton and voids dung like someone suffering from stomach trouble.’ ‘What about his brother Ibrahim?’ He answered: ‘{Dead, not living, are they; they know not when they shall be resurrected}’ ‘And what of Ahmad ibn Isra’il?’ ‘A wonderful man! What a doer of good he is, and what a patient man! He adopts patience as his garment and generosity as his motto.’ ‘What of Sulaiman ibn Wahb?’ ‘He is the ruler’s man and the glory of the royal bureau.’ ‘And what of his brother al-Hasan?’ ‘A bright sapling planted in the nursery of nobility so that, once he sways to them, they will harvest him.’ ‘What have you to say about Ibrahim ibn Rabah?’ ‘He is a man whose generosity has stuck firmly to him and whose virtue has granted him security. He has a prayer which he does not forsake and a lord who does not let him down. Above him is a caliph who is not unjust to him.’ ‘What about Najah ibn Salama?’ ‘What a wonderful person! What a seeker of retaliation he is! What an avenger! He glows like a firebrand. These days he keeps the company of the caliph, which results in certain blessings being removed and replaced with calamities.’ I asked him: ‘O Bedouin, where is your encampment so I may visit you?’ He replied: ‘O God, please forgive me! I have no home. I wear the day and cloak myself with the night. Wherever sleep comes over me, I sleep.’ ‘Are you content with the caliph’s military camp?’ ‘I do not humiliate myself by asking for their

charity. If they give me, I do not praise them, and if they do not, I do not curse them. Have you not heard the verses of al-Ta'i:

I care not, and the best of speech is the truest,

Whether you preserve my honorable reputation or my blood.

I said: 'It was me who composed that verse.' He said: 'Are you al-Ta'i?' I said: 'Yes.' He said: 'All honor to your father! And are you also the one who recited:

Your hand, whether liberal or mean,

Is no substitute for having insulted me?

I said: 'Yes.' He said: 'You are the greatest poet of your age.' So I took him back with me until I met Ibn Abi Du'ad and told him my story with the Bedouin. He in turn took him to see al-Wathiq, who ordered that he be paid one thousand dinars then collected enough money from the state secretaries and state notables to enrich him and his descendants after him."

2836. This anecdote is reported by Abu Tammam. If he is truthful in what he reported, and I do not think he was, the Bedouin did a fine job of description. But if Abu Tammam fabricated that whole dialogue and attributed it to the Bedouin, he fell short of his usual standards, since he is far more accomplished than to write this sort of stuff.

2837. Abu Tammam died in Mosul in 228 [842-3]. He behaved like a buffoon and a libertine at certain times, and this led him occasionally to neglect his religious duties out of jesting, not out of conviction.

2838. `Abdullah ibn al-Husain ibn Sa`d, the secretary, and Ibn Abi al-Azhar>Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Mubarrad, the grammarian>al-Hasan ibn Raja', who said: "Abu Tammam came to see me while I was in Faris. He stayed with me for a long time and I heard from several sources that he did not perform his prayers. I delegated someone to observe him closely at prayer times and found that what I'd heard was true. When I

reprimanded him, he answered as follows: ‘Do you imagine that I would take the trouble to come to you all the way from Baghdad, and suffer the hardships of those difficult roads, and yet be too lazy to perform a few prostrations which are no trouble to me at all, if only I could be sure that the one who prays earns a heavenly reward and the one who neglects to pray merits punishment?’ By God, I was about to kill him but feared that my action would be misinterpreted.”

2839. Al-Mubarrad said: “Yet it is he who recited:

*Of all mankind, the one who most deserves to pay his debt,
Is a person who is in debt to God.”*

The sentiment here is contrary to the story above. Regarding Abu Tammam, people fall into two opposite camps. He has strong partisans who value him above what he deserves and greatly exaggerate his merits, arguing that his poetry is far superior to all other poetry. His detractors on the other hand deny his merits and have a low opinion of his choicest verse, judging the new poetic style which he was the first to introduce to be ugly.

2840. `Abdullah ibn al-Husain ibn Sa`d stated that al-Mubarrad told him the following story: “He [al-Mubarrad] was in the assembly of Abu Ishaq Isma`il ibn Ishaq, the judge, with a number of others whom he named, among whom was al-Harithi, about whom `Ali ibn al-Jahm al-Shami recited:

*These two did not come into view except to presage a calamity:
Al-Harithi and the comet.*

That poem was then recited in full and the conversation turned to Abu Tammam and his poetry. Al-Harithi recited a poem by Abu Tammam where he excelled in mild reproof. Apparently al-Mubarrad was too shy to ask al-Harithi to repeat the poem or allow him to write it down because of the presence of the judge.”

2841. Ibn Sa'd added: "I told al-Mubarrad that I knew Abu Tammam's poem by heart and proceeded to recite it to him. He liked it so much that he made me repeat it several times until he memorized it. The poem was as follows:

*May I be your ransom! `Abdullah is with me,
Following a time of separation and distance between us.
He has a group of friends, bright youths,
Who fulfilled what is required of friendship and affection.
I called them to come to you and you were one,
Whom I called upon in times of great hardship.*

I asked him who was the more talented poet, Abu Tammam or al-Buhturi, and he said: 'Abu Tammam elicits in his verses certain subtle and original meanings and his poetry is better than al-Buhturi's and other modernists before him. But the poetry of al-Buhturi is more sound and less blemished than that of Abu Tammam. Al-Buhturi would recite an entire poem and none could find fault with it, whereas Abu Tammam would recite a remarkable line of verse followed immediately by a silly one. He is like a diver who brings up a pearl along with seaweed, and strings them up in the same composition. He as well as many other poets are criticized by producing a superabundance of poetry. Otherwise, if one deletes from his poetry, despite its excellence, verses that are found objectionable, he would be found to be the best among his contemporaries.' This view of his led me to recite to him the poetry of Abu Tammam where I removed his errors and all his other verses held to be blameworthy and singled out his good lines. I found that the verses which are quoted as proverbs and are commonly known among the elite and many commoners come to one hundred and fifty lines. I know of no pre-Islamic or Islamic poet who has an equal number of lines that are quoted as proverbs.' Al-Mubarrad added: 'With al-Buhturi poetry reaches

its summit.' He then recited to me two lines from al-Buhturi which, he claimed, could pass for lines of Zuhair*:

*The fool, even when excessively foolish,
Has no more effect on you than the restraint of a self-restrained man.
If you anger a noble man,
He will requite you with certain acts worthy of a nasty man."*

2842. Ibn Sa`d added: "Among the verses of al-Buhturi which we cited in that assembly, and which al-Mubarrad thought superior to those of his fellow poets was the verses he composed about the two sons of Sa`id ibn Makhlad:

*And if you were to observe the looks of the two sons of Ibn Sa`id,
They would appear to you like the looks of the two sons of Makhlad.
They are like the two stars in Ursa Minor, which, when observed,
Will be found with neither rising above the other.*

Other verses by al-Buhturi which were cited included the following:

*Who will thank the caliph on my behalf, one upon whom the caliph,
Bestowed such charity and such acts of kindness?
His generosity was such that I myself grew generous,
And was shown by him the path of liberality.
His hands enriched my own, and his bounty
Routed my miserliness, thus impoverishing me as he had enriched me.
I firmly embraced that wonderful exchange,
Which he quickly bestowed upon me, and gave others what he gave me.*

Another verse was the following:

*I wished, the day you met me, that the whiteness of the sword,
Would replace the white hairs on my temples.*

Other verses included the following:

*You drew near, humbly, but rose high in my esteem,
So your two attitudes were a descent and an ascent.*

*Such is the sun: it draws far when it rises high,
But its light and rays draw near.*

There were also the verses composed about al-Fath ibn Khaqan, when he fought a lion and killed him:

*You drew your sword against him, but your determination never wavered,
Your hand did not draw back, nor did the sword's sharp edge recoil.
The lion abstained when he found nothing in you he desired,
And advanced [reading aqdama] when he found he could not escape you.
Thus, when you brought together your right hand and raised it high
To strike him, you left nothing for any sword to strike.*

Also his verse:

*The vicissitudes of time continue to eat away at my sides,
To the point where I have mortgaged my youth with my grey hairs.*

There is also his verse about al-Muntasir:

*`Ali is closer to you in kinship,
And more generous in your view than `Umar.
But each has his own virtues, though the fast horses [reading hudhudh]
On the day of the races come after the horses with white stars on their
forehead.*

2844. There is also the following verse:

*When young and flirtatious women find my grey hairs displeasing,
Whom can I possibly please with my grey hairs?*

He then refers to the breakdown of the truce in his own clan:

*When the truce was in effect, they stitched
These wounds and scars.
But when a wound is stitched when still infected,
The physician's error becomes obvious.
An arrow that hits its mark,
Is more pleasing to the archer than one that occasionally does so.*

There are also his verses:

Al-Fath ibn Khaqan did not hold back on his generosity:

It was just the days: some are generous while others are miserly.

It was like a rain-laden cloud that missed me when it poured down,

Or like a brimming sea that passed me by when bounteous,

Or like a full moon that lit the earth both east and west,

Yet where I stood was dark and murky.

Should I complain about his bounty which spread to all mankind?

Yet who complains of the rain except one who is worthy of all blame?

2845. Muhammad ibn Abi'l Azhar stated: "Ibrahim ibn al-Mudabbir, despite his excellent scholarship, literary attainments and general knowledge, had a very low view of Abu Tammam and would swear that his poetry was entirely without merit. One day I said to him: 'What would you say about someone who composed the following verses:

Grey hairs have now drawn lines across my two temples,

Sketching a line of death, terrifying to the soul.

Visitors are shunned and intimates are avoided,

Friends are disliked, and new companions are reviled.

When the eye examines these grey hairs, they seem clear and white,

But the heart views them as jet black.

We delay their onset, hating it or accepting it,

Yet the nose of the youth is maimed in the midst of his face.

And what do you say about the following verses:

If you shoot arrows to protect `Amr, whose days had brought him ruin,

Then he betrays you, to the point where you see no liking in him for you,

You would be like a sword that fell upon something to be smitten,

And tore it up, then itself was bent and smitten.

2846. 'And what would you say about him who composed the following verse:

Honor to them who came first in time,

But true honor comes with nobility.

And what of him who composed the following:

If people are able to grow haughty, without dispensing largesse,

Then you too can well be haughty.

And what of him who composed:

You rain honor and wealth upon me, and I never meet you

Except when you're being asked for a gift or dispensing a gift.

If you so wish, you are the rope of a bucket,

And if you so wish, you are the well itself.

And what of him who composed:

They are awed by your great assault which, for them,

Resembles a death that comes without any hurdles.

For fear of your revenge, they walk modestly, their call is a mere signal,

And their speech is a whisper.

All our days are tied to your protection,

And our nights are all enchanted.

Your benefactions to guests are most liberal,

And visitors hasten to join those who visit you.

And what of him who recited:

If you find it desirable to settle in some low-lying land,

We do not long [reading nahinnu] for its heights."

2847. Ibn Abi al-Azhar added: "It was, by God, as if I had excited the hostility of Ibn al-Mudabbir towards Abu Tammam, to the point where he cursed and reviled him. So I said to him: 'Now that you have done so, let me tell you a story told to me by a man named Abu `Amr ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi, the poetry reciter. His father had sent him off to Abu `Abdullah ibn al-A`rabi to recite before him the poems of the Hudhail tribe. We recited

some poems in the *rajaz* meter, and I recited to him a *rajaz* poem by Abu Tammam which I did not attribute to him and which was as follows:

*A person there was who blamed me, but whom I blamed for blaming me,
So he, being foolish, thought that I too was foolish.*

*But nothing cheats a person so much as his own mind,
And how can you ever totally depend on your friend?*

*I have put on my garment of youth, so let me wear it out,
And act like a king in his pride and nobility,*

But like a vulgar person in word and deed.

I lauded him seeking his reward,

*But he cut the rope of my hope for intimacy with him,
After he had enslaved me by constant delay.*

But then he went on to apologize for his foolishness,

*And did not fall short in any portion of foolishness [reading *jahl*].*

He regards me, in seriousness or in jesting,

As a prisoner regards the links of his chains.

It is as if I have come to blame him,

And he is amazed by my amazement at his miserliness.

O you who is unique in his sense of justice,

I made you wear the garment of riches, so do not tire of it.

Nothing is more forlorn than a sheath without its sword,

Or praise bestowed on those unworthy of it.

2848. "So Ibn al-Mudabbir said to his son: 'Write it down.' He wrote it on the back of one of his books. Then I said to him: 'May I be your ransom! This poem was composed by Abu Tammam!' He said: 'Tear it up' and his son did so." This is a reprehensible act on his part given his scholarly attainments, because if a thing is done well, by friend or foe, it should not be despised, and profit must be acquired from both the high and the low. The Commander of the Believers, `Ali, is reported to have

said: “Wisdom is the object of the believer’s quest. Acquire this object even from polytheists.” Buzurjmihir son of al-Bakhtukan, who was a Persian sage mentioned earlier in this book under the history of the Sasanids, who are Second Persians, is reported to have said: “I have acquired from everything the best that is in it, even from the dog, the cat, the pig and the crow.” He was asked: “What did you acquire from the dog?” He answered: “His intimacy with his owners and his defense of his master.” “What did you acquire from the crow?” He answered: “His great caution.” “From the pig?” He answered: “His rising early to satisfy his needs.” “From the cat?” He answered: “Her sweet purring and her obsequious manner when asking her owners for something.”

2849. Accordingly, he who censures such poems which comfort the heart, incite the spirit, hold the attention of those who hear them and sharpen the intellect, while all who possess literary talent, cultural refinement and knowledge acknowledge that the poet has attained the very highest degree of excellence, would only be choking himself with wrath and impugning his own knowledge and literary taste. Ibn `Abbas is reported to have said: “Caprice is a god who is worshipped.” As evidence, he cited the following Qur’anic verse: {Have you considered him who takes his own caprice as his god?} Abu Tammam has composed wonderful poems, with subtle meanings and marvelously original phrasing. An expert in poetry was once asked about Abu Tammam and replied: “It is as if he collected the poetry of the whole world then chose its choicest portions.”

2850. Abu Tammam was the author of a book called *Kitab al-Hamasa*, which some call *Kitab al-Khabiya*, an anthology of other people’s poems which appeared after his death. Abu Bakr al-Suli* authored a work where he collected the story of Abu Tammam’s life and his poetry and his diverse talents and ideas. He cited Abu Tammam’s own poems to support his study of him. For instance, he quotes his description of wine:

Jahm-like in description except that they call it
The substance of all things.*

2851. His death was lamented by many poets and men of letters who were his friends, among whom one might mention al-Hasan ibn Wahb, the state secretary. He was a charming poet and a talented author of both verse and prose works. The following verses were his elegy on the death of Abu Tammam:

*In Mosul, may rain-bearing clouds water that foreigner's tomb,
Weeping for him in grief-laden sorrow.*

*May these clouds, when casting their shadow over that tomb,
Pour down on it rain, as though from one worn out water-skin after
another.*

*The lightening has struck its cheeks in sorrow for him,
And the thunder has torn up its garment at the neck-line.*

*The soil of that tomb encloses a beloved,
And beloved was my name for him.*

*A man of intelligence he was, a poet, and a discerning literateur,
Of original mind, and sagacious in critical times.*

*When you met him he would recite poems that please you,
So kind was he and so pleasant.*

*O Abu Tammam al-Ta'i, now that you have left us,
We have fallen upon extraordinary times.*

*In you we lost a great master,
The like of whom we shall never encounter again.*

*You were a brother to me, who extended to me
True affection and kinship.*

*When you passed away, the nights brought sorrow,
To both near and far,*

And Time revealed its ugliest aspect:

A face that is scowling, glum, and frowning.

It is only proper that death itself would be happy to receive you,

And fitting too that our own life would no longer be happy.

2852. Al-Hasan ibn Wahb was an accomplished poet with a fine imagination. The following is an example of his verse:

So sorrowful were you that your eyes,

Prevented you from sleep and the comfort of repose.

It is only right that your eyes should not slumber,

While your heart is snatched away and pledged elsewhere.

Deep within you is a concealed sickness,

Unseen and, I assure you, lying in wait.

Will you stop for long periods every day,

To converse in intimacy with abandoned sites and cry over their traces?

And will you interrogate that site regarding its inhabitants,

And shed tears over those who have departed?

It is as if in times gone by,

You never saw yourself as a foolish and amorous youth.

The days when you were in prime of youth deceived you,

When you were just a tender and green branch.

But now that the shadow of youth has passed you by,

And is gone as if it never existed,

And, following youth, grey hairs have dressed you,

In a headdress as white as cotton,

And you have become like a mote in the eye when pretty girls regard you,

Breaking their promises to you, even when you do not,

And flee from you when you pursue them,

When once you were a sought-after companion,

You no longer have any excuse when, as a mature man,

You know very well the right path to follow.

2853. In the caliphate of al-Wathiq, and in the year 230 [844-5], `Ali ibn al-Ja`d, client of the Makhzum clan, died. He was a celebrated Hadith scholar and transmitter of traditions. In the year 231 [845-6], al-Wathiq killed Ahmad ibn Nasr al-Khuza`i, in connection with the Inquisition about the Qur'an.*

2854. Al-Mas`udi said: Attending the assembly of al-Wathiq was a youth in his capacity as a boon companion. Because of his youth, he attended the assembly standing since, coming in after the others, he did not find a place to sit as did the senior officials of the state. But he was an intelligent fellow and was permitted to consort with other boon companions on any subject that might arise and to speak his mind freely, whether by citing a proverb or quoting a rare line of verse or telling an entertaining story or giving a quick answer to a question. Al-Wathiq, as is well known about him, was a ravenous glutton. One day he addressed his companions as follows: "What is your favorite fruit or nut?" Someone said: "Sugar cane." Another said: "Pomegranates." A third said: "Apples." A fourth said: "Sugar cane sprinkled with rosewater." Another, whom philosophy had encouraged his contrariness, said: "Boiled salt." Another said: "Dried cactus treated like those who prepare date wine, accompanied by enduring the vehemence of the drink and the bitterness of the fruit." Al-Wathiq said: "There's nothing in what any of you have said. But what do you say, young fellow?" He answered: "*Khushkinanj* [sweet pastry] in strips." This found an immediate response in what al-Wathiq harbored in his heart so he said: "Well done! You are absolutely right, and God bless you." This incident took place early on in his reign.

2855. It is reported that Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Musa al-Rida, may God be pleased with him and his ancestors, died in the caliphate of al-Wathiq, having lived to the age we specified when narrating the caliphate of al-Mu`tasim in this book. It is said that he wrote

the following message to al-Wathiq: “O Commander of the Believers, it is not possible for anyone, even if helped by good fortune, to attain happiness in this life except by suffering something hateful. He who neglects to act quickly to attain his objectives and postpones matters will be robbed of his chance by the passing of days. The distinctive characteristic of time is to bring one trouble and sorrow, while the judgment of time is always to rob one of whatever one loves.”

2856. In the year 230, and in the caliphate of al-Wathiq, Abu'l `Abbas `Abdullah ibn Tahir ibn al-Husain died. His death occurred in the month of Rabi` I of that year [Nov/Dec, 844]. When `Abdullah was governor of Egypt, a poet composed the following verses about him, extracted from a longer poem:

People say that Egypt is far,

But Egypt cannot be far while Ibn Tahir is there.

More distant than Egypt are men you see here,

In our midst, whose good deeds are nonexistent.

Dead are they to goodness, and it is all the same whether you visit them,

Hoping for some gift, or you visit the dead in a cemetery.

2857. Al-Wathiq was fond of rational discourse and honored those who practiced it, and loathed mere emulation of ancient authorities. He loved to acquaint himself with scientists and their views and with ancient and modern philosophers and others belonging to revealed religions. One day, he invited a group of philosophers and physicians, and a number of topics in natural philosophy were discussed followed by topics in metaphysics. Al-Wathiq then put the following question to them: “I would like to know how the knowledge of medicine is acquired and how its principles are derived. Is it through sense perception, or through analogy and tradition, or through the first principles of reason? Or do you think that such knowledge is acquired by direct transmission as argued by some jurists?”

Among those present at that gathering were Bakhtishu`, Ibn Masawayh and Mikha'il, and it is said that Hunain ibn Ishaq and Salamawayh were also present.

2858. One of them said: "O Commander of the Believers, several groups of physicians and many of their chief practitioners assert that experience is the sole method by which knowledge of medicine is acquired. They define medicine as a science which is acquired through repeated sensing of a single sensible in diverse conditions. So, in the last resort, it is acquired through the senses as it is acquired in the first instance, and he who acquires that knowledge is the one who experiences it. They argue that experience is derived from four principles which are its foundations and its starting points, and through which the science of medicine is mastered and shown to be accurate. Experience is thus divided into four parts. One of these parts, they claim, has to do with nature, that is, what nature produces in both the healthy and the sick such as nose bleeds, sweating, diarrhea, and vomiting, which when observed, is followed by either benefit or harm. Another part is accidental, that is, the accidents or hazards to which an animal is prone. In the case of a human being, this refers to a wound or a fall followed by little or much blood. It also refers to a sick or healthy person who drinks cold water or a draught which is followed by either benefit or harm. Another part is intentional [reading *iradiyyan*]. This occurs through the action of the rational soul such as a dream that a person has where he observes himself treating a person suffering from a clear and obvious disease by means of some well-known treatment, and the sick person recovers. When awake, this treatment occurs to his mind. He hesitates, but his intelligence then overcomes his surmise and he tries the treatment he saw in his dream. He will either find that it works or that it does not, and he does so repeatedly until an outcome of one sort or another is produced. Another part is analogical.

This is subdivided into three parts: the physician either transfers the same medicine from one disease to another that resembles it, such as from red swelling to the swelling known as the “ant” [eczema], or else from one limb to another that resembles it, such as from the upper arm to the thigh, or from one medicament to another that resembles it, e.g. from quince to azarole in treating diarrhea. In their view, this is practiced solely through experience.”

2859. “Another group of physicians, O Commander of the Believers, asserts that the easiest method to bring the science of medicine nearer to the understanding lies in referring the various diseases and their symptoms back to their exclusive and collective origins. This is because there is no end to engendered diseases. Remedies are then deduced from the very nature of the disease that is immediately present, to the exclusion of the effective causes which no longer exist, and without considering the seasons, times, customs and age. This further involves knowledge of the nature of bodily members and their limits, together with close observation and caution when treating the symptoms of any illness, whether present or absent. They adduce as proof of their theories that, among the obvious and indubitable facts, is that opposites cannot be present in one medical case, and that the presence of one fact negates the presence of another and opposing fact at once and inevitably. They assert that this is similar to deducing from what is apparent that which is hidden, and that what is apparent has a possible existence, thus differing in deduction. Thus a firm and final judgment as to what makes the thing possible cannot be certain. This, O Commander of the Believers, is the view of distinguished practitioners of medicine and of ancient Greek authorities like Namonis [Nemesius?] and Sasalis [Thessalus?], and others. This group is known as those who believe in medical method.”

2860. Addressing them all, al-Wathiq asked: “What do the great majority of physicians believe?” “They believe in analogy,” they replied. “How so?” he asked. They all replied: “This group of physicians believe that the correct path to a knowledge of medicine is derived from primary principles. Among these are knowledge of the nature of the body and its parts and their actions, knowledge of a body in health and in sickness, knowledge of climates and their diverse natures, and of professions, crafts, customs, food, drink and teeth, together with knowledge of the powers of a sickness. They add that it is demonstrably clear that living creatures differ with respect to their outward forms and natures, and their bodily parts also differ in form and nature. They argue that the bodies of animals differ in accordance with their surrounding environment, movement, stillness and food and drink, sleep and wakefulness, voiding what issues from the body or holding it in, and accidental psychic states like sorrow, fear, anger and anxiety. They assert that the purpose of medicine in managing bodies is to preserve the health in a healthy body and to bring health back to a sick body. Therefore, preserving health involves knowledge of the causes that preserve it. Accordingly, and issuing from these basic principles which have been established as indubitably valid, it is the duty of the physician who wishes to treat a sick person to investigate the nature of illnesses, bodies, nutrients, customs, present times and causes, and to deduce the remedy from all these factors. This, O Commander of the Believers, is the view of Hippocrates and Galen and their ancient and modern followers.”

2861. “But despite the agreement among this group about the above mentioned principles, yet differences exist among them regarding the many kinds of nutrients and remedies. This is due to differences over the modality of deduction. Some of them claim that one must deduce the nature of a medicament or nutrient through taste, scent, color, power or

effect on the body, and argue that the surest method of deduction is through their parts since colors, scents and the other things we mentioned are the effects of the four humors, just as warmth, coldness and dryness are also their effects. Another group of physicians claims that the surest and most accurate diagnosis is to prescribe the nature of the remedy and nutrient by what is deduced from its effect on the body, to the exclusion of taste, scent and so forth. Their view is that deduction based on anything other than action and effect cannot be decisive nor reliably establish the nature of the desired medication, whether simple or complex.”

2862. Al-Wathiq then turned to Hunain ibn Ishaq* and asked him: “What are the basic instruments of nutrition in man?” He answered: “The first instrument of nutrition in man is the mouth which contains the teeth. These are thirty-two in number. There are sixteen in the upper jaw and the same in the lower. In each jaw there are four broad and pointed teeth which Greek physicians call “cutters” [incisors]. This is because they tear what needs to be torn of soft foods, just as this kind of food is cut by the knife. They are called *al-thanaya* and *al-raba`iyyat* [central and lateral incisors]. To the side of these four incisors and on each jaw are two teeth with pointed head and broad base, which are called *al-anyab* [canines]. These break whatever food needs to be broken. To the side of the two canines, and in each jaw are five teeth that are broad and rough in surface and called *al-adras* [bicuspid and molars] which the Greeks called *al-tawahin* [grinders] because they grind food that needs grinding. The central and lateral incisors each have one root. The bicuspid and molars on the upper jaw have three roots each except for the two furthest molars where each might have up to four roots. In the lower jaw, the bicuspid and molars each has two roots except for the two furthest molars where each might have up to three roots. It is necessary for bicuspid and molars

from among the other teeth to have several roots because they work hard. The upper teeth contain more roots because they are attached to the upper part of the mouth.”

2863. Al-Wathiq said: “You have given a good account of these instruments. I want you to compose a book for me in which you include whatever needs to be known in this regard.” So Hunain wrote a book in three chapters where he mentions the difference between foods, laxative medicines and the instruments of the body. It is reported that al-Wathiq asked Hunain about many topics at that particular gathering and at others, and that Hunain wrote a work about all these matters which he called the *Book of Natural Subjects* in which he discusses a variety of sciences.

2864. Al-Wathiq used to ask Hunain about a number of topics. It is also reported that he would summon a boon companion of his to ask Hunain in his presence, with al-Wathiq listening to the conversation in amazement at the questioner and the respondent. The companion asked Hunain: “What causes a change in the air?” Hunain answered: “There are five causes: seasons of the year, the risings and settings of heavenly bodies, the winds, the geographical location and the seas.” The questioner asked: “How many are the seasons of the year?” Hunain answered: “Four, these being spring, summer, autumn and winter. The temperament of spring is equal in warmth and humidity. Summer is hot and dry. Autumn is cold and dry and winter is cold and humid.” The questioner asked: “Tell me how the heavenly bodies change the air.” Hunain answered: “If the sun comes near to them or they to the sun, the air becomes hotter, and the nearer they approach the hotter. If the sun moves away from them or they from the sun, the air grows colder.”

2865. The questioner asked: “Tell me how many types of wind there are.” Hunain answered: “North, south, east and west. The force of the north wind is cold and dry, of the south is hot and humid, but the east and west

winds are temperate, although the east wind is more inclined to warmth and dryness while the west is more inclined to coldness and humidity than the east wind.” He said: “Tell me about the types of lands.” Hunain answered: “They are four in number. First are the points of the compass, second is elevation or depression, third is nearness to mountains and seas and the fourth is the nature of the soil. The four points of the compass are south, north, east and west. The south is hotter, the north is colder, but east and west are temperate. Lands differ as to their elevation or depression, since their elevation renders them colder and their depression renders them hotter. Lands also differ with respect to their nearness to mountains. When a mountain lies to the south of a land it renders that land colder because it protects it from southern winds, and the land is exposed only to the northern winds. If a mountain lies to the north of a land, it renders the land more warm.”

2866. He asked: “Tell me about differences among lands with respect to their nearness to seas.” He answered: “If a sea lies to the south of a land, that land is hot and humid. If it lies to the north, the land is colder.” He was asked: “Tell me how lands differ with respect to the nature of their soil.” He replied: “If the soil is rocky, the land is colder and drier. If the soil is gravelly the land is drier and warmer. If the soil is muddy, the land is colder and more humid.” He was asked: “How does the air differ with respect to the seas?” He answered: “If near the sea are found stagnant bodies of water or dead animal carcasses or decaying plants or similar putrid substances, the air is changed.”

2867. When this question and answer session went on for a long time, al-Wathiq became bored, interrupted their conversation, and gave gifts to all who attended him that day. He then ordered each of them to quote whatever occurs to him of ascetic sayings to do with this world, which is the world of decay and corruption. Each of them then cited whatever

occurred to him of sayings attributed to ancient ascetic Greek philosophers and sages such as Socrates and Diogenes. Al-Wathiq said: “You have spoken at length about these topics and done so very well. Let one of you now tell me what are considered to be the most profound pieces of wisdom uttered by those sages who attended the death of Alexander as he lay in his coffin of red gold.”

2868. One of those who attended that gathering said: “O Commander of the Believers, everything that was uttered on that occasion was profound, and the most profound utterance was by Diogenes”---though some attribute it to Indian sages---who said: ‘Alexander was more eloquent yesterday than he is today, but today he is more admonitory than he was yesterday.’ Abu’l `Atahiya took over the import of these words of the Greek sage and put them in the following verses:

Enough sorrow it is to bury you!

I have shaken the soil of your grave from my hands.

While you lived you admonished me,

But today you are more admonitory than when you were alive.

2869. Al-Wathiq wept profusely and moaned aloud, and everyone in that assembly also wept. He then rose at once, reciting:

As arranged by God, time has its ups and downs.

As one stands on a height, suddenly he tumbles,

And is perplexed.

Joy lasts a mere hour,

And the life of a person is like a borrowed garment.

2870. Al-Mas`udi said: Charming stories are told of al-Wathiq, the events of his reign and the subjects discussed in his assemblies which he convened for rational debates and to which he invited jurists and theologians to discuss various types of rational and religious subjects, their principles and branches. We reported all these discussions in our

earlier works. In later sections of this work, and under the caliphate of al-Qahir, son of al-Mu`tadid, we shall cite reports in summary form that have to do with the moral character of various Abbasid caliphs for reasons that made us include these reports under the caliphate of al-Qahir. 2871. Al-Wathiq fell ill so the prayers on the Day of Sacrifice were led by Ahmad ibn Abi Du`ad, who was Chief Judge of the realm. In his sermon, he prayed for the caliph's recovery, saying: "O God, relieve him from that with which You tested him." In an earlier section of this chapter, we mentioned the date of his death, making it unnecessary to repeat it here.

END

Mas`udi Vol.5

Chapter 117

An account of the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil

2872. Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn Harun was paid homage and received the caliphal title of al-Muntasir Billah. But the very next day Ahmad ibn Abi Du`ad gave him the title of al-Mutawakkil `ala Allah. He received homage on the day his brother al-Wathiq died, which took place on Wednesday, six days remaining from the month of Dhu'l Hijja, in the year 232 [August 10, 847]. His patronymic was "Abu'l Fadl." When he received homage he was twenty-seven years and a few months old, and was forty-one years old when he was murdered. So his caliphate lasted fourteen years, nine months and nine nights. His mother was a manumitted Khwarizmian slave called Shuja`. He was murdered on the night of Wednesday, the third of Shawwal, in the year 247 [December 10, 861].

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

2873. When the caliphate passed to al-Mutawakkil, he ordered a stop to all philosophical debates, and all that people had been discussing during the days of al-Mu`tasim, al-Wathiq and al-Ma'mun. He ordered people to adhere to emulation of authority and deference to tradition, and commanded the masters of Hadith to spread their learning and emphasize prophetic practice and the unity of the community. He further took to wearing woven garments called *mulhama*, preferring this to all other clothes. His household followed suit and eventually so did the common people. Its price increased because people followed the caliph's example and good quality cloth of that kind became common since people eagerly sought it out when both caliph and commoner adopted it. Today, what

remains of such garments among people is known as *mutawakkiliyya*, a kind of woven cloth of great beauty, manufacture and excellent dye.

2874. The days of al-Mutawakkil were the best and most prosperous. Government was run on firm and upright lines, and security and justice were widespread. Al-Mutawakkil was not one who might be called generous in his gifts and rewards, nor yet miserly in withholding such gifts. The jesting, buffoonery and ribaldry in the assemblies of all previous Abbasid caliphs, and widely known to people, were abandoned only under this caliph. He was the first to put a stop to this behavior. He further introduced other practices similar to what we mentioned above, and most of his intimates and subjects followed suit. Among his viziers, secretaries and commanders none could be described as generous, and all were averse to ribaldry and music. Al-Fath ibn Khaqan*, a Turk, had the most influence on him, and was the nearest to, and most favored by him. Yet, despite his elevated status, al-Fath was not a person from whom one could hope to profit, nor one from whom evil need be feared. He was something of a scholar and man of letters, and authored a work on literary genres which he called *Kitab al-Bustan*.

2875. In his days al-Mutawakkil introduced an architectural style, unknown until that time, which was called *Hiri*, *Kummayn* and *Arwiqa*. A night companion of his had informed him that a king of al-Hira from the Nu`manid dynasty of the Nasr family had built in his capital, al-Hira, a structure resembling a battle formation, since he was very fond of military affairs and wanted to be reminded of war at all times. The portico (*riwaq*) of the structure, where the king sat, was the center; the two "sleeves" (*kummayn*) were the right and left wings containing the king's intimate possessions; the right wing held the depository of precious garments while the left held the various kinds of beverages. The portico towered above the center, while the two "sleeves" and the three

gates extended from the portico. This kind of structure is, until the present day, called *Hiri* and *Kummayn*, referring to the city of al-Hira. So people began building similar structures in imitation of al-Mutawakkil, and this style of architecture became well known until the present day.

2876. Al-Mutawakkil obtained homage for his three sons: Muhammad al-Muntasir Billah, Abu `Abdullah al-Mu`tazz Billah and al-Musta`in Billah. Describing that homage, Ibn al-Mudabbir recited:

O homage like the Homage of the Tree,*

Bringing good to all creatures,

Ja`far [al-Mutawakkil] ratified it,

And assigned it to his three wonderful sons.

Concerning the same event, `Ali ibn al-Jahm recited:

Say to the caliph Ja`far: O you who are magnanimous,

A son of caliphs, imams and right guidance,

When you determined to reform the religion of Muhammad

You made Muhammad the crown prince of Muslims.

You followed Muhammad up with al-Mu`tazz,

And made the third [i.e. al-Musta`in] the one with the most lofty

support.[musta`in: one who seeks support from God]

2877. Al-Mutawakkil became a caliph one hundred years after Abu`l `Abbas al-Saffah assumed the caliphate, and two hundred years after the death of al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib. But others have mentioned different dates, given the conflicting historical accounts that exist, the dispute among people as to the length of their days, and the increase and decrease in days and months in divergent calculations of their reigns.

2878. Al-Mutawakkil was incensed against Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Malik al-Zayyat. He seized all his property and wealth and appointed Abu`l Wazir to succeed him. Ibn al-Zayyat had, during his vizierate in the days of al-Mu`tasim and al-Wathiq, built an oven-like contraption made

of iron with nails pointing inwards as sharp as needles. In this he held as prisoners those whose wealth had been seized or other offenders, and he used it as an instrument of torture. Al-Mutawakkil ordered that Ibn al-Zayyat himself be held in one of these oven-like contraptions. Ibn al-Zayyat then asked the man in charge to allow him an inkstand and a piece of paper to write what he wanted. Al-Mutawakkil gave permission, so Ibn al-Zayyat wrote the following verses:

*This is the path to be followed, from one day to the next,
Resembling what the eye reveals to you in sleep.*

*Do not despair but be patient, for life is ever changing:
A world of riches passed on from person to person.*

That day al-Mutawakkil was busy so the piece of paper did not reach him. The following day he read it and ordered Ibn al-Zayyat to be released, but he was found dead. He was held in that contraption for forty days before he died.

2879. Ibn al-Zayyat was an eloquent writer and an accomplished poet. When urging al-Ma'mun to act decisively against his uncle Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi, who had rebelled against him, Ibn al-Zayyat had composed the following verses:

*Do you not see how one thing can cause another,
Just as fire is started by a fire stick?
That's how we experienced affairs,
For what came before can indicate to you what comes afterwards.
My view of Ibrahim is that his royal status,
Will one day lead him to resume his wretched reign.
Remember, O Commander of the Believers, his rebellion,
And his days, both jesting and serious.
If he shakes the wooden supports of the pulpit with his buttocks,
He sings of Laila, Mayya or Hind.*

These verses come from a very long poem.

2880. The following verses come from an elegy for al-Mu`tasim:

For him the sword of the Prophet remained as though its edges

Flowed with tears of great sorrow.

Its tassels and garments testify that he

Is the pure one, more worthy to be known.

I say, and as proof of the rightness of what I say,

I repeat it and swear to its truth:

The unjust never feared any ruler like you,

And the unjustly treated never found anyone like you to treat them justly.

We treated the story of his life and cited his best poetry in our book *al-Awsat*.

2881. Abu'l Wazir's vizierate lasted only a short while. Al-Mutawakkil then appointed Muhammad ibn al-Fadl al-Jarjara'i as vizier but later dismissed him. Then he appointed `Ubaidullah ibn Yahya in the year 233 who lasted in that post until the caliph's murder. In our book *al-Awsat* we treated his history and how he came to be close to al-Mutawakkil, and also the life history of al-Fath ibn Khaqan.

2882. Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Mubarrad said: "My name was mentioned to al-Mutawakkil in connection with an argument he had with al-Fath ibn Khaqan over the interpretation of a Qur'anic verse and the dispute among people as to its correct reading. Muhammad ibn al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Sulaiman al-Hashimi, governor of Basra, sent word to me, then conveyed me with all due respect to the caliph. As I was passing a place called al-Nu`maniyya, between Wasit and Baghdad, I was told that a group of madmen were being treated at a monastery called Hizqil. Passing near it, I was tempted to enter it. When I did so, in the company of a pious and educated youth, a madman approached me, so I

said to him: ‘Why are you sitting with them when you are so far apart from them?’ He blinked, raised his voice and began to recite:

*If they [i.e. his beloved] wish to describe me, my body is emaciated,
And if they search me they will find my heart to be pure.*

*What intensifies my weakness and my illness,
Is that I do not complain of my love to anyone.*

*I place my hand over my heart from the heat of my sorrow,
And I bend myself over my hand.*

Alas for love! Alas for my heart!

If I do not die tomorrow, I shall die the day after.

*When I mention them it is as if my heart,
Is a quarry in the paws of a lion.*

2883. ‘I said: ‘Well done, and all honor to your father! Please recite some more.’ So he recited:

How murderous to the spirit is separation!

How painful to the heart is the loss of the beloved!

I exposed myself to a calamity,

That acted so excessively upon my soul and my endurance.

Alas for me that I should die in captivity,

Tossed by sorrows and grief.

Every day my weeping eye overflows,

In mourning for some part of my body that dies.

I said: ‘Bravo! What a wonderful person you are! Well said indeed!

More, please!’ So he recited:

God knows that my grief is intense and private,

For I cannot give vent to my suffering.

I have two souls: the first soul is confined to one town,

While the second is captured by another.

The one confined is not relieved by patience,

Nor is it aided by endurance.

I guess the one I don't see is like the one I see,

Suffering what I suffer.

I said: "By God, you have excelled" and asked him for more.

2884. He said: "Every time I recite something to you, you ask me for more. This can only be the result of great literary sensibility or sorrow at someone's departure. So why don't you too recite something to me?" I said to the youth who was with me: "Recite to him," and he recited:

Censure, separation, farewell and parting?

Which eye would not pour down its tears?

I swear to God, enduring their absence is no real endurance,

Nor do I withhold my tears for them out of stinginess.

Yes, indeed! By the sanctity of that obsession that they have cast into me,

My heart longs for them now that they have departed.

I wish the seven seas would discharge into me,

And that my body would turn into flowing tears.

I wish that, on the day of departure, every rib in every part of my body,

Had been an eye socket.

How amazing is that departure! Had it met with a mountain,

That mountain would at once have collapsed.

Abandonment, distance, slanderers, camels?

These are like vanguards, behind which death might be glimpsed.

The madman said: "Well done! What you recited brought to mind another poem in the same vein. Shall I recite it?" I said: "Let's hear it." So he recited:

They departed, and a curtain was drawn which hid them,

Had I owned them at any time, they would not have left.

Nothing dismays me now except losing them,

When the camels lifted and carried away these doll-like maidens.

*O camel driver, stay please, so I can bid them farewell,
Just a little while, please, for death lurks in that farewell.
I remain devoted to them and have not reneged on my love,
But I wonder, now that time has grown long, what they're up to.*

Al-Mubarrad added: "The youth who was with me said: 'They're dead.'
The madman said: 'Alas! Alas! If they're dead, then I too shall die,' and
he fell down dead. I only left that place when he was washed and
shrouded and I had prayed over his body and buried him."

2885. Al-Mubarrad continued: "I then arrived at Samarra, and was taken
in to see al-Mutawakkil, and found him somewhat drunk. He asked me
about some of the topics for the sake of which I had been summoned and
I responded. The poet al-Buhturi was in attendance and began to recite a
poem in praise of al-Mutawakkil. That gathering included Abu'l `Anbas
al-Saimari. So al-Buhturi recited the poem which began thus:

*From what mouth do you smile?
With what glance do you pass judgment?
A beautiful man who illumines with his beauty,
And beauty is the closest thing to nobility.
Say to the caliph Ja`far al-Mutawakkil,
Son of al-Mu`tasim,
The one with whom all are well pleased, son of the elect,
The benefactor, son of the avenger:
Your subjects are secure in your justice.
O you who built up a glorious structure,
That once was undermined then fell into ruin,
Commit yourself to Muhammad's religion,
For, when you do, the religion itself is secure.
Through you we obtained right guidance, following blindness,
And plenty following poverty.*

2886. As he ended, al-Buhturi walked backwards intending to depart, but Abu'l `Anbas sprang up and said: "O Commander of the Believers, order him to come back for I have composed some verses which counter his poem." Al-Mutawakkil commanded him to return. Abu'l `Anbas then began to recite some verses which we would not ordinarily have cited here, were it not that this would interrupt the course of the story:

In what shit are you stuck fast?

And with what hand are you eating it?

You inserted the head of al-Buhturi,

Abu `Ubada, in a vagina.

He followed this up with verses equally abusive.

2887. Al-Mutawakkil fell back laughing, scraping the floor with his left leg, then said: "Ten thousand dirhams to be paid to Abu'l `Anbas!" Al-Fath said: "Master, is al-Buhturi to be summarily dismissed after being insulted and reviled?" He said: "Ten thousand dirhams to be paid to al-Buhturi!" Al-Fath said: "Master, what about this man from Basra [al-Mubarrad] whom we summoned from his hometown? Will he not have a share in their reward?" He said: "Let him too be paid ten thousand dirhams." So we all departed with buffoonery acting as our intercessor, whereas al-Buhturi's seriousness, diligence and prudence were of no benefit to him."

2888. Al-Mutawakkil then turned to Abu'l `Anbas and said: "Tell me about your donkey, how he died and the verses he recited in a dream you saw." He answered: "Yes, O Commander of the Believers. My donkey was more sober than any judge. He had no shameful habit and no sin. Then all of a sudden he fell sick and died. In my sleep, I saw him and asked him: 'O my donkey, did I not give you cold water to drink? Did I not feed you barley that I myself cleaned for you? Did I not treat you as best I could? Why then did you die so suddenly? Tell me how this

happened.’ He answered: ‘Yes I will. When on that day you stopped at the door of the pharmacist to chat with him about this and that a beautiful female donkey passed by me. When I saw her, I fell totally in love with her and my passion and adoration increased, so I died in sorrow from a broken heart.’ I said: ‘My donkey, did you compose any verse about this?’ He said: ‘Yes,’ and recited the following:

*My heart was entranced by a female donkey,
At the door of the pharmacist.
Coily she enslaved me by love of her,
By her charming gait,
And by her soft cheeks, the color of “shanqarani”.
It was because of her I died for, had I lived,
My humiliation would have lasted long.*

I said: ‘My donkey, what is “shanqarani”?’ He answered: ‘That’s a rare word used by donkeys.’” Al-Mutawakkil was greatly amused and ordered his singers and entertainers to sing the donkey’s verses that day and became excessively happy to an extent not seen before or after. He then augmented his gift and his bounty to Abu’l `Anbas.

2889. Abu `Abdullah Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn `Arafa, the grammarian>Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Mubarrad, who said: “Al-Mutawakkil said to Abu’l Hasan `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib: ‘What do the children of your father say about al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib?’ He answered: ‘O Commander of the Believers, what can the children of my father say about a man upon whose progeny God imposed the duty of obedience upon His creatures, and imposed his obedience upon his progeny?’” Al-Mutawakkil ordered that he be paid one hundred thousand dirhams. What Abu’l Hasan really meant was the obedience to God imposed upon his progeny, but he spoke ambiguously.

2890. False accusations about Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn Muhammad had been relayed to al-Mutawakkil and that his house contained arms and letters and other matters sent to him by his followers. So al-Mutawakkil sent a group of Turkish and other soldiers who broke into his house at night, unnoticed by his household, and found him alone in a room, its door closed, and wearing a garment of haircloth. Instead of carpets, the floor of the house was strewn with pebbles and sand. On his head was a woolen wrap. He was devoting himself to God and reciting Qur'anic verses having to do with the promise of paradise and the threat of hell. So he was seized in that condition and carried to al-Mutawakkil in the middle of the night. He stood before him while al-Mutawakkil was drinking wine from a cup in his hand. When al-Mutawakkil saw him he was in awe of him, and made him sit next to him. There was nothing in his house that resembled what was reported, nor was there any other charge of which he could be accused. Al-Mutawakkil handed him the cup he was drinking from, but `Ali said: "O Commander of the Believers, wine has never permeated my flesh and blood. So please spare me." The caliph refrained, then asked him to recite some verses.

2891. `Ali recited the following verses:

They came to rest on mountaintops, guarded by defeated men,

But mountaintops were of little use to them.

Once all-powerful, they were made to come down from their fortresses,

And laid in graves; how wretched their abodes!

A voice called out to them after they had been buried:

"Where are your thrones, your crowns, your royal garments?"

Where are those soft and dainty faces,

Protected from view by curtains and drapes?"

When asked, the grave answered for them:

"These faces are a battleground for maggots."

*Long did they eat and drink,
And having eaten for so long, they themselves are now being eaten.
Long did they build mansions to make themselves secure,
But they abandoned mansions and families and departed.
Long did they hoard and heap wealth,
But left it all to their enemies and passed on.
Their mansions are now uninhabited ruins,
Their denizens conveyed to their graves.*

2892. All who were in that gathering felt compassion for `Ali and thought that al-Mutawakkil would fly into a rage against him. The narrator of this story continues: “But, by God, al-Mutawakkil wept for so long that his tears soaked his beard, and all who attended him wept too. He then ordered the wine to be taken away and said to `Ali: ‘O Abu`l Hasan, are you in debt?’ He answered: ‘Yes, for four thousand dinars.’ Al-Mutawakkil ordered that sum to be paid to him, and had him conveyed back to his house with all due respect.”

2893. In the year 233 [847-8], Muhammad ibn Sama`a, the judge, companion of Muhammad ibn al-Hasan [al-Shaibani] and of Abu Hanifa, died during the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil. He was a hundred years old, sound in body, mind and sense, and still capable of deflowering maidens and mounting upon horses that gallop or go fast, and did not lack any of his faculties. His son, Sama`a ibn Muhammad reported that his father Muhammad ibn Sama`a once said to him: “I found in the lifetime of Sawwar ibn `Abdullah, the judge of the caliph al-Mansur, a letter written in his own hand which contained what I think are verses that he either composed himself or found them worthy of recording. They are as follows:

*You [fem] ripped the flesh off my bones, leaving them
Naked and cracked in their skins.*

*You emptied them of their marrow,
Resembling flasks through which the winds whistle.
Take my hand then lift up my garment and see
My wasted body, though I try to hide it.”*

2894. Muhammad ibn Sama`a is the author of fine works of jurisprudence and reports transmitted from Muhammad ibn al-Hasan and others. Among his works is one entitled *Nawadir al-Masa`il*, transmitted from Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, and is thousands of pages long.

2895. In that year, namely 233, Yahya ibn Ma`in died. In the year 235 [849-50], Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaiba and al-Qawariri died. These two were celebrated Hadith masters who committed it to memory. In that year too Ishaq ibn Ibrahim ibn Mus`ab died. He had been in charge of the police of Baghdad and his son succeeded him. Charming reports are related of him, a selection of which we cited in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

2896. Among these reports that deal with his history and conduct in Baghdad is one related by Musa ibn Salih ibn Shaikh ibn `Umaira al-Asadi. He relates that Ishaq ibn Ibrahim saw the Prophet in a dream who said to him: “Set the murderer free.” He was greatly alarmed and scrutinized all the letters he had received from prison wardens but saw no reference to any murderer. So he summoned al-Sindi and `Abbas and asked them if either of them had received any information to do with anyone charged with murder. Al-`Abbas said: “Yes, and we’ve written to you about him.” He once more examined the letters and found that particular letter tucked away among a pile of papers. It was the case of a man whom witnesses affirmed that he committed murder and that the man himself had confessed his crime. Ishaq then ordered him to be brought before him. When he saw the man’s great alarm he said to him: “If you tell me the truth I will set you free.” So he began to tell him his story which was as follows. He and a number of companions had formed

a gang that committed grievous crimes and violated all sanctities. They would meet in a house in Baghdad to plan all sorts of crimes. On that particular day, an old woman who frequented their company for immoral purposes entered, accompanied by a maiden of surpassing beauty. When in the middle of the room, the maiden uttered a loud cry of alarm. I left my companions and approached her, led her into a room, calmed her down and asked what had happened to her. She said: “Fear God and do not harm me. That old woman had deceived me, telling me that there was a receptacle for perfume in her cupboard that had no equal, and tempting me to examine its contents. I went out trusting her word and she suddenly barged in, leading me among you. My ancestors are the Prophet of God and his daughter Fatima, and my father is al-Hasan ibn `Ali, so please respect me and protect me for their sake.”

2897. The man added: “So I assured her that she was safe, went out to my companions and told them her story. It was as if I had increased their lust for her. They said: ‘Now that you have gratified your desire with her, you want to turn us away from her?’ They then sprang upon her and I stood guard and protected her from them. The scuffle became serious and I suffered some wounds so I went after the one who was most lustful among them and most determined to rape her, and I killed him. I continued to defend her until I saved her and she slipped away, no longer afraid for herself. I led her out of the house and heard her saying: ‘May God protect you as you protected me, and may He treat you as you treated me!’ The neighbors heard the tumult and came in, found me holding a knife and the man floundering in his blood, so I was seized and delivered to the police in that state.’ Ishaq said to him: ‘I shall recognize and reward you for what you did in protecting that maiden, and shall release you for the sake of God and His Prophet.’ The man answered: ‘I swear by Him for whose sake you have freed me that I shall never

commit another crime nor any act of doubtful morality until I meet my God.' Ishaq told him about his dream and that God had not forgotten his good deed, and offered him a very generous reward but the man refused to accept anything.

2898. In the year 237 [851-2], al-Mutawakkil pardoned Abu Muhammad Yahya ibn Aktham, the judge, and had him sent to Samarra where he was appointed chief judge. Al-Mutawakkil was incensed against Ahmad ibn Abi Du'ad* and his son Abu'l Walid Muhammad, who was acting as judge. He seized the sum of one hundred and twenty thousand dinars from Abu'l Walid plus forty thousand dinars worth of jewelry, and he was brought down to Baghdad. Ahmad ibn Abi Du'ad had suffered a stroke forty-seven days after the death of his enemy Ibn al-Zayyat. This was in the year 233. In the year 240 [854-5], Abu `Abdullah Ahmad ibn Abi Du'ad died, twenty days after the death of his son Abu'l Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad. He was a man whom God had made to be a source of much good to people, as is well known, and had smoothed his path to wealth, making him a lover of generosity and good deeds.

2899. It is reported that al-Mu`tasim was once in the palace of al-Jawsaq with his boon companions. He had determined to start the morning with a bout of wine drinking and commanded each companion to prepare a dish of food. Suddenly he saw Salamah, a page of Ibn Abi Du'ad, and said: "This is the page of Ibn Abi Du'ad spying upon us, and will go at once and reveal your names to his master: so-and-so the Hashimite, so-and-so the Quraishite, so-and-so the Ansari, so-and-so the Arabian. He will then come and present his petitions on behalf of the needy, and disrupt our plans. I call you to witness that I will not satisfy any of his requests today." He had hardly finished speaking when Itakh the chamberlain entered requesting permission to enter for Ibn Abi Du'ad. The caliph turned to his companions and asked: "What should I say?" They

answered: “Don’t let him in.” He said: “Woe to you! A whole year’s fever is easier for me to bear than this.” So Ibn Abi Du’ad came in. 2900. No sooner had he sat down, greeted the gathering and began to speak than al-Mu`tasim’s face brightened with pleasure, and he smiled at him from every side. Then he said to him: “O Abu `Abdullah, we have each cooked a skillet of food, and we have appointed you as arbiter of their taste.” He answered: “Bring them in and I will eat then give my considered judgment.” So the skillets were carried in and placed before him. When he consumed the first skillet completely, al-Mu`tasim said: “This is unfair.” “Why?” he asked. “Because I see you’ve done full justice to this meal and will judge its cook the winner.” He replied: “O Commander of the Believers, it is my duty to eat from all these skillets as much as I ate from this one.” Al-Mu`tasim smiled and said: “Have it your own way then.”

2901. So he ate as he had promised then said: “The fellow who cooked this one did well by being liberal with the pepper but with only a little cumin. The fellow who cooked this one did well by being liberal with vinegar but with only a little oil. As for this one, its cook spiced it well with moderate spices, while in this one the cook did it with skill by decreasing its water and increasing its sauce.” He proceeded to describe every single skillet with epithets that pleased their owners, and ate with the others also the most wholesome and cleanest food. At one time he would narrate to them stories about the big eaters in early Islam like Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan, `Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad, al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf and Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik. At others he would tell them stories about the big eaters of his own days such as Maysara the date seller, Dawraq the butcher, Hatim the grain measurer and Ishaq the pigeon keeper.

2902. When the tables were cleared, al-Mu`tasim said to him: “Is there anything you need, Abu `Abdullah?” “Yes, O Commander of the Believers. There is a man from your family who has fallen on hard times, is presently impoverished and lives in misery.” “What’s his name?” asked the caliph. “Sulaiman ibn `Abdullah al-Nawfali.” “What do you think he needs to better his way of life?” “Fifty thousand dirhams.” “This is granted.” “Another request.” “What is it?” “To return to Ibrahim ibn al-Mu`tamir his estates.” “Done,” said the caliph. “There’s another request.” “Done too.” By God, he did not leave before asking thirteen requests, all of which the caliph granted, bar none. Ibn Abi Du’ad stood and made the following speech: “O Commander of the Believers, may God grant you a long life! By living long, the orchards of your subjects will blossom, their lives will grow easy and their wealth will multiply. May you continue to enjoy good health, be crowned with honors and be immune from the vicissitudes of time.” He then departed.

2903. Al-Mu`tasim said: “Here’s a man who is a true ornament and a joy to have near one. He is worth a thousand of his like. Did you observe how he came in and greeted us and spoke? How he ate and described the skillets then conversed in detail, and how much we enjoyed our meal with him around? None can deny this man’s requests except he be a man of mean spirit and nasty pedigree. I swear to God, had he asked me in this gathering for requests to the value of a million dirhams I would have granted them, for I know that he will win me praise in this world and reward in the next.”

2904. Regarding Ahmad ibn Abi Du’ad, Abu Tammam recited:

*The evils of all times have been forgotten,
Due to the good deeds of Ahmad ibn Abi Du’ad.
Wherever I travel over the earth,
My camel and provisions are supplied by his generosity.*

He will always be true to your opinion of him and what you hope from him,

Even when my travels fill me with anxiety in some far land.

2905. Al-Fath ibn Khaqan narrated the following story: “I was with al-Mutawakkil in his palace of al-Ja`fari when he determined to begin his morning with a drinking bout. He had sent after his boon companions and singers. I walked around conversing with him, with him leaning upon me, until we reached a point where we could overlook the canal. He called for a chair, sat down and began to talk to me. Suddenly he noticed a large boat secured to the bank of the canal, and a sailor carrying a large skillet in which he was cooking beef in vinegar. The smell of the cooking had spread wide, so he said: ‘O Fath, this surely is the smell of meat cooked in vinegar! Woe to you! Do you not see how delicious is its smell? Bring it to me exactly as it is!’

2906. The household servants then set off and took it out of the hands of the sailor. When the other sailors and boat owners saw what happened, they were overcome with anxiety and terror, and brought all their skillets to al-Mutawakkil, boiling over and just as they were, and these were all placed before us. He appreciated their smell and color and asked for a loaf of bread, broke off a piece and handed it to me then broke another piece for himself and each of us ate three mouthfuls. When the boon companions and singers arrived, he gave each a mouthful from a skillet. The food then arrived and tables were spread. When he finished eating, he ordered these skillets emptied and washed in his presence and commanded them to be filled with dirhams. A purse was then produced and emptied into the skillets. Two thousand dirhams remained from that purse so he told a nearby servant: “Take all these skillets and deliver them to the owners of the boat, and tell them this is payment for what we ate of your skillets. To the cook, hand over the dirhams remaining from

that purse as a reward for his cooking skills.” Al-Fath added: “Al-Mutawakkil would often say whenever the skillet of that sailor was mentioned: ‘I never ate anything more delicious than that meat cooked in vinegar belonging to the owners of the ship.’”

2907. Abu’l Qasim Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn Hamdan al-Mawsili, the jurist, told me the following tale in Juhaina, he himself being from Haditha of Mawsil: “Abu’l Hasan al-Salihi reported that al-Jahiz said: ‘My name was mentioned to the Commander of the Believers al-Mutawakkil as a tutor to some of his children, but when he saw me he found me very ugly, ordered that I be paid ten thousand dirhams then dismissed me. Leaving his presence, I met Muhammad ibn Ibrahim who was about to travel to Baghdad. He offered to take me with him in his light-going ship so we went on board. Reaching the mouth of the Qatul canal and leaving Samarra, he ordered the curtains to be set up and the singing to begin. A woman playing the *oud* began to sing:

*Every day there is a quarrel and a reprimand,
And our life is spent in anger.
I wonder, was I singled out from all mankind for this,
Or is this how lovers behave?*

She then fell silent. He ordered a woman playing the mandolin to sing and she sang:

*Mercy upon lovers!
I see none to help them.
How often are they abandoned, deserted, or forsaken,
Yet they patiently endure!*

2908. The *oud* player said to her: ‘So what do they do?’ She answered: ‘That’s what they do.’ She struck the curtain with her hand, tearing it apart, and stood up like a piece of the moon, then threw herself into the water. Standing over the head of Muhammad was a youth equally

beautiful and carrying a fly whisk. When he saw what she did, he dropped the fly whisk from his hand, went to the spot where she threw herself in, saw her bobbing in and out of the water, and recited the following verse:

*It is you, and destiny, that made me drown,
If only you knew.*

He then dived in after her. As the sailor moved the ship around, they were seen to be embracing. They then sank out of sight. Muhammad was greatly alarmed by what happened, then turned to me and said: ‘O `Amr [Jahiz] tell me some story that distracts me from the loss of these two people or I’ll toss you in after them.’

2909. ‘I said: It is reported that Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik sat one day to adjudicate cases of injustice. A piece of paper was handed to him which read: ‘If the Commander of the Believers, may God give him strength, deigns to allow his slave girl to come out to me and sing me three tunes, let him do so.’ Yazid was greatly angered and ordered a messenger to go after the man, cut off his head and bring it to him. He then followed the first messenger with another ordering the man to be brought to him.

When the man stood before him, Yazid said: ‘What made you do what you did?’ He answered: ‘My trust in your forbearance and confidence in your pardon.’ He commanded him to sit down and when all the Umayyad family members had left, he ordered the slave girl to come in with her *oud*. The young man said to her: ‘Sing the following verse:

*Gently, O Fatima, after all that flirting!
If you’ve decided to drop me, do it in a comely manner.*

She sang it. Yazid then said to him: ‘Tell her to sing some more.’ He said: ‘Sing the following verses:

*The lightening flashed over Najd and I said to it:
O lightening, I am too preoccupied to bother with you.*

An enemy of mine, furious and resentful, has spared you from troubling me,

Holding in his hand a mighty sword, poised like a spear.

She sang it.

2910. Yazid said to him: ‘More’ The youth said: ‘Order a *ratl* of wine for me.’ The wine was brought and no sooner had he drunk it than he leapt up, climbed to the top of Yazid’s highest dome, and threw himself headlong down, and was killed. Yazid said: ‘We belong to God and to Him we shall return! Did you see that ignorant fool? He thought that if I bring out to him my slave girl I would then return her to my possessions? Pages, take the girl by the hand and deliver her to the man’s family, if he has one. If not, sell her and distribute her price as alms on his behalf.’

They set off with her and passing by the central hall of the palace the woman saw a cistern in the middle of Yazid’s palace to trap rainwater.

She yanked herself away from their hands and recited:

He who dies from love, let him die thus.

There is no good in a love without death.

She then threw herself headlong into the cistern and was drowned.’

Muhammad was now comforted and distracted by these tales and gave me a generous gift.” It is also claimed that this story occurred in the days of Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik and not of Yazid.

2911. Al-Jahiz added: “I mentioned that story to Abu `Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ja`far al-Anbari in Basra who then said to me: ‘I will tell you a story similar to the one you just told me. This was narrated to me by Faiyiq the royal servant, who was a client of Muhammad ibn Hamid al-Tusi. Muhammad ibn Hamid was once sitting with his boon companions when a slave girl sang from behind a curtain:

O moon of the palace, when will you rise?

I suffer while others enjoy your company.

If God has decreed upon my head what I see of you,

What am I to do?

Standing at Muhammad's head was a youth holding a cup from which he was giving him to drink. The youth dropped the cup and said: 'You do thus!' He then threw himself from that mansion into the Tigris. The slave girl tore the curtain and plunged after him. The attendants dived after them but could not find either of them. Muhammad stopped drinking and rose and left the gathering."

2912. Al-Mas`udi said: In the year 233 [847-8], al-Mutawakkil was exceedingly angry with `Umar ibn Faraj al-Rukhkhaji, a senior state secretary. He seized from him money and jewels to the value of about one hundred and twenty thousand dinars, and from his brother to the value of one hundred and fifty thousand dinars. A settlement was then reached with Muhammad [?]* whereby he paid twenty-one million dirhams but recovered his estates. He was incensed with him a second time and ordered that his face be slapped every day. It was estimated that he received a total of six thousand slaps. He also made him wear a garment of coarse wool. Later on, he forgave him but then was incensed a third time, when he was ordered to be taken down to Baghdad, where he died.

2913. The chief priest of the Magians gave al-Mutawakkil a gift of a flask of ointment and wrote to him: "If a gift is sent by an insignificant person to an important one, and is small and fine, it would be more splendid and fitting. But if it is a gift from an important person to an insignificant one, and is large, it would be of greater value and use."

2914. Al-Mas`udi said: Ahmad ibn Hanbal died in Baghdad during the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil, in the month of Rabi` II, in the year 241 [August, 855]. He was buried in the quarter known as Bab Harb on the western side of the city. Prayers over his body were led by Muhammad

ibn Tahir and a vast crowd of people attended his funeral, more numerous than at any funeral before. The common people discussed his views at great length, views that were often in contradiction to the norm. For example, one of his followers would call out: “Cursed be the man who refuses to pass judgment in dubious cases!” This contradicts the words of the Prophet regarding this legal issue. One of his prominent followers stood up after the leader of prayers of the funeral had finished, and bellowed:

The world grew dark after the death of Muhammad,

And the world grew dark after the death of Ibn Hanbal.

He meant that the world had grown dark after Ibn Hanbal’s death just as it had done after the death of the Prophet, thus equating the two deaths.

2915. In that year [i.e.241] there was a shower of meteors the like of which had never been seen before. This took place on Thursday, the sixth day of Jumada II [October 18, 855]. In the year 323 [935] there was another huge meteor shower. That very night, the Qaramita* attacked the Iraqi pilgrimage caravan as it passed on the Kufa road. This attack occurred in the month of Dhu’l Qa`da, in the year 323 [October, 935].

2916. In the year in which Ibn Hanbal died, Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Iskafi also died. He was a rationalist and a prominent Mu`tazilite. In the year 234 [848-9], Ja`far ibn al-Mubashshir died. He was a celebrated Baghdadi Mu`tazilite and religious scholar. In the year 236 [850-51], Ja`far ibn Harb died. He was a man from the Hamdan tribe and a prominent member of the Qahtan. His father gave his name to the Harb Gate on the western side of Baghdad, and Ja`far was the most celebrated of Baghdadi theologians.

2917. Abu’l Husain al-Khayyat stated that Abu’l Hudhail Muhammad ibn al-Hudhail* died in the year 227 [841-2]. His followers then differed as to his date of birth, some of them citing the year 131, others the year 134.

Abu'l Hudhail had once met to dispute with Hisham ibn al-Hakam al-Kufi, the silk merchant. Hisham was the leading anthropomorphist and head of the Rafida* sect of the Shi`a who followed his lead. Abu'l Hudhail on the other hand rejected anthropomorphism and any ascription of human characteristics to God, and further rejected Hisham's view regarding God's unicity and the imamate. Hisham asked Abu'l Hudhail: "If you claim that motion is visible, why do you not claim that it can also be touched?" He answered: "Because it is not a body that can be touched, since touching can only occur with respect to bodies." Hisham said: "Then why not claim it is invisible since sight can only occur with respect to bodies?" Abu'l Hudhail then went on to question Hisham and asked him: "Why do you say that an attribute is neither that to which it is attributed nor anything else?" Hisham replied: "Because it is impossible for it to be my act and impossible for it to be someone else's act. Differentiation relates to bodies and individual autonomous substances. Since my action is not autonomous, nor is it possible for it to be my action, it follows that it is neither mine nor anyone else's. There is another reason to which you yourself subscribe. You claim that motion is neither touchable nor separate [from bodies?] because in your view it is not possible for it to be touched or be separate, and that is why I maintain that an attribute is neither I nor anyone else. My reason for this view is like your reason that it is neither touchable nor separable." Abu'l Hudhail fell silent and could not respond.

2918. In the year 226, Abu Musa al-Mirdar died. He was a leading Baghdad Mu`tazilite and theologian. In the year 131[748-9], Wasil ibn `Ata', whose patronymic was "Abu Hudhaifa" died. He was the founder of the Mu`tazilite movement and the first to propound the doctrine of the "Stage between the two stages." This held that a transgressor (*fasiq*) from among the religious community is neither a believer nor an unbeliever. It

was because of him that the Mu`tazilites acquired their name. In an earlier section of this work, and in discussing Umayyad history, we cited the five principles of the Mu`tazilites, making it unnecessary to repeat them here. In our other books too we explained these principles in detail. 2919. In an earlier section of this work we recounted the history and death of `Amr ibn `Ubaid, a founder and leading figure of the Mu`tazilite movement, and his death in the year 144 [761-2]. `Amr too had debated Hisham ibn al-Hakam, who held that the imamate was designated by God and his Prophet to be held by `Ali ibn Abi Talib and by his pure descendants after him like al-Hasan, al-Husain and their later successors. `Amr on the other hand argued that the imamate was a matter of choice by the community at all times. At that debate, Hisham asked `Amr: “Why did God create your eyes?” He replied: “To see what God has created in the heavens and on earth, so that this might act for me as proof of His existence.” “Why did He create your ears?” “To hear about the licit and illicit, and about commands and prohibitions.” “Why did He create your tongue?” “To express what is in my heart and address those whom God imposed on me the duty of commanding and prohibiting.” “Why did He create your heart?” “In order that all these senses should lead to Him and in order to distinguish the beneficial senses from the harmful.” “Is it possible that God would create all your senses and yet not create a heart to which all these senses refer back?” “No” “Why?” “Because the heart spurs these senses to seek what is good for it. Since God did not create a spur for these senses in and of themselves, it is impossible for Him not to have created for them a spur to spur them on to what they were created for except through the creation of the heart. The heart would then act to spur them on to what they do, and distinguishes between their beneficial and harmful effects.” Hisham said: “The imam for mankind is similar to the heart with respect to the senses, for the senses refer back only to the

heart and nothing else, and mankind refers back to the imam and to no one else.” `Amr did not come up with any rebuttal that was recorded.

2920. The account cited above is found in Abu `Isa Muhammad ibn Harun al-Warraq, of Baghdad, in his book called *Kitab al-Majalis*. Abu `Isa died in Baghdad, in the quarter known as al-Ramla, on the western side, in the year 247 [861-2]. He was the author of several fine works, including his book on the views of the sects regarding the imamate, and on other rational topics. In the year 245 [859-60], Abu'l Husain Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Ishaq al-Rawandi died in Rahbat Malik ibn Tawq, or in Baghdad in another version. He was about forty years old. He was the author of one hundred and fourteen books.

2921. In our work *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we mentioned the death dates of prominent theologians, sectarians, polemicists and religious scholars, together with their life histories, disputations and intellectual differences. We did the same in our book *al-Awsat*, carrying the account down to the year 332. In this work, and as the occasion arises, we mention some of them in brief, along with others such as jurists and Hadith masters.

2922. In that year [i.e. 245] Ibrahim ibn al-`Abbas al-Suli*, the state secretary, died. He was a most accomplished prose writer and poet, and no state secretary before or after him was more talented as a poet. In his youth, he used to earn his livelihood by composing poetry, and would frequent kings and princes reciting verses in praise of them, and seeking their patronage.

2923. A state secretary told the following story, which was told to him by Ishaq ibn Ibrahim, brother of Zaid ibn Ibrahim: “Ishaq was governor of al-Saymara and Sirawan when al-Suli passed by him heading for Khurasan. In Khurasan, al-Ma'mun had just announced that `Ali ibn Musa al-Rida was to be his heir apparent. Al-Suli had composed a poem in praise of `Ali ibn Musa, in which he extolled the virtues of the Alid

family and that they were more worthy of the caliphate than others. Ishaq added: 'I liked the poem very much and asked him to copy it out for me. He did so, and I gave him one thousand dirhams and a riding animal.'

2924. 'Then time and its vagaries brought al-Suli to be put in charge of the Bureau of Caliphal Domains, succeeding Musa ibn `Abd al-Malik. I had been one of Musa's agents and al-Suli was intent on exposing the shortcomings of his predecessor, Musa. He dismissed me and ordered a financial review, which was done. He refused to acknowledge my earlier favors to him [reading *kanada*] and I came to attend the financial inquest. I would present unanswerable arguments but he would refuse to accept them, and other state officials would support my statements but he would pay no attention to them. He would meanwhile address some very harsh words to me. This went on until he forced the state officials to take an oath on some item, so I swore an oath. He said to me: 'The oath of this state is no oath for you since you are a Rafidi Shi`ite.' I said: 'May I draw near to you?' He consented and I said to him: 'I cannot endure your accusation which might lead to my death. Now if I were to write to al-Mutawakkil what I heard you say, I would not feel safe from punishment. I have endured everything that has taken place here except the charge of Rafidi Shi`ism. A Rafidi is a person who claims that `Ali ibn Abi Talib is better than al-`Abbas, and that `Ali's progeny is more worthy of the caliphate than the progeny of al-`Abbas.' He said: 'Who maintains this view?' I replied: 'You did, and I possess a text to this effect in your own hand,' then told him about his poem. He immediately became perplexed and said: 'Bring me that notebook in my own handwriting.' I replied: 'That's out of the question! By God, I will not do so until you give me a firm and trustworthy assurance that you will not hold me to account for any financial transaction that I concluded, that you put an end to this financial inquest, and you cease to accuse me of any financial

impropriety.” He swore an oath to that effect which I found satisfactory, then put an end to his ongoing inquest. So I brought him the notebook which he placed in his sleeve, and I left, having escaped all the accusations made against me.

2925. Al-Suli is the author of epistles that have been written down and preserved, and of fine specimens of his discourse that have been collected, much of which we recorded in our book *al-Awsat*. Among the passages that we have chosen to quote from his eloquent prose, though all of it is generally held to be exceedingly eloquent, is the following: “In olden days, rebelliousness fed its children, nursing them with milk from its udders, spread before them false hopes to tempt them, and infused its hazards in them by making light of these hazards. Once they felt safe and secure, and had launched confidently into rebellion, the period of nursing gave way to weaning, and rebelliousness fed them with poison. Its udders spurted blood and its sweet nourishment turned bitter. From their fortresses, it brought them down to be led by a rope, and from strength down to humiliation, from joy to sorrow, from happiness to regret, killing and capturing them, willingly or by force. Rarely does a person plunge into civil war, raising dust as war flares around him, and charging into its confusions without that war exhausting him, grabbing him by the throat and causing right to triumph over his wrong, turning him in this world into a heap of flesh and in the next world into firewood for hell, and making of him a moral example of the truth and an argument against falsehood, as in the following Qur’anic verses: {This would be their shame in the present life though the torment of the hereafter is more grievous and your Lord is never unjust to His servants}.”

2926. He also has fine poems. Among his poems that have been much admired, and which literary critics consider unequalled by any of his contemporaries are the following:

To us belongs a herd of mighty camels, which space is too narrow to hold,

Where earth and sky make them languid.

To protect them our blood is shed,

And to protect us their blood is shed.

Pasturage interdicted to others and food given to guests:

We defend them to the death from being captured.

But on a day of honor it is the easiest thing for us to slaughter them.

Another sample of his verse is:

But that generous man Abu Hisham,

Is true to his word and faithful when absent from you.

He forgets you as long as you have no need of him,

But when you are in trouble he will call on you again and again.

Or this:

If God rewards a person for his deeds

May He reward a brother of yours, noble and liberal.

I drew his attention to a falsehood he'd committed,

And it was as if I had awakened one who is bright of face.

Or this:

Suppose Time smote me with a falling-out with my friends,

And one of whom smote me when he saw that Time had smitten me,

He whom I had treasured for myself, and he became a treasure of time

[i.e. died],

Yet if someone were to tell me: Insure yourself from the ravages of time,

I would not seek any other surety except from friends.

2927. Statesmen should keep in mind his verses:

The days when propitious,

Increase him in resolution and knowledge of its vagaries.

It is as if when the times are auspicious,

They make him hear the sound of its corruptions.

Among his fine verses which excel those of his contemporaries are:

May our days that passed be graced with rain and pasturage!

I wept then, but today I mourn them.

Such are our days. We no doubt weep when they pass away,

But today we feel their loss.

2928. Among his verses are the following:

The most deserving person whose joy you should share

Is he who consoled you in your time of sorrow.

When noble men attain to a life of ease,

They remember those who once lived with them in hardship.

Or else the following:

Blame me not, for you are determined to accumulate wealth,

Whereas I am determined to pursue noble virtues.

How can he who knows the pleasure of spending,

Hold back what his hands have gathered?

Or else:

A fierce lion he is when you annoy him

But a devoted father when possessed of wealth.

When he is rich, those furthest from him know it,

But when impoverished, those nearest to him do not know it.

2929. Al-Suli used to say: “The companions of the ruler are like a group who climbed a mountain then fell off it. The most likely to perish are those who ascended the highest.”

2930. Al-Suli used to claim that the poet al-`Abbas ibn al-Ahnaf* was his maternal uncle. Abu'l `Abbas ibn Ja`far ibn Hamdan, the judge>Sulaiman ibn al-Hasan ibn Makhlad> his father, who said: “Al-Suli once recited the following verses to al-`Abbas ibn al-Ahnaf:

If he speaks he does not act, and if asked he does not give,

And if reprimanded he does not become angry.

He loves to shun me, and if he says to me:

Do not drink cold water, I do not.”

Al-`Abbas said: “By God, this is true poetry! Excellent in conception, easy on the tongue, charming to the ear, and rarely equaled. I never heard verse more sound in judgment yet delicate, more easy yet difficult, more fair yet eloquent, than this.” Al-Hasan said to him: “By God, what you have just uttered is better than his poetry.”

2931. Among verses much admired that were composed by `Abbas ibn al-Ahnaf are the following:

Bear the greatest blame from the one you love,

And even if unjustly treated, say: I am to blame.

Blessed is he who sleeps a wink at night,

And feels at ease, for such a person is indeed fortunate.

Or else:

O `Abbas, resolve to turn your heart away from her,

Or else you will die of sorrow from love of her.

Had she lived in some town far in the land of the Byzantines,

I would live nowhere else except in that town.

O you who complains of his longing for someone long absent,

Be patient, and perhaps you will meet with what you love tomorrow.

Or else:

He made his visits short when he sensed

Estrangement, or certain signs thereof.

The beloved did not turn against us,

But is merely the victim of boredom with those who love him.

2932. Abu Khalifa al-Fadl ibn al-Hubab al-Jumahi>al-Riyashi, who said:

“A number of Basrans related the following story: ‘We set off on pilgrimage and while on the road we encountered a youth who stood by

the wayside and called out: ‘O people, are any of you from Basra?’ We approached him and asked what he wanted and he said; ‘My master wishes to confide to you his last testament as he lies dying.’ We went along with him and came to a man lying under a tree, not far from the road, and unable to speak. We sat around him and when he felt our presence he barely could raise his eyes and recited:

*O you who are in a foreign land, far from home,
All alone and weeping for his misfortune,
Whenever his tears began again,
The diseases of his body grew worse.*

He was unconscious for a long time as we sat around him. Suddenly, a bird came and perched atop that tree and began to sing. The young man opened his eyes and listened to the singing of the bird, then recited:

*My heart grew sadder
When a bird wept on his branch.
What made him sick is what made me sick, so he wept,
Each weeping for the one he loves.*

He then breathed deeply and expired. We only left him once we had washed and shrouded him then prayed over his body. Having buried him, we asked his page who the dead man was and he told us he was Al-`Abbas ibn al-Ahnaf.” This story was also told to us by Abu Ishaq al-Zajjaj, the grammarian>al-Mazini, who said that some Basrans had related the above story to him.

2933. In the year 240, Abu Thawr Ibrahim ibn Khalid al-Kalbi died. In the year 232 [846-7], al-Mutawakkil exiled the poet `Ali ibn al-Jahm to Khurasan, though the year 239 is also mentioned. We have already narrated his history and what happened to him, how he later returned to Iraq and then left for the frontier. This took place in the year 249 [863]. Arriving near Aleppo, in the territory of Qinnasrin and al-`Awasim, and

at a place called Khusaf, horsemen from the Kalb tribe attacked and killed him. As he lay dying he recited:

Has another night been added to the night?

Or has some flood carried away the dawn?

I remembered the people of Dajil,

But where is Dajil from where I am now?

2934. `Ali ibn al-Jahm al-Sami, though inimical to the Commander of the Believers `Ali ibn Abi Talib, and pretending to be a Sunnite, was a capable poet by instinct, with charming phrasing and prolific in output. In an earlier section of this work, we mentioned those who cast doubt on his pedigree and what people have said regarding the descendants of Sama ibn Lu'ayy ibn Ghalib and the verses composed by the poet `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ja`far al-`Alawi:

Sama is one of us, but as for his progeny

Their claim is in our view very dubious.

These are people who described their genealogy to us,

But this was the mere fantasy of a sleeper.

We said to them what the Prophet had said,

And everything he says is true:

If you are asked a question and you don't know the answer,

Just say: God knows best.

We mention these verses again in this place even though we cited them earlier in this work when it happened that we mentioned `Ali ibn al-Jahm in the days of al-Mutawakkil and needed to quote some of his verse together with the response of al-`Alawi.

2935. In his reply to `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ja`far al-`Alawi, `Ali ibn al-Jahm recited:

You denied me the sweet taste of fairness,

And dealt most unfairly with me.

*You abandoned loyalty, though fully aware of what it means,
And went way beyond what is acceptable.*

*However, if I were to review the rights,
Possessed by the clan of Hashim ibn `Abd Manaf,
I cannot possibly find myself rejoicing at their misfortune,
Whether in verse or not.*

*I have a soul which disdains ill-breeding,
And the nobly born do not assail one another.*

2936. When in prison, `Ali ibn al-Jahm composed a well-known poem whose theme no poet before him had ever tackled. It ran as follows:

*She said: "You have been imprisoned." I said: "My imprisonment is
No disgrace to me. Which sharp sword is never sheathed?*

*Do you not see how a lion feels comfortable in his thicket,
Whereas other wild beasts hesitate to enter it?*

*And had the sun not been concealed from your eyes,
Ursa Minor would not have lit up the sky.*

*Fire is hidden in its stones,
But will burst into flame only when ignited by fire sticks.*

*And prison, if you're in it not for some ignoble crime,
Is an excellent abode and a place to visit.*

*It is a house that renews the dignity of a dignified man,
Where a person is visited but neither visits nor is served.*

*If nothing else is good about a prison, it is the fact
That slaves do not humiliate you from behind a curtain."*

2937. Among his much-admired verses are the following:

*Unjust was she who stripped her veil before me,
And then departed, her tears overflowing.*

*The worst of her objections was that our covenant of love was severed,
And had not lasted for me, but which covenant lasts forever?*

She disapproved of what she saw on my head, and said:

“Are these grey hairs or pearls in a string?”

My sorrow is not one that I can be consoled about,

Or that one can accept and endure.

It is truly a memorable event that

A person, that night, spoke so ill of my grey hairs.

I have nothing to offer, even if consoled,

Except a freely given obedience and a pure heart.

2938. Among his excellent verses are the following:

Such is the soul: whatever you load it with, it will bear,

And time brings about days that treat you justly and others that do not.

The outcome of seemly patience is seemly,

And the most perfect virtue of a man is to be gracious.

It is no disgrace if a person loses his good fortune,

But the real disgrace is not to bear this with patience.

Wealth if lost merely causes regret,

But is a pure gain, quickly acquired, if you proffer it.

2939. Among his excellent verses of apology are those he composed about al-Mutawakkil:

The humiliation of begging and apologizing,

Is a hard condition to bear for free men.

It was not through falsehood that a man came to bear this humiliation,

But simply because fate quickly intervened.

So be content with submission from him who begs you,

And with humble apology from him who committed an offense.

If, as a favor, you give up what is your due,

More reason for you to forgive major sins.

*But if you decide to punish, then you are more familiar with God’s
commandments,*

And it is no disgrace to be punished by you.

There are also his excellent verses when he was put in chains:

I said to her, my tears falling in diverse paths,

And the fire of love in my heart, its firewood blazing:

Do not be alarmed when you see his chains,

The anklets of men are their chains.

His tongue was so sharp that hardly anyone was ever safe from it.

2940. Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir ibn al-Husain was greatly displeased with `Ali ibn al-Jahm, so the latter sought Wasif the Turk to intercede for him with Muhammad ibn `Abdullah until matters returned to normal. Then Wasif was incensed with him so `Ali sought Muhammad ibn `Abdullah to intercede for him with Wasif, and wrote to him:

Praise be to God, and thanks,

Our hearts lie in His hands.

The Emir is now my intercessor

With the one who was once my intercessor with him.

2941. `Ali ibn al-Jahm composed a number of unique poems which contain widely quoted words of wisdom, some of which we selected above, but decided to confine ourselves to these selections. A number of poets wrote elegies for him after he was killed. These include Abu Sa`id who composed the following verses:

Pour down [fem] your tears and refrain from sleeping,

And be sure not to lose your total grief for him.

Say: the refuge of the clan of Lu`ayy,

Now lies murdered in al-Sham.

O clan of Jahm ibn Badr, I offer you my condolences,

For you have met with a terrible misfortune.

By God, if the ropes of death know what has befallen you,

They would weep effusively.

*The refuge of widows and orphans is now in his grave,
A man with whom all seasons were like the spring.
A chivalrous youth he was, like arrows aimed at the enemy,
And a lion who protected us from disasters.*

2942. In the year 243 [857-8], al-Mutawakkil left Damascus and headed back to Samarra. Between leaving Samarra and returning to it was a period of three months and seven days. When he left Samarra, Yazid al-Muhallabi composed a lengthy poem from which we selected the following verses:

*I fancy al-Sham must regard Iraq with malicious glee,
Now that the Imam has decided to leave.
If you abandon Iraq and its inhabitants,
The comely wife will be smitten with divorce.*

When al-Mutawakkil arrived in Damascus, he refused to settle in the city itself because of the fogginess of the air of al-Ghuta and the mists rising from its waters. So he took up residence in the palace of al-Ma'mun, between Darayya and Damascus, about an hour from the city and on elevated ground. This site overlooks the city and most of the Ghuta and is still known as the palace of al-Ma'mun up to the present day, which is the year 332.

2943. Sa'id ibn Nakis recounted the following story: "I was standing in the presence of al-Mutawakkil in his residence in Damascus when his army grew restless, banded together, clamored loudly and demanded their pay. They then drew their weapons and began to shoot their arrows. As I went forward, I saw arrows being aimed high in the portico, so al-Mutawakkil said to me: 'O Abu Sa'id, summon Raja' al-Hadari to me.' I did so and he said to him: 'O Raja', have you seen what these troops are up to? What do you advise?' Raja' replied: 'O Commander of the Believers, I had been afraid something like this would happen during our

present journey. This is why I advised you to postpone it.’ Al-Mutawakkil turned to him and said: ‘Forget the past and tell me what should be done now.’ ‘They should be paid,’ he answered. Al-Mutawakkil said: ‘But this is what they want, and if this is done while they are rebellious no one knows what will happen.’ Raja’ said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, order that this be done and my advice will come afterwards.’ Al-Mutawakkil ordered `Ubaidullah ibn Yahya to pay them, and when the money began to be distributed, Raja’ came in and said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, now order the drums to be beaten announcing our return to Iraq, and they will not touch any of the money being distributed to them.’ The caliph did so, and the troops abandoned their payments and immediately commenced their journey back to Iraq, to the point where a paymaster would cling to a soldier to give him his pay but he would refuse to take it.”

2944. Sa`id added: “The Turks had plotted to assassinate al-Mutawakkil in Damascus, but could not contrive to do so because of Bugha the Elder*. So they planned to cause a rift between Bugha and the caliph, and distributed slips of paper in the place where al-Mutawakkil was encamped in which was written: ‘Bugha is planning to kill the Commander of the Believers. As proof of this, Bugha will be riding out with his cavalry and infantry on such and such a day, and will surround the caliph’s camp, then lead a contingent of Persian youths who will break in upon him and kill him.’ When al-Mutawakkil read those slips of paper he was astounded by their content, and thought the worst of Bugha, then sought the advice of al-Fath, told him about Bugha’s plan to kill him and consulted with him. Al-Fath said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, the person who wrote these slips of paper claims as proof the fact that the cavalry will ride out at a specific time to the outskirts of the camp and take it over, and that the plot will unfold thereafter. My advice is that you

should hold back and wait. If this turns out to be true, we will see what is to be done. If false, we offer thanks to God.’

2945. “Slips of paper kept being thrown about at all hours, claiming to offer sincere advice, and that those who wrote it were in duty bound by their oath of homage to offer sincere counsel. When they knew that the caliph was cognizant of what they had written and was convinced of its truth, they wrote other slips of paper and scattered them in Bugha’s camp which read: ‘A number of youths and Turks are intent upon assassinating the caliph where he is camped. They have laid their plans and agreed upon them and swore they would come to kill the caliph from such and such directions. O Almighty God! You must, O Bugha, protect the Commander of the Believers tonight from these specific directions, and do so yourself along with those whom you trust, for we are offering you sincere counsel.’ Many slips of paper were scattered to this effect that emphasized the safety of the caliph. When Bugha got word of this, and the slips kept being distributed, he could not determine whether they were true or not, after his earlier experience with the first assassination plot.

2946. “When the night mentioned in these slips arrived, Bugha gathered his troops and ordered them to ride out fully armed, heading to the places that were mentioned. He captured these places in the name of al-Mutawakkil and stood guard over them. The news reached the caliph, and he was no longer in doubt that what he had heard was true. So he kept expecting some people to break in upon him and kill him, and spent the night awake, refusing food and drink. When morning came and found Bugha guarding him, though al-Mutawakkil thought otherwise, he suspected Bugha and found his action most unusual. Determined to leave Damascus, he said to Bugha: ‘O Bugha, I no longer feel at ease with your relationship to me, and I have determined to appoint you as governor of this region [al-Sham], but will continue to pay you the same salary and

offer you the same gifts, and to provide you with the same food grants and aid as before.’ Bugha replied: ‘I am your slave, O Commander of the Believers, and you can do what you want and order me to do whatever you please.’ So al-Mutawakkil left him behind in al-Sham and departed, and his clients later on carried out their plan. So neither al-Mutawakkil nor Bugha were able to detect the plot until that plot finally achieved its objective.

2947. “Thus, when Bugha the Younger* decided to kill al-Mutawakkil, he summoned Baghir the Turk, a man he had chosen to be close to him and showered gifts upon him. Baghir was courageous and foolhardy. He said to him: ‘O Baghir, you know how much I like you, prefer you to others and how generous I have been to you. As far as you are concerned, I am like one whose orders cannot be disobeyed, nor are you a person who can lose my affection. I intend to order you to do something, so tell me how you feel about it.’ Baghir replied: ‘You know how I feel, so order me and I will carry it out, whatever it may be.’ Bugha said: ‘My son, Faris, is undermining my work and is determined to shed my blood, and I have established this as a fact.’ ‘So what is it you want me to do?’ ‘I shall summon him to my presence tomorrow. The signal between us is this: if I place my cap upon the ground, you are to kill him.’ Baghir replied: ‘Yes, but I fear that you might change your mind or hold a grudge against me for having killed him.’ He said: ‘I swear to God that you will be secure from this.’

2948. “When Faris entered, Baghir was in attendance and took up a striking position. He kept observing Bugha to see if he would place his cap on the ground, but he did not do so. So he winked at him as though to say ‘Shall I?’ and Bugha said: ‘No.’ Having failed to detect the signal and once Faris had gone, Bugha said to him: ‘I want you to know that I thought he was a mere youth and that he is my son, and decided to spare

him that time.’ Baghir said: ‘I hear and obey. You know best what you have decided and determined to be the sound course of action.’

2949. “Bugha then said to him: ‘There is something else, bigger and more momentous, so tell me how you will react.’ Baghir said: ‘Say whatever you like and I will do it.’ ‘I have come to know for a fact that my brother Wasif is plotting against me and my colleagues, that my prominent standing has become too much for him to bear, and that he has decided to kill us all and to run the affairs of state by himself.’ ‘So what would you like to be done with him?’ ‘It is this. He is coming to see me tomorrow. Our signal is for me to step down from the prayer carpet upon which I will be sitting. When you see me stepping down, thrust your sword into him and kill him.’ He answered: ‘Yes.’ When Wasif came to see Bugha, Baghir came in and stood prepared to act, but he did not detect the agreed upon signal until Wasif rose and left. Bugha then said to him: ‘O Baghir, I thought about it and about his being my brother to whom I had sworn amity, so I did not consider it proper to do what I had intended.’ He then rewarded Baghir with gifts.

2950. “He then, and for a long time, stopped summoning him. Finally he called for him and said: ‘O Baghir, something has now come up more momentous than before, so how do you feel about it?’ He replied: ‘My heart and feelings are at your disposal. Say the word and I will carry it out.’ Bugha said: ‘There is this fellow al-Muntasir [crown prince] and I’ve come to know for sure that he is plotting to have me and others killed, and I want to kill him first. What do you feel about this?’ Baghir thought for some time and hung down his head then said: ‘Killing him will not be of any use.’ ‘How so?’ ‘The son is to be killed and the father to be left alive? You will have accomplished nothing, and his father will kill you all in revenge.’ ‘So what do you advise?’ ‘We start by killing the father and killing the son will be easier.’ Bugha said: ‘Woe to you! Can

this be easily done and planned?’ ‘Yes. I will walk in on him and kill him.’ Bugha kept asking him to repeat his statement and he kept answering: ‘This is the only course of action.’ Baghir then said to him: ‘Walk in after me. If I kill him, well and good. Otherwise, kill me and place your sword upon me and say: ‘He wanted to kill his lord and master.’ Bugha then realized that Baghir was willing and able to kill the caliph, and entrusted him with the plot to kill al-Mutawakkil.”

2951. In the year 247 [861], Shuja`, mother of al-Mutawakkil, died. Prayers over her body were led by al-Muntasir. This took place in the month of Rabi` II [July 861], and al-Mutawakkil was murdered six months after her death, on the night of Wednesday, three hours of the night having passed, on the third day of Shawwal, or the fourth day in some accounts, in the year 247[December 10, 861]. He was born in Famm al-Sulh.

2952. Al-Buhturi said: “One night, I met al-Mutawakkil with some other boon companions and we discussed the subject of swords. A man who was there said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, I have been informed that a man in Basra has in his possession a matchless Indian sword whose like has never been seen.’ Al-Mutawakkil ordered that a letter be written to the governor of Basra commanding him to buy the sword at any price. The letter was sent off by postal horses and the governor soon responded that the sword had been bought by a man from the Yemen. Al-Mutawakkil then sent word to the Yemen to seek that sword and buy it, and his royal letter went out. As we sat with al-Mutawakkil, `Ubaidullah ibn Yahya entered with the sword and informed the caliph that it had been bought from its Yemeni owner for ten thousand dirhams. The caliph was delighted and offered thanks to God for facilitating the transaction, pulled the sword from its sheathe and admired it. Then each of us said a few appropriate words and the caliph placed it in the folds of his bed.

2953. “The following day, al-Mutawakkil said to al-Fath: ‘Find me a youth whom you trust to be intrepid and brave, and hand him the sword so he can stand and carry it above my head, and never leave me as long as I remain seated.’ He had hardly finished speaking when Baghir the Turk entered, so al-Fath said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, here’s Baghir the Turk! He has been described to me as exceedingly courageous and would best fit the caliph’s request.’ Al-Mutawakkil ordered him to step forward, handed the sword to him and gave him his orders, then commanded that he be promoted in rank and his salary be doubled.” Al-Buhturi added: “By God, that sword was never raised nor left its sheathe from the moment it was handed to Baghir until the night when he struck the caliph with that very sword.”

2954. Al-Buhturi added: “I witnessed a remarkable event the night al-Mutawakkil was killed. We were discussing the subject of pride and the tyranny practiced by ancient kings. We talked about that subject at length and he kept repeating that he was free from such character traits. He then turned his face towards the direction of prayer, prostrated and scattered earth on his face as a sign of humility before God, then took a handful of earth and spread it on his beard and head and said: ‘I am a mere servant of God. Whoever turns eventually into dust should be humble and avoid pride.’ I found this to be an evil omen for him, and thought his act of scattering earth on his head and beard inappropriate. He then sat to drink and once the effect of drinking took hold, the singers in attendance began to sing a song he liked. Turning to al-Fath, he said: ‘O Fath, none remains who has heard this song from Mukhariq* except you and I,’ then began to weep. I found his weeping to be an evil omen and said to myself: ‘That’s the second evil omen.’”

2955. “As we were occupied thus, a servant of Qabiha entered carrying a shawl containing a precious garment that Qabiha had sent him. Her

messenger said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, Qabiha says that she had this garment made specially for the Commander of the Believers, found it attractive and sent it for him to wear.’ That shawl contained a red vest the like of which I had never seen, and an outer garment of red silk so delicate that it resembled *dabiqi* [white silk]. He wore the vest and wrapped himself with the outer garment. I searched in my mind for some unusual anecdote to tell him which might cause him to give me the garment, and as I was doing so he shifted his position while wrapped in that garment, wrenching it and tearing it from side to side. He took it, folded it and gave it to Qabiha’s servant who had brought it and said: ‘Tell her to keep that garment with her in order to be my shroud when I die.’ I said to myself: ‘We belong to God and to him we shall return. By God his time has come.’”

2956. “Al-Mutawakkil became very drunk. It was customary when in that condition, and as he began to sway from side to side, for his attendant servants to set him up straight. As this was being done, three hours of the night having passed, Baghir entered with ten Turkish soldiers. They were hooded and carried swords whose blades were shining in candlelight. They attacked us then moved towards al-Mutawakkil, and Baghir and another Turk climbed onto the dais. Al-Fath screamed at them: ‘Woe to you! He’s your Lord!’ Seeing that sight, the pages and other boon companions in attendance fled, and al-Fath was the only person remaining behind. He fought them and stood in their way. Then I heard al-Mutawakkil cry out as Baghir struck him with that same sword he had once given to him on his right side, wounding him deeply in his waist. He then turned him over and struck him on his other side. Al-Fath would move forward to try to prevent them until one of them struck him a blow with his sword in the stomach which exited from his back. Yet he would neither move away nor leave his place. I never saw anyone behaving with

greater fortitude or nobility. He then threw himself upon al-Mutawakkil and both were killed. Their bodies were wrapped in the carpet on which they were killed and thrown to the side. They were left in that state for the rest of that night and the whole of the following day until the caliphate had passed securely to al-Muntasir, who ordered them to be buried. It is said that Qabiha shrouded him in that torn garment.”

2957. Bugha the Younger had grown exceedingly hostile towards al-Mutawakkil, and al-Muntasir meanwhile would attract the loyalty of the Turks to him. Thus, Utamish, the erstwhile servant of the caliph al-Wathiq, was an adherent of al-Muntasir, and that was why al-Mutawakkil hated him. Utamish recruited Turks to the cause of al-Muntasir, whereas the vizier `Ubaidullah ibn Khaqan and al-Fath ibn Khaqan were opposed to al-Muntasir and inclined to al-Mu`tazz. These two had aroused al-Mutawakkil against al-Muntasir. So whenever al-Mutawakkil drove away any Turk, al-Muntasir would recruit him to his cause to the point where he gained the loyalty of the Turks and of many troops from Farghana and Ushrusana. This went on until the assassination of al-Mutawakkil, described above. Other versions of that event are also found, but we chose the above account because it is better expressed and easier to understand. We gave a full account of what has been said about this event in our book *al-Awsat*, making it unnecessary to repeat that account here.

2958. Al-Mutawakkil was never as happy as he was on the day of his assassination. He got up that day feeling energetic and happy, saying: “It is as if I feel the flow of blood within me.” That day he had himself cupped, then summoned his boon companions and entertainers, and his joy increased. All that joy however turned into sorrow. It is only a silly and self-deluded person who is seduced by this world, feels at ease in it, or feels secure from its treachery and the calamities it brings upon him. This is a life whose joy never lasts or is ever complete, where dangers can

never be avoided. It is a place where happiness is tethered to harm, hardship to ease and bliss to calamity, ending in extinction. As it brings about bliss, it also brings in its wake misery; joy is followed by sorrow; what is lovable is succeeded by what is hateful; health is accompanied by sickness; life ends in death; joy is followed by grief and delights give way to misfortunes. In it, a noble man becomes a nonentity, a powerful man is brought low, a rich man is left penniless and a prominent man is abased. Nothing remains except the ever-living God who never dies and whose kingdom is everlasting. He is All-powerful, All-wise.

2959. Regarding the treachery of al-Muntasir and his plot to kill his father, al-Buhturi composed a poem of which the following is an extract:

Did the crown prince plan his treachery?

It is astonishing that the crown prince should be the traitor.

May he who remains behind not live beyond the life of him who passed away,

And may his pulpits never call out prayers [for a long life].

2960. The days of al-Mutawakkil, with their splendor and their pleasant and easy living conditions, all of which earned the praise and approval of both elite and commoners, were days of happiness and not of wretchedness. One person described them as follows: “The caliphate of al-Mutawakkil was better off as regards the safety of highways, low prices, the expectations of love and the joyful days of youth.” This idea was taken over by a poet who expressed it in the following verses:

Your nearness to me is dearer,

Than low prices and safe highways,

And than nights of love, associated with

The charming period of youth.

2961. Al-Mas`udi said: It has been claimed that in no period or era were expenditures as they had been in the days of al-Mutawakkil. It is said that

he spent on the two palaces, al-Haruni and al-Jawsaq al-Ja`fari, a sum in excess of a hundred million dirhams, in addition to his numerous clients, troops and hirelings, all of whom were regularly paid on top of the monthly gifts and rewards they received. It is said that he had four thousand concubines with every one of whom he had copulated. When he died, his treasuries contained four million dinars and seven million dirhams. No craftsman or artist, serious or frivolous, ever failed to make good during his reign or was unhappy in his days, or did not share fully in his wealth.

2962. Muhammad ibn Abi `Awn narrated the following story: "I attended the assembly of al-Mutawakkil on the Feast of Nawruz*. With him was Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir and before him stood al-Husain ibn al-Dahhak, the libertine poet. Al-Mutawakkil winked at one of the servants standing by his head, a youth of comely appearance, to give al-Husain a drink, and to accost him with a rose smelling of amber. The servant did so, and al-Mutawakkil turned to al-Husain and said:

'Compose some verse on the subject of this youth.' Al-Husain recited:

Like a white pearl, he accosted me with a rose smelling of amber,

A youth who struts in a single garment, like a rose.

Each time he accosts me, he flirts with me with his eyes,

Causing the man of forbearance to be moved with passion.

I had hoped I would be given to drink from the palm of his hand,

A drink that would remind me of past love.

God bless that time when I never slept an hour of night,

Without a beloved on a tryst.

Al-Mutawakkil said: 'Well said, by God! For each line of verse let him be given a hundred dinars.' Muhammad ibn `Abdullah said: 'He was quick to respond, reminded us of our youth, and increased our longing.

Were it not that the generosity of the Commander of the Believers cannot

be surpassed by anyone, I would have rewarded him handsomely with whatever I possess, old or new.’ At this point al-Mutawakkil said: ‘Let him be paid a thousand dinars for each line.’”

2963. It is related that when Muhammad ibn al-Bu`aith was brought as a prisoner to al-Mutawakkil, the latter ordered a leather receptacle [for severed heads] and a sword to be brought forward. He said to him: “O Muhammad, what led you to rebel?” He answered: “Wretchedness, O Commander of the Believers! You are the shadow of God that stretches between Him and His creatures. I expect two things from you and the nearest to my heart is the more worthy of you, namely, to pardon your servant.” He then recited:

*Imam of right guidance, people think you will no doubt kill me today,
But forgiveness is more worthy of a free man.*

Am I anything but one of many sinners?

But your pardon, coming from the light of prophecy, is more gratifying.

Compared to your pardon, my sin shrinks in significance,

So show me your grace, and graciousness is preferable.

For you surpass all others in glory,

And I have no doubt you will choose the better of the two acts.

Al-Mutawakkil said: “I shall choose the better of the two acts and put you in my debt. Go home.” Ibn al-Bu`aith said: “O Commander of the Believers, God knows best where He places His message.”

2964. When al-Mutawakkil was murdered, many poets composed elegies.

Among them was an elegy by `Ali ibn al-Jahm which included the following lines:

It was the slaves of the Commander of the Believers who killed him,

And the greatest misfortune of kings is their slaves.

O clan of Hashim, bear this with patience, for every catastrophe,

Will, with the passage of time, lose its novelty.

2965. On this same subject Yazid ibn Muhammad al-Muhallabi composed a long ode of which the following are some verses:

Death came to him while his eye was sleeping:

If only the ropes of death had come when spears were correctly pointed!

The swords of the most base sort of men rose high to reach you,

While there was none above you save the One and the Eternal.

A caliph he was whom none equaled in attainment,

And no body or soul like his was ever created.

2966. Another poet recited:

His death came to him by night,

After he had abandoned his entertainment and gone to sleep.

His destiny said: Arise! He did, and how many a king

Has destiny awakened from sleep to perdition!

The libertine Husain ibn al-Dahhak composed the following verses:

Never have the nights brought good fortune to a person,

Without bringing him misfortune afterwards.

Have you not seen what the ravages of time

Have inflicted upon the Hashimite and al-Fath ibn Khaqan?

2967. `Ali ibn al-Jahm stated: "When the caliphate passed to the Commander of the Believers Ja`far al-Mutawakkil `ala Allah, people presented him with gifts, each according to his means. `Abdullah ibn Tahir presented him with a gift consisting of two hundred male and female slaves, among them a female called Mahbuba. She had belonged to a man from Ta'if who had educated her, trained her and instructed her in the various arts. She could recite poetry, put it to music and sing it accompanied by the *oud*. She mastered all the arts that accomplished people normally mastered, so she rose in the caliph's esteem and occupied an important place in his heart which none could rival.

2968. “One day I entered to be his boon companion. When I settled down in that assembly, the caliph rose and entered an apartment, then came out laughing and said: ‘Woe to you, `Ali! I entered that apartment and found a slave girl had written the word Ja`far on her cheek in musk. I never saw a more lovely sight, so compose some verses on the subject.’ I answered: ‘Master, me alone or also Mahbuba?’ He answered: ‘You and Mahbuba.’ She called for an inkstand and paper and beat me in composing a song. She then took up the *oud*, modulated her voice, tuned it until a melody was ready, laughed to herself a little then said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, will you permit me?’ He did, and she sang:

*She wrote the word Ja`far on her cheek in musk,
And my soul reposes on that line of musk where it left its mark.
Though she confined one line of musk to her cheek,
Yet she has confined many lines of love to my heart.
How strange that a slave is obeyed by his master,
In all he says openly or in secret!
What is wrong with my eyes? Who has ever seen one like Ja`far?
May God pour down early rains upon Ja`far!*

2969. “All my mental faculties changed abruptly and it was as though I could not compose a single line of poetry. Al-Mutawakkil said: ‘Woe to you, `Ali? What happened to my command to you?’ I replied: ‘Master, spare me. By God, my mind has left me.’ He continued to beat me on the head and taunt me with that incident until the day he died.”

2970. `Ali added: “One day I entered to be his boon companion and he said to me: ‘Woe to you, `Ali! Have you heard that I have quarreled with Mahbuba, ordered her confined to her apartment, and forbidden domestic servants to go in to her, having found her conversation disdainful?’ I replied: ‘Master, having quarreled with her today, make up with her tomorrow, and may God prolong the pleasure and life of the Commander

of the Believers.’ He bowed his head for a while then ordered his boon companions to depart and for the drinks to be removed.

2971. “The following day, I went in to see him and he said to me: ‘Woe to you, `Ali! Last night I dreamt that I had made up with her.’ A slave girl called Shatir who was standing before him said: ‘I swear I just heard from her apartment a sound like mumbling, and could not make out what it was.’ He said: ‘Get up, woe to you, and let’s see what is happening.’ He rose barefooted and I followed behind until we came near her apartment. She seemed to be tuning a *oud* and practicing a melody, then sang in a loud voice:

I walk around the palace and see no one,

I complain to him but he does not talk to me.

It is as if I have committed some crime,

From which there is no penance to save me.

Who will intercede for me with a king,

Who visited me in my sleep and patched up our quarrel?

But when morning arrives,

He once again abandons and disdains me.

Al-Mutawakkil clapped his hands in joy and she clapped hers. When he entered her apartment, she flung herself at his feet and kept kissing them and scattering dust on her cheeks until he took her by the hand and we went back, she becoming once again our third partner.

2972. `Ali added: “When al-Mutawakkil was assassinated, Mahbuba along with many other slave women passed by ownership to Bugha the Elder. One day, she entered into his presence to act as a boon companion. Bugha ordered the curtain removed and commanded the slave women to come in. They did so, swaying from side to side in their finery and jewels. Mahbuba however came in without any finery at all, and wearing white, and sat, head bowed. Wasif said to her: ‘Sing!’ She gave some

excuse so he said: ‘I swear you will!’ then ordered the *oud* to be placed in her lap. When she found she had no choice but to sing, she left the *oud* in her lap and sang, unaccompanied:

What joy can there be for me in this life,

When I do not see Ja`far?

A king whom I saw bloodied in the dust.

All who were perplexed or sick are now cured,

Except for Mahbuba who, if she sees death being bought and sold,

Would buy it and spend all she owns in order to be buried.

Wasif was angry and ordered her to be imprisoned, and this was the last anyone heard anything about her.”

2973. Al-Mas`udi said: During the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil, a number of scholars, historians and Hadith masters died. Among them was `Ali ibn Ja`far al-Madini, who died in Samarra on Monday, three days remaining from Dhu`l Hijja, in the year 234 [July 21, 849]. He was seventy-two years and a few months old. His date of death is disputed. Earlier in this work we cited the year in which his death is said to have occurred. In that same year Abu`l Rabi` ibn al-Zahrani also died. The year of death of Yahya ibn Ma`in is also disputed. Some agree with what we cited earlier, and others, who are the majority, state that he died in 233 [847-8].

Yahy`a patronymic was “Abu Zakariyya.” He was a client of the Murra tribe and died in Medina aged seventy-five years and a few months. It is said that this year also witnessed the death of Abu`l Hasan `Ali ibn Muhammad al-Mada`ini,* the historian, whereas others claim he died in 228 [842-3], in the caliphate of al-Wathiq.

2974. That year also witnessed the death of Musaddad ibn Musarhad, whose name was `Abd al-Malik ibn `Abd al-`Aziz; the death of al-Himmani the jurist; of Ibn `A`isha, whose name was `Ubaidullah ibn Muhammad ibn Hafs, and whose patronymic was “Abu `Abd al-

Rahman.” He belonged to the Taym branch of the Quraish. During the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil the following also died: Huda ibn Khalid, Shaiban ibn Farrukh al-Ubulli, and Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Shafi`i. All these latter figures died in 236 [850-51].

2975. The year 237 [851-2] witnessed the death of al-`Abbas ibn al-Walid al-Narsi in Basra, of `Abd al-A`la ibn Hammad al-Narsi and of `Ubaidullah ibn Mu`adh al-`Anbari. In the year 238 [852-3], Ishaq ibn Ibrahim, commonly known as Ibn Rahawayh, died as also Bishr ibn al-Walid al-Kindi, the judge and follower of Abu Yusuf. It is also claimed that the above-mentioned al-`Abbas ibn al-Walid died in this year, i.e. 238. In the year 239 [853-4], `Uthman ibn Abi Shayba al-Kufi died in Kufa, as also al-Salt ibn Mas`ud al-Jahdari.

2976. In the year 240 [854-5], Shabab ibn Khalifa al-`Usfuri and `Abd al-Wahid ibn `Attab died. The year 243 [857-8] witnessed the deaths of Hisham ibn `Ammar al-Dimashqi; Humaid ibn Mas`ud al-Naji; `Abdullah ibn Mu`awiya al-Jumahi; Yahya ibn Aktham, the judge, in al-Rabadha; and Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Abi'l Shawarib. In the year 246 [860-61] the following died: Muhammad ibn al-Mustafa al-Himsi, `Anbasa ibn Ishaq ibn Shamir and Musa ibn `Abd al-Malik.

2977. Al-Mas`udi said: Interesting stories and habits of conduct and behavior are related about al-Mutawakkil other than what is mentioned here, all of which we set forth in detail and explicated in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. Success comes from God.

Chapter 118

An account of the caliphate of al-Muntasir bi'llah

2978. Muhammad ibn Ja`far al-Muntasir was paid homage the day following the night in which al-Mutawakkil was murdered, that day being Wednesday, the third of Shawwal, in the year 247 [December 11,861]. His patronymic was “Abu Ja`far.” His mother was a manumitted slave

called Hubshiyya, a Byzantine. He assumed the caliphate aged twenty-five and the act of homage took place in the palace known as al-Ja`fari, built by al-Mutawakkil. He died in the year 248 [862], his caliphate having lasted six months.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

2979. The place where al-Mutawakkil was murdered was precisely the same place where Shirawayh had killed his father Kisra [Chosroes] Abrawiz. That place was known as al-Mahuza. Al-Muntasir remained in al-Mahuza for seven days after the murder of his father. He then moved elsewhere and ordered that site to be destroyed.

2980. Abu'l `Abbas Muhammad ibn Sahl related the following: "I used to act as a scribe of `Attab ibn `Attab, who was in charge of the Bureau of Private Militias [*Shakiriyya*] in the caliphate of al-Muntasir. I entered a portico and found it covered with a prayer carpet from Susanjard, wooden benches, and cushions both red and blue. Around the carpet were squares with pictures of people and writing in Persian. I knew Persian and to the right of the prayer carpet was the picture of a king, with a crown on his head and very life-like. I read the writing which went as follows: 'This is the picture of Shirawayh, killer of his father king Abrawiz. He reigned for six months.' I then saw pictures of many other kings. To the left of the prayer carpet was written: 'This is the picture of Yazid ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik, killer of his cousin al-Walid ibn Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik. He reigned for six months.' I was amazed by such a coincidence and how that carpet happened to be to the left and right of the chair of al-Muntasir, and said to myself that he will not reign more than six months, and by God so it turned out.

2981. "I then left the portico and went to the assembly of Wasif and Bugha, who were in the other palace, and said to Wasif: 'That fellow in

charge of furnishings: was he not able to find any other carpet to place beneath the Commander of the Believers except that one which has the picture of Yazid ibn al-Walid, killer of his cousin, and of Shirawayh, killer of his father Arawiz, both of whom lived only six months after their acts of murder?’ Wasif was alarmed and said: ‘Summon Ayyub ibn Sulaiman, the Christian, keeper of the furnishings.’ When Ayyub appeared before him, Wasif said to him: ‘You found no other carpet to spread beneath the Commander of the Believers except the one which was spread beneath al-Mutawakkil the night he was killed, the carpet that has pictures of the Persian king and others, and on which there are traces of blood?’ Ayyub replied: ‘The Commander of the Believers, al-Muntasir, asked me about that carpet and what had happened to it, and I told him it has very visible marks of blood, and that I had decided not to spread it again after that event. He said: ‘Why don’t you wash it and make it fragrant?’ I replied: ‘I feared that whoever sees that carpet would spread the news of what had happened.’ He said: ‘The matter is too well known to hide’---he meant the Turks killing his father al-Mutawakkil. So we washed it, made it fragrant and spread it out beneath him.

2982. “Wasif and Bugha said: ‘When the Commander of the Believers rises to leave, take the carpet and burn it.’ When the caliph left his assembly, the carpet was burned in the presence of Wasif and Bugha. A few days later, al-Muntasir said to me: ‘Spread that particular carpet.’ I said: ‘Where is it?’ He said: ‘What happened to it?’ I told him that Wasif and Bugha had ordered me to burn it. He fell silent and never reverted to the subject again until he died.”

2983. During those days, Al-Muntasir wished to be entertained with singing, so he summoned Bunan ibn al-Harith who was an accomplished *oud* player. He had once been furious with him but now summoned him and the latter sang:

*It's been a long time since I've been with the Imam Muhammad,
And I had not feared that such a time would grow long.
I had been far from him though my house was near:
How strange to be so near and yet so far!
I saw you wearing the Prophet Muhammad's cloak,
And you looked, between the turban and cloak, like the full moon on a
dark night.*

*If only the Day of the Feast would recur today,
For I have seen the Feast display your face to me.*

This took place on the second day of the Feast of Sacrifice, and al-Muntasir had led the congregation in prayer on the day of the Feast. 2984. Among other songs composed by al-Muntasir which Bunan sang that day was the following:

*In my dream I saw you to be less niggardly,
And more docile than you are when awake.
Oh, if only the morning had vanished from sight!
And if only the night went on for a thousand years!
If only drowsiness was bought and sold,
I would have made it more expensive for people.*

Among other songs composed by al-Muntasir and sung in his presence that day was the following:

*In my dream, I saw you as if offering me
Some saliva from your cool mouth,
And as if my hand held the palm of yours,
And we went to sleep under a single coverlet.
Then I woke up and found both your wrists
In my right hand, while your right hand held my arm.
So I spent that whole day pretending to be asleep,
In order to see you in my dream, though I was not drowsy.*

2985. Al-Muntasir had appointed Ahmad ibn al-Khasib as vizier but later regretted that appointment. He had also exiled `Ubaidullah ibn Yahya ibn Khaqan. Ahmad ibn al-Khasib had ridden out one day when he was accosted by a man unjustly treated, and holding a piece of paper stating his complaint. Ibn al-Khasib removed his foot from the stirrup and kicked the man in his chest, throwing him to the ground. This incident became widely known and a poet of that period recited the following verses:

Tell the caliph: O cousin of the Prophet Muhammad,

Bind the legs of your vizier, for he's a kicker.

Bind him so he doesn't kick men, and if you need money,

Your vizier has all the money you need.

2986. Al-Mas`udi said: Had that poet lived into the days of the vizier Hamid ibn al-`Abbas, who was the vizier of the caliph al-Muqtadir bi'llah, he would have witnessed behavior similar to that of Ibn al-Khasib. One day a man was conversing with him when he flipped the man's clothes over his shoulders and punched him in the throat. One day, Umm Musa, the Hashimite housekeeper, or some other housekeeper, went in to see him, and spoke to him about some money as per a letter from al-Muqtadir. Hamid said some words to her which included the following verse:

Fart and pick it up,

And calculate, and make no mistakes.

She was embarrassed, and was inhibited from asking what she had intended. She went at once to see al-Muqtadir and the caliph's mother and told them what happened. He ordered his singing girls that day to sing those verses and it was a day of much pleasure and entertainment. In our book *al-Awsat*, we recounted the history of Hamid and of other viziers of the Abbasids as well as the history of the state secretaries of the

Umayyads, bringing the account down to the present day, i.e. the year 332.

2987. I was told the following story by Abu'l `Abbas Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Musa ibn al-Furat: "Ahmad ibn al-Khasib had a low opinion of my father, who was one of his deputies. A spy from among the royal servants came to me and said: 'The vizier has appointed so and so to take over all your official functions, instructing him to treat your father with extreme severity and to seize a large amount---which he mentioned--of your wealth.' So I sat down, and with me were some other secretaries who were our friends, and immediately wrote to inform my father of what I'd heard. While temporarily preoccupied from attending to the scribe sitting next to me, he leaned against a cushion and fell asleep, then woke up terrified and said: 'I saw the strangest dream! Ahmad ibn al-Khasib was standing here and said to me: 'The caliph al-Muntasir will die within three days.' I said to the secretary: 'The caliph is on the parade ground playing polo, and your dream is simply the result of phlegm and bile, and the food is now ready.'

2988. "We had hardly finished speaking when someone entered to announce: 'I saw the vizier in the royal residence, his face covered. When I asked why this was so, I was told that the caliph had left the parade ground sweating profusely, entered the bath, then slept in a wind tower where the wind affected him and now he has a very high fever. Ahmad ibn al-Khasib entered to see him and said: 'Master, you are a natural philosopher and the wisest man of the age, and yet you leave your horse-riding tired, you enter the bath, then leave it in a sweat, and you lie down in a wind tower?' Al-Muntasir replied: 'Are you afraid I might die? Yesterday I had a dream where someone came to me and told me I will live for twenty-five years. I took this as a good omen for the future, and that I would remain a caliph for that period.' He died on the third day.

When they investigated, they found that he had completed his twenty-fifth year.”

2989. Some historians state that the wind adversely affected al-Muntasir on Thursday, five days remaining from the month of Rabi` I, and he died at the time of the afternoon prayer, on the fifth day of the month of Rabi` II [June 8, 862]. Ahmad ibn Muhammad, al-Musta`in, led the prayers over his body. He was the first Abbasid caliph to have his burial open to the public because his mother Hubshiyya had asked for this. Her wish was granted and she had his internment made public in Samarra.

2990. It is also said that al-Tayfuri poisoned him with a sharp knife with which he was cupping him. Al-Muntasir, it is claimed, had intended to disperse the Turkish troops, and sent Wasif with a large number of raiders on a summer raid in Tarsus. One day he saw Bugha the Younger coming to the palace surrounded by a group of Turks and said to al-Fadl ibn al-Ma`mun: “May God kill me if I do not kill them and scatter them in all directions for having killed al-Mutawakkil!” When the Turks realized what was being done to them and knew the intentions of the caliph, they waited for their chance to kill him. One day he had a fever and wanted to be cupped. Three hundred dirhams* of blood were taken from him. He then drank a medicinal draught which dissolved his vital powers. It is also said that the poison was in the physician’s lancet when he cupped him.

2991. Ibn Abi`l Dunya*>` Abd al-Malik ibn Sulaiman ibn Abi Ja`far, who said: “In a dream, I saw al-Mutawakkil and al-Fath ibn Khaqan, surrounded by flames. Muhammad al-Muntasir sought permission to enter but was prevented from doing so. Al-Mutawakkil then turned to me and said: ‘O `Abd al-Malik, tell this to Muhammad: From the same cup you gave us to drink you too shall drink.’ In the morning I went to see al-Muntasir and found him suffering from a fever. I kept visiting him and as

his death approached I heard him say: 'I acted in haste and was hastily punished.' He died from that sickness."

2992. Al-Muntasir was a tolerant person, sober in mind, did much good, was inclined to virtuous actions, and was generous, cultured and chaste. He held himself to high standards of virtue, fairness and good company in a manner not seen in any previous caliph. His vizier, Ahmad ibn al-Khasib, rarely did any good, was often evil and was very violent. Before that caliphate the Talibids were experiencing extreme hardship and were very afraid for their lives. They had been forbidden to visit the tomb of al-Husain in al-Ghariyy, in the territory of Kufa. Their other Shi`ite followers were also forbidden to visit these sacred sites. This was done upon the orders of al-Mutawakkil in the year 236 [850-51]. In that year, he ordered a man called al-Dhiraj to go to the tomb of al-Husain ibn `Ali, may God bless them both, destroy the tomb and erase all traces of it, and punish anyone found on the site. He offered a reward to anyone who would first strike a blow at the tomb but all feared punishment and declined, so al-Dhiraj picked up a hoe and knocked down the upper part of the tomb, at which point the other workers joined in and destroyed the structure until they reached the hole in the ground where the body had been laid but found no trace of any decayed bones or anything else.

2993. This anti-Alid policy remained as described above until al-Muntasir assumed the caliphate. He then proclaimed safety to all, and ordered all persecution of the Talibids to cease and a stop to all spying on them. No one was to be prevented from visiting the tomb of al-Husain in al-Hira or the tombs of other Talibids, and he ordered that the oasis of Fadak* be returned to the descendants of al-Hasan and al-Husain, and freed the pious endowments of the Talibids. He stopped the harassment of the Shi`ites and prohibited all harm to be done to them. Concerning this matter, al-Buhturi composed the following verses:

*‘Ali is closer to you in kinship,
And more generous in your view than ‘Umar.
But each has his own virtues, though the fast horses [reading hudhudh]
On the day of the races come after the horses with white stars on their
forehead.*

2994. Yazid ibn Muhammad al-Muhallabi who belonged to the followers of the Talibids, composed the following verses which describe what the Shi‘ites had suffered during that period and how the commoners were encouraged to attack them:

*You have shown kindness to the Talibids,
After they had suffered insults for so long.
You re-established amity among the Hashimite clans, and now,
Following their enmity, you can see them acting again as brothers.
You made their nights pleasant and were gracious towards them,
To the point where they’ve forgotten all their rancor and resentments.
If our ancestors knew how graciously you have treated them,
They would regard you as the most virtuous man on earth.*

2995. In the year 248, al-Muntasir divested his two brothers, al-Mu‘tazz and Ibrahim, from the line of succession. Al-Mutawakkil had made a covenant establishing them as heirs in documents he drafted and conditions he had set forth, delegating to each the functions he had designated. He had made Muhammad al-Muntasir his heir and successor, to be succeeded by al-Mu‘tazz and with Ibrahim al-Mu‘ayyad as the successor of al-Mu‘tazz. Homage was taken from the public accordingly, monies were distributed and gifts and presents were widely dispersed among the people.

2996. Orators and poets mentioned that covenant. Among the poems widely admired was a long ode composed by Marwan ibn Abi‘l Janub, of which the following is a selection:

*Three kings they are: Muhammad is a light of guidance,
By which God guides those whom He wishes to guide,
Abu `Abd al-Ilah is similar to you in piety,
And as generous.*

*Ibrahim, the virtuous, is a defender of the people,
Pious and faithful to both promises and threats.
The first is a light, the second is right guidance,
The third is the way of truth, and each is a savior [Mahdi].*

The same poet wrote some excellent verses in praise of al-Mutawakkil, as in the following:

*You who are the tenth caliph, may you live long in enjoyment of kingship,
And may you covenant to ten caliphs after you,
Until you become their imam,
And they become like shimmering stars approaching a splendid moon.*

2997. Regarding the above mentioned covenant of succession of al-Mutawakkil to his three sons, a poet known as al-Sulami recited the following from a longer poem:

*The cornerstone of religion has been firmly put in place by that covenant,
agreeable to all,
An omen of good fortune, made by Ja`far ibn Muhammad
[al-Mutawakkil].*

*Al-Muntasir will first set that cornerstone,
Then to be reinforced by al-Mu`tazz before al-Mu`ayyad.*

Among other poets who eloquently described that event was Idris ibn Abi Hafsa, as in the following verses:

*The caliphate cannot be transferred to any but Ja`far,
Light of right guidance, and his sons.
When the caliph Ja`far has satisfied his desire for ruling,
And has grown tired of it, though none tires of him,*

*Then Muhammad after the caliph Ja`far—and may people not lose him---
Is the best alternative.*

*The continuation of the present ruler, and awaiting Muhammad,
Is better for us and for him than making haste.*

2998. During the days of al-Muntasir, Abu'l `Amud the Kharijite declared a rebellion in the regions of the Yemen, Bawazij [near Takrit] and Mosul. He proclaimed God as the only ruler, and his followers grew in number when others of the same view from Rabi`a and the Kurds rallied to him. Al-Muntasir sent an army against him commanded by Sima the Turk and several battles ensued until Sima captured him and led him to al-Muntasir, who pardoned him, made him swear not to rebel again, then let him go. The vizier of al-Muntasir, Ahmad ibn al-Khasib ibn al-Dahhak al-Jurjani related that when al-Muntasir had pardoned the Kharijite, he said: “The pleasure of a pardon is sweeter than the pleasure of gratifying one’s desire for revenge. The most heinous act of one who is in a position of power is revenge.”

2999. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Durayd* told us the following story: “A state secretary saw a dream that night on the morning of which al-Muntasir assumed the caliphate, as if someone was reciting the following verses:

This is the imam al-Muntasir,

The eleventh king.

His command when he issues it,

Is like a sword: whatever it encounters, it cuts in half.

His eye when it regards something,

Is like Time, bringing both good and evil.”

3000. Al-Muntasir pursued a policy of justice towards his subjects, and the hearts of both elite and commoners were attached to him, though much in awe of him.

3001. Abu'l Hasan Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn `Ali ibn Yahya, known as Ibn al-Nadim>`Ali ibn Yahya the astrologer, who said: "I never saw anyone more noble in his acts than al-Muntasir, but without bragging or affectation. One day he saw me troubled and deep in thought because of an estate right next to mine which I had wanted to buy and tried by all means to convince its owner to sell it to me, until he finally consented. At that moment in time, however, I did not possess the money to pay him, so I went to see al-Muntasir while in that troubled state of mind. When he saw the dejection on my face and my preoccupied mien, he said: 'I see you are deep in thought, so what is the matter?' I tried to spare him the truth and to hide my story from him but he made me swear to tell him the truth, so I told him about the estate. Al-Muntasir said: 'What is its price?' I said it was thirty thousand dirhams. He asked: 'How much of this sum do you possess?' I answered: 'Ten thousand.' He held off and gave no answer, pretended to be too busy to talk to me, then called for an inkstand and a piece of paper, wrote something on it that I did not see, and made a sign to a servant standing by his head which I did not understand. The servant left in a hurry and al-Muntasir turned to me and kept conversing with me and raising one subject after another until the servant returned and stood before him. Al-Muntasir then stood up and said: 'O `Ali, if you wish you may go home.' I had imagined because of his interrogation that he would order the price to be paid to me or at least half the sum, so I went home even more dejected.

3002. "Arriving at my house, I was met by my agent who said to me: 'The servant of the Commander of the Believers has been here with a mule carrying two purses which he delivered to me and took a receipt from me that I had received the money.' I was so overjoyed that I could no longer control myself and went in, not believing the words of my agent until he brought out the two purses. I thanked God for his favor and

immediately sent the owner of the estate the needed sum, then spent the rest of that day taking possession of it and getting its owner to witness its sale. Early the next morning, I went to see al-Muntasir, but he never said a word about the subject nor asked me about the estate until death separated us.”

3003. Al-Mas`udi said: Abu`l Fadl ibn Abi Tahir mentioned the following tale in his book called *Akhbar al-Mu`allifin*: “I was told the following story by Abu `Uthman Sa`id ibn Muhammad al-Saghir, client of the Commander of the Believers: ‘During his reign, al-Muntasir kept the company of a group of intimates who included Salih ibn Muhammad, known as al-Hariri. One day, the subject of love and passion was being discussed in his assembly, and al-Muntasir said to one of his companions: ‘Tell me what is the most grievous loss that a soul can suffer and which causes it the most profound grief.’ He answered: ‘The loss of a dear friend who is most akin to one, and the death of one nearest and dearest.’ Another person who attended that assembly said: ‘How hard is vacillation of view among those who are in love, and how hard is the weaning of the soul when the time of youth is upon it! The hearts of lovers are sundered by those who censure them, for such blame is like a pendant in their ears. The ardor of love is like a fire raging in their bodies while the tears of a sufferer pour down in pails and buckets. He whom abandoned sites and gardens have caused to weep will know what I am talking about.’

3004. “Another person said: ‘How wretched is a passionate lover! Everything is his enemy. When the wind rises, he becomes worried. When the lightening flashes, he cannot sleep. Censure pains him; separation wastes his body; remembrance makes him ill; nearness to the beloved arouses him; the night multiplies his misery; sleep eludes him; the traces of the beloved’s encampment scald him and standing by these traces causes him to weep. Lovers have tried to cure themselves by

coming together or going far, but no medicine can cure passion and no consolation can calm it. The poet who composed these verses expressed the matter well:

*They claim that when a lover draws near to his beloved,
He grows bored, and that separation cures ardor.
We have tried all remedies but nothing cured us,
Though nearness is preferable to distance.*

3005. “All who attended that assembly spoke at length about that subject. Then al-Muntasir turned to Salih ibn Muhammad al-Hariri and said: ‘O Salih, have you ever been in love?’ He answered: ‘Yes, by God, Master, and remnants of that love are still in my chest.’ ‘Woe to you! With whom were you in love?’ He answered: ‘I used to frequent al-Rusafa in the days of al-Mu`tasim. A singing woman, who had given birth to a male for al-Rashid, had a slave girl who would go out, do her shopping, take care of her and meet people on her behalf. The singing woman was at that time in charge of the domestic affairs of the palace. The slave girl would pass by me, and I would regard her closely but respectfully. Then I wrote her a letter but she drove away my messenger and threatened me. I would sit by the road she frequented in order to speak to her, but whenever she saw me she laughed and winked at the other slave girls to make fun of me. So I left her though my heart still harbored a fire of love that was not extinguished, an ardent longing that never cooled, and a passion ever renewed.’ Al-Muntasir said: ‘How would you feel if I summon her and marry her to you if she is a free woman, or else buy her if she is still a slave?’ Al-Hariri replied: ‘By God, Master, I am most desirous of this and most in need of it.’

3006. “Al-Muntasir then summoned Ahmad ibn al-Khasib and asked him to dispatch a single servant of his, sending with him a letter with firm instructions to Ibrahim ibn Ishaq and Salih, the royal servant, who was in

charge of the womenfolk in Baghdad. The messenger went on his way. The singing woman had freed her and she had passed on from the status of a slave to that of a free and adult woman. So the messenger brought her to al-Muntasir. Appearing before him, he saw an old woman, her back bent, unmarried but still possessing traces of her earlier beauty. He said to her: ‘Would you like me to marry you off?’ She replied: ‘Master, I am your slave and your subject, so do what you like with me.’ Al-Muntasir then summoned Salih, married them and paid her bride-money. He then made fun of him, brought walnuts adorned with jewels and smooth rubbed corn and scattered it on the newly-weds. She lived with Salih for a long time, then he grew tired of her and left her.”

3007. Ya`qub al-Tammar wrote the following verses regarding that story:

May God grant Abu`l Fadl [al-Hariri] a life without sorrows!

May He protect him, for he loved much and was faithful.

Ardent lover he was, awaiting his chance to contract a marriage.

He loved her who dyed her hair with henna and galls.

Wearing a crown with gems, she is one of the most beautiful of God’s creatures.

Armed with patience, he took his time and waited.

An old woman she was, passionately loved by an old man, squatting.

She was good for hunting in Noah’s days, he of the Ark, and he too.

What good fortune could he have acquired were it not for the rubbed corn and gem-studded walnuts?

If only he had left it up to her to decide whether to marry him or not, thus escaping!

But now whenever his penis draws near to her, it shrinks.”

3008. Abu`Uthman Sa`id ibn Muhammad al-Saghir recounted the following story: “When al-Muntasir was caliph, he sent me to Egypt on government business. I had fallen in love with a slave woman owned by a

slave seller who had put her up for sale. She was a skillful singer, acceptable in appearance and fully endowed with good qualities and perfections. I bargained with her owner but he refused to sell her for less than a thousand dinars. I did not have that sum at that time, so my trip to Egypt bothered me now that she had captured my heart, and her love had made me restless and on edge, so I regretted not having bought her. When I returned from my mission to Egypt and gave the caliph an account of what I'd done, he praised my efforts and asked me what I needed and how I fared. I told him about the slave girl and my passion for her. He ignored me and grew even more abrupt towards me. Meanwhile, my heart grew more passionate and my patience weaker, so I amused myself with other women. Yet it was as if I had become even more attached to her and could not be distracted from loving her.

3009. "Every time I went in to see al-Muntasir, he would mention her and arouse my longing for her. To attain my object, I tried to convince his boon companions and intimates, his favorite slave women, his wives and even his grandmother, the mother of the caliphs, to get him to buy her for me. But he did not respond to any appeal, and accused me of impatience. Meanwhile, he had ordered Ahmad ibn al-Khasib to write to the governor of Egypt and to buy her and send her over to him, all of which I knew nothing about. She was then carried to him and joined his household. He looked at her, heard her singing, and could no longer blame me for loving her. He then handed her over to the woman in charge of his slaves who proceeded to spruce her up and prettify her.

3010. "One day, he made me sit and ordered her to come out behind the screen. When I heard her singing, I knew it was she, but could not bear to let him know I had recognized her. But I could not hide for long what I had kept inside of me and my patience was exhausted. He said to me: 'What's the matter with you, Sa'id?' I answered: 'I am fine, Master.' So

he suggested that she sing a tune I had once told him I had heard her sing and found charming. She sang it and he said to me: ‘Do you know that song?’ I answered: ‘Yes, by God, Master, and I once hoped to possess the person who sang it. But now I have lost all hope of her and am like one who kills himself with his own hand and brings an end to his life.’ He said: ‘O Sa`id, I swear I bought her only for you and God knows I never laid eyes on her except when I went in to see her after she had rested from her tiring trip and recovered from the fatigue of her travels. She now belongs to you.’ I prayed for his welfare in any manner I could, and those in his assembly also offered him thanks on my behalf. Her ordered her to be made ready and to be taken to my house, and my life was revived after it was about to expire. No one in my household is more favored than she, and no children are dearer to me than her children.”

3011. Among the amusing stories related of libertines and entertainers is the one related by Abu`l Fadl ibn Abi Tahir>Ahmad ibn al-Harith al-Khazzaz>Abu`l Hasan al-Mada`ini and Abu `Ali al-Hirmazi, both of whom said: “There was once in Mecca a degenerate individual who brought men and women together for immoral purposes. He was a Quraish aristocrat, but otherwise unnamed. The people of Mecca then complained to the governor about him and he ordered him to be exiled to `Arafat where he settled in a house there. He then entered Mecca in disguise, met his former male and female clients and asked them: ‘What prevents you from coming to me?’ They replied: ‘How can we do so when you are in `Arafat?’ He answered: ‘All it costs is the hire of a donkey for two dirhams and then you’ll be safe and enjoy your promenade, privacy and pleasure.’ They said: ‘We have no doubt you have spoken the truth.’

3012. “So they would go to him, and this became so widespread that he corrupted the youth and disreputable elements in Mecca. Once more, the

Meccans complained to their governor and he ordered him summoned. He said to him: ‘Enemy of God! I expelled you from God’s sanctuary and you went off to the most holy pilgrimage station to practice corruption and join immoral people together?’ He answered: ‘May God guide the governor aright! These people are lying out of envy.’ The Meccans said to the governor: ‘One single proof stands between us. Gather the donkeys of the donkey keepers and send them off to `Arafat. If they do not head directly to his house, having become accustomed to ferry the degenerates and the sinners there, his statement would be true.’ ‘Yes, this constitutes proof,’ said the governor. He ordered the donkeys to be gathered and then dispatched to `Arafat where the donkeys headed to his house, and this was confirmed by trustworthy deputies. So he said: ‘No other proof is needed. Strip him so that he may be whipped.’

3013. “When he saw the man who was about to whip him he said: ‘Am I to be whipped for sure, O Emir?’ The governor replied: ‘Without any doubt, you enemy of God!’ The man said: ‘Whip me then for, by God, it cannot be any worse than for the people of Iraq to make fun of us and say: The Meccans are willing to accept the testimony of donkeys. And this in addition to ridiculing us for accepting the testimony of a single person accompanied by the oath of a plaintiff.’ The governor laughed and said: ‘I shall not whip you today,’ and ordered him to be released and harassed no longer.”

3014. Charming stories are related about al-Muntasir, in addition to poems, funny anecdotes, stories involving boon companions, and epistles and letters before he assumed the caliphate. We recounted all this in detail, choosing what we found of interest and which we have not included in this book. These are to be found in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In each work we set down what is not mentioned in the others. Had it been otherwise, there would be no difference between

these works and they would all have been one thing. Once we finish this work, we shall write another in which we intend to include a miscellany of histories and reports, not arranged systematically or under specific headings, but in accordance with what occurs to our mind of narratives that are of value, interspersing it with diverse literary and historical reports. This book, God willing, will act as a continuation of our earlier works and a sequel to our previous writings.

Chapter 119

An account of the caliphate of al-Musta`in billah

3105. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Mu`tasim received the oath of homage the day al-Muntasir died, namely on Sunday, the fifth of Rabi` II, in the year 248 [June 8, 862]. His patronymic was "Abu'l `Abbas". His mother was a manumitted slave of Slav origin called Mukhariq. He renounced the caliphate and handed it to his brother al-Mu`tazz, so his caliphate lasted three years and eight months, or three years and nine months in other versions. He died on Wednesday, the third of Shawwal, in the year 252 [October 16, 866], and was murdered aged thirty-five.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

3016. Al-Musta`in appointed Abu Musa Utamish as his vizier, and the man in full charge of the vizierate was a state secretary of Utamish called Shuja` ibn al-Qasim. When Utamish and his secretary were murdered, Ahmad ibn Salih ibn Shirzad became the vizier. When Wasif and Bugha killed Baghir the Turk, the non-Arab elements split into factions and Wasif and Bugha went down to Baghdad, taking al-Musta`in with them. They put him up in the house of Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir. This took place in the month of Muharram in the year 251 [February, 865]. Al-Musta`in was utterly powerless and all power was now held by Wasif and Bugha. The subsequent siege of Baghdad was described in our

book *al-Awsat*. About al-Musta`in, a poet of that period recited the following verses:

*A caliph in a cage,
Between Wasif and Bugha.
He repeats what they tell him,
Just like a parrot.*

3017. Al-Musta`in had exiled Ahmad ibn al-Khasib to the island of Crete in the year 248 [862-3] and exiled `Ubaidullah ibn Yahya ibn Khaqan to Barqa. He then appointed `Isa ibn Farrukhan as vizier and Sa`id ibn Humaid as head of the Bureau of Correspondence. Sa`id had memorized a large body of historical reports and poems and was proficient in a wide range of sciences. He was charming in conversation and very informative in company.

3018. Sa`id also composed many delightful verses, and the following have been widely admired and prized:

*I used to frighten him with prayers,
And was afraid he would commit sins,
But when he persisted in his unjust conduct,
I stopped my prayers against the unjust.*

Or the following:

*My lady, why do I see you being stingy?
Whoso wishes for more from you is fated to be denied.
You have become like the world, whose fluctuations we censure,
And follow this up by cursing it, though we are its slaves.*

Or the following:

*God knows, as the world leaves me behind,
And my life is unstable, and Time itself ebbs and flows,
That the agonies of separation from you
Fill my heart with a fear greater than that of death.*

*I used to find joy in this world and its delights,
But despair compels its enemies to hope.*

Or the following:

*My love for her was not love at first sight,
Nor was it an embrace [reading ghamratan] followed by great passion.
It was the world that passed us by,
And what can console you if the world passes you by?*

Or the following:

*It was as if, when she revealed the tears pouring down her soft cheeks,
Pearls were tumbling upon pearls.*

3019. However, Sa`id, though possessing the fine literary sensibilities described above, was an enemy of the Shi`a, and pretended to support the Sunnites and to be a follower of Ibn Hanbal. This enmity towards the Commander of the Believers `Ali and his pure descendants was fully apparent, and a poet mentions this in the following verses:

*We've never seen anyone like Sa`id ibn Humaid.
Why does he harm the Prophet of God by cursing his brother?
It is heresy that permeates his ancestral religion.*

Sa`id ibn Humaid had Magian ancestors and the poet Abu `Ali al-Basir composed the following verses about him:

*Let him who claims to be eloquent hear this from me and from everyone:
Insert your head in your mother's vagina!
Official letters go out bearing our brother's signature,
And I don't mean Sa`id ibn Humaid.*

3020. Between Sa`id ibn Humaid on the one hand and Abu `Ali al-Basir and Abu'l `Ayna' there exist a number of exchanges of friendly censure, of correspondence, and of mutual jesting which we have cited in our *al-Awsat*. Abu `Ali al-Basir was one of the most spontaneously endowed poets of his age, and would compose one extraordinary line of verse after

another, and one proverbial line after another which none could equal. Ibn Mayyada, though defective in his literary taste, considered him superior to Jarir and to all other poets of his age. He is, however, superior to his colleagues of his day and age though inferior to al-Buhturi. Among his most widely known verses are those he composed about al-Mu`alla ibn Ayyub:

*Upon your father's life! Al-Mu`alla was never associated with generosity,
As long as generous men exist in this world.*

*But when the land suffers from drought,
And its plants turn dry, chaff becomes pasturage.*

3021. Among his widely admired verses are the following:

*If students who depart in pursuit of knowledge,
Acquire of knowledge only what can be set down for ever in books,
I am quick to tell them to exert themselves and be serious,
So that the inkstand becomes their hearing and the notebook is lodged in
their chest.*

Other admired verses of his are the following, composed as he went on pilgrimage:

*We departed, heading for Mecca,
Going on both major and minor pilgrimage.
Approaching al-Hira, my camel driver was perplexed.
So I said: Set my baggage down here,
And pay no attention to who our neighbors might be.
There we met with entertainment, an orchard and a wine seller,
And a gazelle*, a belt tied between arm and waist.
So what do you imagine will happen to a halfa plant,
If you set it on fire?*

3022. In that year, that is 248, Abu'l Husain Yahya ibn `Umar ibn al-Husain ibn `Abdullah ibn Isma`il ibn `Abdullah ibn Ja`far ibn Abi Talib,

“al-Tayyar,” rose in rebellion in Kufa. His mother was Fatima bint al-Husain ibn `Abdullah ibn Isma`il ibn `Abdullah ibn Ja`far ibn Abi Talib, “al-Tayyar.” Another version states that this occurred in the year 250 [864]. He was killed and his severed head was taken to Baghdad where it was exhibited on a cross. There was turmoil among the population because of their love for him, for he began his uprising by refusing to shed blood or to seize any of the people’s wealth, and acted with justice and fairness. His rebellion was the result of an insult he had suffered, a harshness in treatment and a severe ordeal he had endured at the hands of al-Mutawakkil and some Turks.

3023. People then entered to congratulate Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir for having quelled that uprising. Among them was Abu Hashim al-Ja`fari, whose name was Dawud ibn al-Qasim ibn Ishaq ibn `Abdullah ibn Ja`far ibn Abi Talib. There were just three fathers between him and Ja`far “al-Tayyar” and he was at that time the most eminent in pedigree of all the Talibids, the Hashimites and the Quraish. He was an ascetical, pious, devout and learned man, sound in mind and senses and with his back straight. His tomb is well known and we recounted his history, the reports transmitted about him and the ancestors he had encountered in our work entitled *Hada`iq al-Adhhan fi Akhbar Al al-Nabiyy*. He now addressed Ibn Tahir thus: “O Emir, you are being congratulated for killing a man for whose death the Prophet of God, had he been alive, would have accepted condolences.” Muhammad did not answer him. Abu Hashim then left the house, reciting the two lines of verse below. Al-Musta`in had ordered the head to be exhibited but Ibn Tahir ordered it brought down after having observed how disturbed the people were by this.

3024. The lines of verse by Abu Hashim al-Ja`fari were as follows:

O family of Tahir, “devour” him and be diseased:

The flesh of the Prophet is not edible as food.

A revenge that God Himself seeks to exact,

Is not one that can be avoided.

3025. Abu'l Husain Yahya ibn `Umar was the subject of many elegies.

We recounted the manner of his death and the elegies composed for him in our book *al-Awsat*. Among these elegies is a long ode composed by the poet Ahmad ibn Abi Tahir:

Farewell to Islam, for it must be bidden farewell,

Now that the family of the Prophet are gone and been bidden farewell.

When we lost them, we lost honor and glory,

And the thrones of nobility are now tottering.

How can any eye conjoin sleep and a bed,

When the descendant of God's Prophet lies in the dust?

The House of the Prophet Muhammad is empty of religion and Islam,

For that House now lies in ruin.

The members of his family have been killed in its recesses,

And a group of them has been dispersed, never to reunite.

Do you not see how the souls of the family of the Chosen One,

Are chosen by the ropes of death that pursue them?

O family of Tahir, whose malice is a trait of character,

And whose treachery is both apparent and hidden,

Your swords do not cut down the Turks,

But instead cut down the family of Ahmad [Muhammad].

Every day their blood provides you with a drinking hole,

And drinking it does not slake your thirst.

Your spears are ever ready to strike the Talibids,

While the spears of the Turks continue to bring you death.

Your killing fields are the family of Muhammad,

While your houses are the killing fields of the Turks and the army.

*Do you really imagine that God will watch over your privileges,
When the privileges of the Prophet of God are lost among you?
They now pray for God's intercession,
But none can intercede with God when God aims to exact revenge from
him,
Whereby a crucified person is crucified and a killer is killed,
A high person is brought low and a low person is raised high.*

3026. Yahya was a pious man, very compassionate towards the poor and needy among the common people, and caring towards the elite. He was very supportive of his family, preferring them to himself, and took upon his shoulders the heavy burden of supporting Talibid women, exerting himself to maintain their welfare and to show them kindness and consideration. He is never known to have committed a sin or a shameful deed. When he was killed, people were greatly distressed, and he was lamented by both near and far, grieved by both young and old, and bewailed by the high and the low.

3027. A poet of that time, who bemoaned his loss, composed the following verses:

*Horses wept in anguish for Yahya's loss,
As did sharp Indian swords.
Iraq, both east and west, lamented,
As did the Holy Book and Revelation.
The Sanctuary wept for him as also the Holy House and the Corner-
Stone:
All wailed for him.
How was it that the sky itself did not fall upon us,
The day they said Abu'l Husain has been killed?
The daughters of the Prophet weep in anguished distress,
Their tears overflowing.*

*They weep for a full moon, removed by death,
Whose loss was devastating, inordinate and momentous.
His face was cut by enemy swords:
May my father be ransom for that charming and lovely visage!
Yahya's death has left rancor in my heart,
A rancor that will harm my body.
His murder reminds one of the murder of `Ali and al-Husain,
And of the day when the Prophet passed away.
May God's blessings upon them be ever flowing,
As long as a man in pain cries out, or a bereaved person wails in longing.*

3028. Another poet who eulogized Yahya was `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ja`far al-`Alawi al-Himmani. He resided in Kufa with the tribe of Himman, so was counted of their number. His verses were as follows:

*You who remain from our pious ancestors,
And from commerce that brings real profit,
The passage of days finds us either dead or wounded.
May the face of the earth be dashed!
How many a beautiful face has it hidden away!
Oh what a frightful day,
For a bleeding heart!*

Another elegy for Yahya by the same poet is as follows:

*When his body was laid to rest, the sides of the tomb were diffused with
the odor of musk,
And these sides would not have done so were it not for the sweet odor of
his body.*

*Noble and distinguished heroes have met their deaths in the fight,
And Yahya the good was fated to meet a similar end.*

Another runs as follows:

My clan and I are by pedigree related to you,

As the mosque of Khaif is related to its center.*

A boy of ten amongst us, no sooner girt with a sword,

*Than his resolution [reading wa himmatuhu] is found to be sharper than
a sword.*

3029. When al-Husain ibn Isma`il, commander of the army that defeated Yahya ibn `Umar, entered Kufa, the above mentioned poet, i.e. `Ali ibn Muhammad, who was maternal brother of Isma`il al-`Alawi, failed to go and congratulate the conqueror, though all the `Alids had done so. `Ali ibn Muhammad had been the leader of the Kufan `Alids, their poet, teacher and spokesman. No `Alid at that time in Kufa was higher than him in esteem.

3030. The conqueror, al-Husain ibn Isma`il, noted his absence, asked about him and sent some people to summon him, expressing his displeasure that `Ali ibn Muhammad had failed to congratulate him. `Ali answered like one who despaired of life and prepared himself for death: "I had wanted to come and congratulate you for your victory and continued success!" He then recited verses that no one who wanted to continue living would have composed:

You have killed the noblest of all who ride,

While I attempt to soften you up with words!

It is so hard for me to meet with you,

When the edge of the sword lies not between us.

But when the wings of a bird are severed,

It quivers on a hill.

Al-Husain ibn Isma`il said to him: "You are one who seeks revenge, so I do not find your words objectionable." He then presented him with robes of honor and had him conveyed to his house.

3031. Abu Ahmad al-Muwaffaq Billah* at one time imprisoned `Ali ibn Muhammad as a result of a false report that he was planning a revolt. So `Ali wrote the following verses to him from prison:

*Your grandfather`Abdullah was the best of parents
For `Ali's two sons, Husain the good and Hasan.
The palm of a hand is weakened in its every fingertip,
When weakness befalls its sister palm.*

When these verses reached him, al-Muwaffaq arranged for `Ali ibn Muhammad to be discharged and conveyed back to Kufa.

3032. `Ali ibn Muhammad composed odes and elegies for his brother Isma`il and other members of his family. He also wrote verses disparaging grey hairs and we have cited many of these in our work *Akhbar al-Zaman* when discussing the Talibids, and also in our other work entitled *Mazahir al-Akhbar wa Tara'if al-Athar* devoted to the history of the Prophet's family.

3033. Among those elegized by `Ali ibn Muhammad was Abu'l Husain Yahya ibn `Umar. He excelled in that elegy where he also boasted over other clans of Quraish:

*I swear, if Quraish was pleased by his death,
He was one who refrained from fighting when fighting came to an end.
But now that he died facing the thrust of spears,
He surely belongs to a clan [reading ma`sharin] who despise death from
sickness.
Do not curse! That clan lives on in those who remain,
Following in the path of ancestors, like heirs.
Against you they once fought, when you cut your noses,
Many battles between al-Safa and al-Mu`arraf.*
This is their legacy from Adam and Muhammad,
Down to the two weights* of the Prophet and the Qur'an.*

3034. About grey hairs he composed the following verses:

*When he reached the age of youth,
His whiskers were intensely white, his hair jet black.
He was like a moon on the sky's horizon,
Who girded himself with the halo of a full moon.
O you, son of him whose virtues
Have attained the highest station and the necklaces of Qur'anic chapters,
You who descends from a family whose visage
Is made to resemble reviving rain to mankind,
The fates are in awe of their lofty station,
And it is as though they are one lofty station over another.
The arrows of death do not reach the highest heaven and the stations of
lords.*

3035. Among his highly admired elegies is the one he composed about his brother:

*This is the son of my mother, whose soul resides along with mine in my
body,
Time cut my heart in two when he died.
Today nothing remains to console me,
Except the wasting of my bodily members from grief,
Or else an eye that weeps, trying to hide its sorrow,
Or a line of verse, an elegy that lasts for ever.
Should I communicate with you through tears,
When my companion has fallen asleep while I remain wide awake?
Light of my life, where am I to find one like you,
You who are my right hand, now paralyzed?
Where am I to find one I can call upon in times of trouble,
One who hears complaints but himself complains to none?*

I have endured all kinds of bereavements but yours was the most profound,

And most grievous for the heart to bear.

Tell death: Do not spare anyone after him,

And tell the ropes of death: Pick whomever you wish.

Time itself has passed away with his passing,

And life proclaims imminent separation and misery.

ʿAli ibn Muhammad al-ʿAlawi died in 260 [873-4], in the caliphate of al-Muʿtamid.

3036. During the caliphate of al-Mustaʿin, and in the year 250 [864], al-Hasan ibn Zaid ibn Muhammad ibn Ismaʿil ibn al-Hasan ibn Zaid ibn al-Hasan ibn ʿAli ibn Abi Talib rose in rebellion in Tabaristan which he then conquered along with Jurjan, following many battles and very hard fighting. This territory remained in his hands until he died in the year 270 [883-4]. His brother, Muhammad ibn Zaid, succeeded him until he was challenged by Rafiʿ ibn Harthama. Muhammad ibn Zaid then entered the territory of the Dailam in 277 [890-91] and conquered it. Thereafter, Rafiʿ ibn Harthama paid him homage, became his follower, accepted his religious call and declared his obedience to him. Al-Hasan ibn Zaid and Muhammad ibn Zaid called for the leadership of whomever was found most acceptable from among the family of the Prophet.

3037. This principle, i.e. the call for the most acceptable of the Prophet's family, was also adopted by later rulers who succeeded them in Tabaristan such as al-Hasan ibn ʿAli al-Hasani, known as al-Utrush, and his descendants, then by the missionary al-Hasan ibn al-Qasim whom Asfar killed in Tabaristan. Al-Hasan ibn al-Qasim was a descendant of al-Hasan ibn ʿAli ibn Abi Talib. In our work *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we recounted the history of all the other Talibids in Tabaristan, and those among them who rose in rebellion in east and west and elsewhere on this

earth, bringing the narrative down to the present, i.e. the year 332. In this work we simply mention brief selections of what needs to be mentioned so that this work may not be devoid of their mention.

3038. In that year, i.e. the year 250, Muhammad ibn Ja`far ibn al-Hasan rose in rebellion in Rayy, calling for the imamate of al-Hasan ibn Zaid, ruler of Tabaristan. He fought several battles in Rayy against the Abbasids of Khurasan as a result of which he was captured and conveyed to Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir in Nishapur, where he died in prison. He was succeeded in Rayy by Ahmad ibn `Isa ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, who called for the imamate of the most acceptable of the Prophet's descendants. He fought Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Tahir, then in Rayy, and Muhammad fled to Baghdad which the Alid then entered.

3039. In that same year, that is 250, al-Hasan ibn Isma`il ibn Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, known as "al-Karaki", declared a rebellion in Qazwin. He was a descendant of "al-Arqa" [nickname of grandfather]. It has also been claimed that the name "al-Karaki" referred to al-Hasan ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Isma`il ibn Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib. Musa ibn Bugha fought him, so "al-Karaki" retreated to the land of the Dailam, where he ended up with al-Hasan ibn Zaid al-Hasani, and died before al-Hasan.

3040. In Kufa, al-Husain ibn Muhammad ibn Hamza ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib proclaimed a rebellion. Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir sent an army against him from Baghdad commanded by Ibn Khaqan. The Talibid was defeated and disappeared when his followers abandoned him. This took place in the year 251[865].

3041. In the year 249, al-Musta`in appointed his son al-`Abbas governor of Mecca, Medinah, Basra and Kufa and was about to obtain homage for him but postponed this because of the young age of the prince. `Isa ibn Farrukhanshah had asked the poet Abu `Ali al-Basir to compose some verses on that occasion which referred to homage. Abu `Ali composed a long ode of which the following are selections:

Through you [al-Musta`in] God protected the religion and revived the community,

Saving it from that slippery slope the like of which causes death.

Make your son al-`Abbas your heir, for he is worthy thereof,

And inform the people of your covenant.

Though his age might hold him back, yet his mind

Brings him close to the rank of a mature man, rightly guided.

Before him, Yahya [John the Baptist] was endowed with wisdom when still a boy,

And `Isa [Jesus] spoke to people from his cradle.

3042. Abu'l `Abbas al-Makki said: "I used to be a boon companion of Muhammad ibn Tahir before his wars against the Talibids. At no time did I see him as happy or energetic as the time before the rebellion of the Alid in Rayy, in 250. One night we were conversing, all good things being present and with curtains let down, when he said to me: 'I feel a craving for food, so what shall I eat?' I said: 'Breast of heath-cock or a cold piece of kid goat meat.' He said: 'Page, get me a loaf of bread, vinegar and salt.' So he ate from that. The following night he said: 'O Abu'l `Abbas, I feel hungry so what shall I eat?' I answered: 'What you ate last night.' He said: 'You clearly do not know the difference between my two statements. Yesterday I said I felt a craving for food but tonight I said I'm hungry, and there's a difference between the two.' He then called for food and said to me: 'Describe to me food, drink, perfume,

women and horses.’ I said: ‘In verse or in prose?’ He answered: ‘No, in prose.’ I said: ‘The most delicious of foods is that which satisfies hunger with a taste that corresponds to a craving.’ ‘What about the best of drinks?’ I replied: ‘A glass of wine which calms your anger and which you share with your intimate friend.’ ‘What of the best music?’ I answered: ‘Four strings and a singing girl sitting cross-legged, whose singing is amazing and whose voice is exactly right.’ ‘Which perfume is most fragrant?’ I answered: ‘The smell of a beloved, and the close proximity of a child you are bringing up.’ ‘Which women are the most desirable?’ ‘She from whom you depart reluctantly and to whom you return in amorous rapture.’ ‘Which horse is swiftest?’ ‘The one with a wide mouth and large eyes that, when pursued, outstrips its pursuer, and when pursuing catches up with what is pursued.’ He said: ‘Well spoken. O Bishr, give him a hundred dinars.’ I said: ‘What am I to do with two hundred dinars?’ He said: ‘So you’ve increased your reward by a hundred dinars? Page, give him the one hundred we mentioned first and another hundred for thinking well of us.’ So I departed with my two hundred dinars.” Between that conversation and his departure from Rayy was a mere week.

3043. Al-Musta`in had a wide knowledge of the battle-days and history of the past and was fond of ancient history. Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Duraid>Abu`l Baida, client of Ja`far al-Tayyar, who was a charming conversationalist, told me the following story: “In the days of al-Musta`in, we travelled from Medinah to Samarra, and with us was a group of Talibids and Ansar. We were kept waiting at his gate for a whole month before we were permitted to see him. Each one of us said something and expressed his thoughts, and made pleasing conversation. He began by speaking of Medinah, Mecca and their history. I had the best knowledge among our group of the subjects he was talking about so I

said: 'Will the Commander of the Believers allow me to speak?' 'If you wish,' he answered. So I began to talk about the same subjects he was discussing. Then the conversation branched into all kinds of histories of nations and we departed, being well accommodated and provided for.

3044. "In the early evening, a royal servant came to see me with some Turks and cavalymen, and I was made to ride on an easily led mare which they had with them and conveyed to al-Musta`in. I found him sitting in a pavilion. He brought me near to him and having put me at ease, began to talk about the history and battle-days of the Arabs and those who suffered from passionate love. The conversation then drifted to the tribe of `Udhra and those among them who were passionate lovers. Then he said: 'What do you know about the history of `Urwa ibn Hizam and his love for `Afra?'" I answered: 'O Commander of the Believers, when `Urwa ibn Hizam left `Afra' bint `Iqal, he died from love and longing for her. A caravan passed by who recognized him, and when they reached the camp of `Afra', one of them recited in a loud voice:

*O abode whose people are unaware of what has happened,
We announce to you the death of `Urwa ibn Hizam.*

`Afra' heard him, came within sight of him and recited:

*Woe to you, you caravan, hurrying past!
Have you truly announced the death of `Urwa ibn Hizam?*

A man from that caravan answered her:

*Yes, we left him behind in a far land,
Abiding there in a wilderness and sandy hills.*

3045. "She said to them:

*If you speak the truth you must know,
That you have announced the death of every full moon on a dark night.
May heroes, after him, never meet with any pleasure,
And never return safely after an absence.*

*May a woman never deliver a noble person like him,
And may she never, after him, be pleased with any son.
May you never reach your destination,
And may every food taste bitter in your mouths.*

She then asked where they'd buried him, rode to his grave, and drawing near, said: 'Set me down for I want to answer the call of nature.' They set her down, she stole away to his grave, threw herself upon it and her cries alarmed them. When they heard her, they went quickly after her and found her stretched over his grave, dead. So they buried her next to him. 3046. "Al-Musta'in said to me: 'Do you know anything else about him other than what you mentioned?' I replied: 'Yes, O Commander of the Believers. I was told this by Malik ibn al-Sabbah al-'Adawi>al-Haitham ibn 'Adiyy>Hisham ibn 'Urwa>his father al-Nu'man ibn Bashir who said: 'Uthman ibn 'Affan sent me on a mission to collect the alms of the tribes of 'Udhra and Baliyy in a clan of theirs called the Banu Manbadha. I found a new tent set up somewhat distant from the rest of the encampment. Heading to it, I found a youth sleeping in its shade and an old woman sitting in a fold of that tent. When the youth saw me, he trilled the following verses in a weak voice:

*I shall acknowledge the wisdom of the soothsayer of Yamama,
And the soothsayer of Najd, if they are able to cure me.*

*They said: Yes, we can cure you completely of this disease,
Then rose with my visitors to do their job.*

*They left no incantation known to them which they did not employ,
And no potion which they did not make me drink.*

*They said: God cure you! By God we have no power
To cure what your heart has had to bear.*

*My longing for 'Afra' is such as to resemble,
A sharp spear-head tearing into my neck and entrails.*

`Afra' is the most beloved of mankind to me:

`Afra' turns away from me and is remiss [reading mutawani].

I would long for the Day of Final Gathering if told

That `Afra' and I would meet that Day.

God curse those evil gossipers who tell me

That `Afra' is now the lady-love of someone else.

3047. "He then sighed faintly and when I looked at his face I found he was dead. To the old woman I said: 'Old woman, I think the man sleeping in the shade of your tent has died.' 'By God, I think so too,' she replied. She looked at his face and said: 'By the Lord of the Ka'ba, he has expired.' I asked: 'Who is he?' She answered: 'Urwa ibn Hizam al-Udhri and I am his mother. I swear that for the past year I never heard him moan except for today at noon, for I heard him recite:

If any of my mothers are ever to cry for me,

Let them do so, for I feel that I shall die today.

Let them make me hear their weeping but I shall not hear them,

Once I have been carried above the people's heads as a dead body.

I remained until I witnessed him being washed, shrouded, prayed over and buried.' The caliph `Uthman said to me: 'What made you do so?' I answered: 'To win God's reward for this deed.' The caliph rewarded my companions but my gift was superior to theirs."

3048. Al-Mas`udi said: Marvellous stories and charming verses are narrated of passionate lovers of the past. Among these is a story told to us by Abu Khalifa al-Fadl ibn al-Hubab al-Jumahi, the judge>Muhammad ibn Sallam al-Jumahi*> Abu'l Hayyaj ibn Sabiq al-Najdi al-Thaqafi, who said: "I travelled to the land of the `Amir tribe for no other reason than to meet the *Majnun* [crazed with love]. I found his father to be an old man and his brothers to be grown up men, and found them to be living a life of luxury and great prosperity. I asked them about the *Majnun* and they

wept. The old man said: 'By God, he was the most dutiful of all my sons. He fell in love with a woman of his tribe, a woman who, by God, could not have dreamed of one like him. When their affair became public, her father disliked the idea of marrying her to him, so he married her off to another man. We tied him up but he would bite his tongue and lips so severely that we feared he might cut them off. Seeing this, we released him and he went away into this wilderness. Each day his food would be taken to him and placed where he could see it. When he did so, he would come and eat. When his clothes grew tattered, new clothes would be brought and placed where he could see them.' I asked them to show me where he might be found and they introduced me to a youth in their clan who was, they said, a friend of his, and the only person with whom he felt at ease.

3049. "I asked that youth to lead me to him and he answered: 'If you are interested in his verse, I know all the verse he composed up till yesterday. I plan to see him tomorrow and if he has composed any other verse I will recite it to you.' I said I wanted to see him and he replied: 'If he sees you, he will run away, and I fear he might later on avoid me, and his poetry will be lost.' I insisted that he should lead me to him so he said: 'Go seek him in this wilderness. If you see him, approach him in a friendly manner. If he threatens to fling at you some object in his hand, you must sit down and pretend not to look at him but observe him closely. When you see he has calmed down, try to recite some verses by Qais ibn Dhuraih, whom he admires.'

3050. "That very day I went out looking for him and found him in the afternoon sitting on a mound tracing some lines with his finger. When I approached in a friendly manner, he was as alarmed as some wild animal might be alarmed by a human. Near him was a heap of stones, and he picked one up. I came forward and sat not far from him. I sat quietly for

an hour while he sat as if in fear. When I'd sat for a long time, he calmed down and began to play with his finger. I looked at him and said: 'By God, Qais ibn Dhuraih has put the matter very well in his verses:

*I shall exhaust the tears of my eyes by weeping,
Wary of what has been and what will come to be.
They told me that tomorrow or the night after,
The beloved will depart, who said nothing while departing.
I had not been afraid that my death will come about by my own hand,
But that event whose time has come will now come to be.*

3051. "He cried until the tears poured down then said: 'By God I am more talented than him in the following verses:

*My heart refused to love anyone but that woman from `Amir,
She is called Umm `Amr but without having a son called `Amr.
When I touch her, my hand is as if daubed with morning dew,
Its tips sprouting green leaves.
I was astonished how Time conspired to separate us,
And when that which had joined us had passed, time itself stood still.
O love of her, increase me every night in agony!
O days of consolation, your appointed time is the Day of Final
Gathering.*

3052. "He then rose and I departed. The following day I returned and did what I had done the day before, and he too acted as he did before. When he felt at ease I said to him: 'By God, Qais ibn Dhuraih has put the matter very well in these verses.' 'What verses?' he asked.

I recited:

*Reckon me as one who is grateful if you act graciously to him,
And if you do not, he nevertheless is forgiving.
If some people have advised that we be separated,
Yet what is between you and me is still steady and lasting.*

He wept then said: ‘By God I am more talented than him in the following verses:

*You brought me near to you and then, having enslaved me,
With words that untie knots, and softly flowing,
You treated me harshly, and I could not find a way to win you back,
Leaving behind in my heart that which you left.*

3053. “A gazelle then appeared and he ran after it, so I departed. On the third day I returned but could not find him so I turned back and informed his family. They sent after him the man who used to take him food but he returned to say the food had been untouched. In the morning I set off with his brothers and looked for him all day and night. In the morning we found him lying dead in a valley full of stones. His brothers carried him back and I returned home.”

3054. Al-Mas`udi said: In the year 248 [862], Bugha the Elder, the Turk, died, aged almost ninety. He had taken part in more battles than anyone else, and never suffered a wound. His son Musa took over his functions and attached his father’s followers to himself, assuming the leadership of the group. Bugha was, for a Turk, a pious man. He was a royal servant of al-Mu`tasim who took part in major battles or waged them in person. When a war ended without harm to himself he would say: “The appointed time is a breastplate.” He never wore any iron on any part of his body. When criticized for this he said: “I saw the Prophet and some of his Companions in a dream and he said to me: ‘O Bugha, you showed kindness to a man of my community who prayed for your welfare, and his prayers have been answered.’ I said: ‘Prophet of God, who is that man?’ He answered: ‘The man you saved from wild beasts.’ I said: ‘Prophet of God, ask your Lord to prolong my life.’ He raised his hands to heaven and said: ‘O God, prolong his life and complete his appointed term.’ I said: ‘Prophet of God, let it be ninety-five years.’ A man who

was with the Prophet said: ‘And may he be free from all illnesses.’ I said to the man: ‘Who are you?’ He answered: ‘I am `Ali ibn Abi Talib.’ I woke up saying: ‘`Ali ibn Abi Talib.’”

3055. Bugha showed much kindness and benevolence towards the Talibids. He was asked: “Who was the man you saved from wild beasts?” He replied: “A man was brought to al-Mu`tasim, accused of heresy. A private conversation ensued between the two of them at night, at the end of which al-Mu`tasim said to me: ‘Go and throw him to the wild beasts.’ So I took the man and was about to throw him in, being enraged with him, but then heard him say: ‘O God, You know that I only spoke in Your defense, seeking thereby only You, and to draw near to You by obeying You and establishing the truth against those who disobeyed You. So will You now give me up?’ I shuddered when I heard this, felt a certain pity for him and my heart was filled with fear of him. So I pulled him back from the edge of the pit where the wild beasts were kept, just as I was about to throw him into it, and took him back to my house, where I hid him. When I went to see al-Mu`tasim, he said: ‘What then?’ I said: ‘I threw him in.’ He said: ‘Did you hear him say anything?’ I answered: ‘I’m a foreigner and he said some words in Arabic that I could not understand. He was uncivil in speech.’ At dawn, I said to the man: ‘I have opened the gates and will lead you out with my bodyguards. I have preferred your life to mine and have protected you with my soul. Make sure you do not appear in public in the days of al-Mu`tasim.’ He said: ‘Yes.’ I asked him: ‘What’s your story?’ He replied: ‘A governor of the caliph in my home town was intent on committing all kinds of immoral and degenerate acts, suppressing the truth and shoring up falsehood. This led to the corruption of the religious law and undermining God’s unity. I found no one to back me up against him so I attacked him at night and

killed him, because his crimes merited death according to the religious law.””

3056. Al-Mas`udi said: When al-Musta`in, accompanied by Wasif and Bugha, descended to Baghdad, the Turks, Farghanis and other client troops became restless in Samarra, and decided to send a delegation to ask the caliph to return to his capital. A group of prominent clients, carrying the Prophet's garment and rod, some treasures and two hundred thousand dinars, went to see him to ask him to return. They confessed the error of their ways and gave assurances that neither they nor their colleagues would revert to behaving in a manner objectionable to him. They humbled themselves before him and were submissive, but he gave them an answer that they disliked. So they returned to Samarra, and told their colleagues what had happened, and that they despaired of the caliph's return.

3057. Al-Musta`in, when he descended to Baghdad, had arrested al-Mu`tazz and al-Mu'ayyad but had not taken them with him. He had been suspicious of Muhammad ibn al-Wathiq so had taken him with him on his journey to Baghdad, but the latter escaped later, when war was declared. The clients in Samarra then agreed to free al-Mu`tazz, pay him homage, support his caliphate and wage war against al-Musta`in and his Baghdad followers. They brought al-Mu`tazz down from the place called Lu'lu'at al-Jawsaq, where he had been under arrest with his brother, al-Mu'ayyad, and paid him homage. This took place on Wednesday, the eleventh day of Muharram, in the year 251 [February 12, 865]. Al-Mu`tazz rode out the following morning to the Public Hall [*Dar al-`Ammah*] where he received the homage of the public, then bestowed fine garments on his brother al-Mu'ayyad, and hung two sashes around his neck, one black and one white. The black signified his status as crown prince while the white signified his function as guardian of the two holy

sanctuaries [Mecca and Medinah]. From Samarra letters were sent out to all cities proclaiming the caliphate of al-Mu`azz, and these were signed and dated by the state secretary Ja`far ibn Mahmud. Al-Mu`azz then dispatched his brother Abu Ahmad al-Muwaffaq with client troops to wage war against al-Musta`in in Baghdad, where he then camped. There then occurred the first battle between the followers of al-Mu`azz and al-Musta`in, and Muhammad ibn al-Wathiq managed to escape and join al-Mu`azz. The war with the people of Baghdad lasted until the middle of the month of Safar of that year. As the war progressed, the forces of al-Mu`azz grew in strength while those of al-Musta`in grew weaker, and civil strife was widespread.

3058. When Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir saw what was happening, he wrote to al-Mu`azz, expressing his support and his agreement to a truce whereby al-Musta`in would be deposed. When the common people of Baghdad heard that Muhammad was intent upon deposing al-Musta`in, they rebelled in protest and took the side of al-Musta`in. So Muhammad brought out al-Musta`in to stand on the heights of his palace where the commoners addressed him while wearing the Prophet's garment and his rod. He denied to them what they had heard about deposing him and thanked Muhammad ibn `Abdullah. Later, however, Muhammad met with Abu Ahmad al-Muwaffaq in the quarter of al-Shammasiyya, and they agreed to depose al-Musta`in but to grant him and his family safe-conduct for their person and property. It was agreed between them too that al-Musta`in should proceed to Mecca where he would settle with any members of his family whom he chose, but that he should remain in Wasit prior to his departure for Mecca. Al-Mu`azz then wrote to him binding himself to certain conditions and stating that if he broke these conditions, God and his Prophet would be quit of him, and people would no longer be obligated to pay him homage.

Lengthy conditions were appended to that declaration, too long to record here. Al-Mu`azz would later violate these conditions as he strove to undermine them.

3059. So al-Musta`in abdicated the caliphate on Thursday, the third of Muharram in the year 252 [January 24, 866]. From the time he arrived in Baghdad to the time of his deposition was a period of exactly one year. His caliphate had lasted, from the time indicated above to the ending of his rule, three years, eight months and twenty-eight days, though other dates have been cited, as already mentioned. He was taken to the house of al-Hasan ibn Wahb in Baghdad where he rejoined his family and children, then led to Wasit under the supervision of the Turk Ahmad ibn Tulun, before this latter had become governor of Egypt. It was now widely known that Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir had failed to protect al-Musta`in when the latter sought refuge with him, had let him down and had transferred his allegiance to al-Mu`azz. A Baghdad poet of that time composed the following verses:

*The Turks encircled us for one whole year,
But the hyena [Muhammad] never left its lair.
It remained humiliated and insulted in its lair,
But when it showed up, it displayed to us the treachery of malice.
It did not respect the rights owed to al-Musta`in,
And instead sought help against him from the accidents of time.
That hyena united in itself malice, cowardice and humiliation,
Bringing lasting disgrace to the Tahirid family.*

3060. As the deposition of al-Musta`in, described above, was concluded, Abu Ahmad al-Muwaffaq left Baghdad for Samarra, where al-Mu`azz bestowed robes of honor on him, a crown and two sashes, and gave robes of honor to his commanders. `Ubaidullah ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir, brother of Muhammad, came to see al-Mu`azz, carrying the Prophet's

cloak, rod, sword and the jewelry of the caliphate, and was accompanied by Shahak, the royal servant. Muhammad ibn `Abdullah wrote to al-Mu`tazz regarding Shahak: “He who brought you the heritage of the Prophet of God deserves that you do not deny what is owed to him.”

3061. Al-Musta`in was deposed while Ahmad ibn Salih ibn Shirzad was acting as his vizier.

3062. In the month of Ramadan of that year, namely 252, al-Mu`tazz dispatched Sa`id ibn Salih, the chamberlain, to meet al-Musta`in. Sa`id had been among those who conveyed him to Wasit. As al-Musta`in approached Samarra, Sa`id met him, killed him, cut off his head and took it to al-Mu`tazz, leaving his body by the side of the road until it was buried by a group of commoners. The death of al-Musta`in took place on Friday, the sixth of Shawwal, in the year 252 [October 20, 866]. He was thirty-five years old, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

3063. Shahak the royal servant stated: “I accompanied al-Musta`in when al-Mu`tazz sent him to Samarra. We were in a large boat and, arriving in al-Qatul, were met by numerous troops. He said to me: ‘O Shahak, look out and tell me who is commanding these troops. If it is Sa`id the chamberlain then I am lost.’ Observing them closely I said: ‘By God, it is Sa`id.’ He said: ‘We belong to God and to Him we shall return. I am lost.’ He then began to cry. When Sa`id came up, he whipped him, then made him lie on the ground, sat on his chest, cut off his head and carried it away, as already mentioned. Thus, the political situation settled in favor of al-Mu`tazz and there was general agreement about his caliphate.

3064. Other reports are told about al-Musta`in, other than what we have cited in this work, under this chapter. These have been cited in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. We included this information in this book so that no one can be under any illusion that we omitted such information or failed to understand its significance. We thank God that

we have not omitted any history of prominent persons, any aspect of their conduct or the events of their time, citing the choicest parts of these histories in our books. {Above every person possessed of knowledge is One All-knowing.} God guides to the truth.

Chapter 120

An account of the caliphate of al-Mu`tazz Billah

3065. Al-Mu`tazz Billah, whose name was al-Zubair ibn Ja`far al-Mutawakkil, received the oath of homage on Thursday, the second of Muharram, or the third according to another account, in the year 252, as mentioned above. His mother was a manumitted slave called Qabiha. His patronymic was “Abu `Abdullah” and he was eighteen years old at the time. This took place after al-Musta`in had abdicated. The military commanders, clients, auxiliary troops and the people of Baghdad all paid him homage, and his name was mentioned in sermons in the congregational mosque of Baghdad, and on the two sides of the river. Al-Mu`tazz abdicated the caliphate on Monday, three days remaining from the month of Rajab, in the year 255 [July 11, 869], then died six days after his abdication. Thus, his caliphate lasted four years and six months, and he was buried in Samarra. In total, his reign, from the moment he was paid homage in Samarra and before the abdication of al-Musta`in, and until his own abdication, lasted four years, six months and a few days. Counting from the homage paid to him in Baghdad, his caliphate lasted three years and seven months. He died aged twenty-four years.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

3066. When al-Musta`in was forced to abdicate and taken to Wasit, after he had testified that he had abdicated the caliphate and was not fit to assume it given the current divisions, and had therefore absolved people of their oaths of homage, much verse was composed by the poets of the

time. He was described at length in the odes of the period. Among these was a lengthy ode by al-Buhturi where the following verse occurs:

To Wasit, behind chicken, though his claws

*Would not have stuck in chicken meat.**

The poet known as al-Kinani also wrote an ode on this subject in which the following verses occur:

I see you fearful of departure:

The imam is now devoid of freedom and deposed.

The Caliph, Ahmad ibn Muhammad is now,

Following his caliphate and its splendor, ousted.

His days were days of laughter and joy [reading bahjatan],

And he himself was like the springtime, to all who welcomed the spring.

Destiny removed him from the highest rank,

And he lies buried in Wasit, unable [reading yatiqu] to return.

Between the abdication of al-Musta`in and his murder was a period of nine months and one day.

3067. A number of scholars and Hadith masters died in the caliphate of al-Musta`in, including: Abu Hashim Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Rifa`i; Ayyub ibn Muhammad al-Warraq; Abu Kuraib Muhammad ibn al-`Ala' al-Hamdani in Kufa; Ahmad ibn Salih al-Misri; Abu'l Walid al-Sariyy al-Dimashqi; `Isa ibn Hammad Zughba al-Misri in Egypt whose patronymic was "Abu Musa"; and Abu Ja`far ibn Sawwar al-Kufi. All of them died in the year 248 [862-3].

3068. In the caliphate of al-Musta`in, and in the year 249[863-4], the following died: al-Hasan ibn al-Sabbah al-Bazzar, a prominent Hadith master; Hisham ibn Khalid al-Dimashqi; Muhammad ibn Sulaiman al-Juhani in al-Massisa; al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Talut; Abu Hafs al-Sairafi in Samarra; Muhammad ibn Zunbur al-Makki in Mecca; Sulaiman ibn Abi Tayyiba; and Musa ibn `Abd al-Rahman al-Barqi.

3069. In the caliphate of al-Musta`in and in the year 250 [864], the following died: Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Taymi, judge of Basra; Mahmud ibn Khidash; Abu Muslim Ahmad ibn Abi Shu`aib al-Harrani; al-Harith ibn Miskin al-Misri; Abu Tahir Ahmad ibn `Amr ibn al-Sarh, and others we omitted to mention from among Hadith masters and Traditionists, but whose names we mentioned under the year 6 in our book *al-Awsat*. In that section we listed all their names, from the beginning of the era of the Companions of the Prophet until the present day, i.e. the year 332. In this work we merely mention in summary form the deaths of these scholars in order that the present work may not be devoid of what needs mentioning, in line with what a student of these subjects might need.

3070. In the year 248 [862], al-Musta`in removed from the treasury of the caliphate a ring with a red ruby stone known as “the mountain”. This was a ring that caliphs had kept under lock and key. It had been bought by the caliph al-Rashid for forty thousand dinars. He had his name, Ahmad, inscribed on it, and wore it on his finger, and this became a subject of conversation among the population. It was mentioned that that ring had been handed down from one great Persian king to the next, and had been inscribed in ancient times, and that all kings who inscribed it died by murder. Whenever a certain king died, his successor would rub out the inscription, so kings handed it down and wore it without inscribing it, though on rare occasions a king might inscribe it. It was of red ruby and glowed at night like a lantern so that if placed in a room without a lantern it would shine forth. At night, and by its light, shadows would appear. That ring has an amusing and long story which we mentioned in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, under the section devoted to the rings of Persian kings. That ring had appeared in the days of al-Muqtadir but then disappeared from view.

3071. A number of poets composed lengthy verses about al-Mu`tazz when firmly established in power and following the deposition of al-Musta`in. Among them are verses recited from a longer poem by Marwan ibn Abi'l Janub:

*Authority has now reverted to al-Mu`tazz,
While al-Musta`in reverted to his earlier state of affairs.
He knew well that kingship did not suit him,
And that by right it belongs to you [al-Mu`tazz], but he merely deluded himself.*

3072. A man from Samarra, said to be al-Buhturi, recited:

*How capable is that band of Turks!
With the sword they drove away the calamities of their time.
They killed the caliph Ahmad ibn Muhammad,
And made all people wear the garment of fear.
They grew tyrannical and our kingship is dissolved,
And our Imam appears in it like a guest.*

3073. Regarding al-Mu`tazz, how power reverted to him, and how he obtained general agreement for his rule, Abu `Ali al-Basir recited:

*The condition of Islam has reached its best conclusion,
And kingship is now firmly established in its proper place,
Stable in its foundations and secure,
Populous and welcoming, following alienation and exile.
Offer thanks to God alone, and seek, through pardoning him who pardoned,
God's ample reward.*

3074. Ja`far ibn Mahmud al-Iskafi was the first vizier of al-Mu`tazz but he later appointed others to that post. The royal letters, however, went out under the signature of Salih ibn Wasif, as if he was the vizier.

3075. Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad died during the caliphate of al-Mu`tazz. This took place on Monday, four days remaining from the month of Jumada II, in the year 254 [June 21, 868]. He was forty years old, or forty-two or even more in other versions. During his funeral, a slave girl was heard to say: "What have we met with on Mondays, both in the past and today?" Ahmad ibn al-Mutawakkil prayed over his body in the street called Abu Ahmad and in his house in Samarra, where he was buried.

3076. Ibn al-Azhar>al-Qasim ibn `Abbad>Yahya ibn Harthama, who said: "Al-Mutawakkil sent me to Medinah to bring back `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja`far after having heard some rumors involving him. Arriving in Medinah, I found its people so agitated and so rowdy and overexcited to an extent I'd never experienced before. So I attempted to calm them down and swore to them that I meant `Ali no harm. Searching his house, I found only a Qur'an, a book of prayers and such things. So I conveyed him to al-Mutawakkil, but personally attended to serving him and treated him with respect.

3077. "One day, while the sky was clear and the sun was out, he mounted, wearing a woolen raincoat, and having knotted the tail of his riding animal. I was very surprised by what he did. Soon thereafter, a cloud passed over and loosed its spouts upon us, and we suffered much from that downpour. `Ali ibn Muhammad turned to me and said: 'I know that you found my actions strange and imagined that I knew about the matter more than you did. But it is not as you imagine. I was raised in the desert and know the winds that precede rain. When I woke up in the morning a wind blew which cannot be misread, and in which I smelt rain, so I took the necessary precautions.' Arriving in Baghdad, I began by visiting Ishaq ibn Ibrahim the Tahirid [military governor] who said to me: 'O Yahya, this man with you is a descendant of the Prophet of God, and

al-Mutawakkil is a man you know well. If you encourage him to kill him, the Prophet of God would be your adversary on Judgment Day.’ I replied: ‘I swear I saw nothing but the most seemly conduct from him.’

3078. “I went on to Samarra and began by seeing Wasif the Turk, being one of his friends. He said: ‘If a single hair falls from the head of this man, none but me will be held responsible.’ I was surprised by what I’d heard from these two men, and reported to al-Mutawakkil what I had discovered and the words spoken in `Ali’s praise. He rewarded `Ali handsomely and treated him with generosity and great respect.”

3079. Muhammad ibn al-Faraj told me the following story in the city of Jurjan, in the quarter known as Bi`r Abi `Inan: “I was told the following by Abu Di`ama: ‘I went to call on Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Musa during his final illness that year. When about to leave, he said to me: ‘O Abu Di`ama, it is only right that you should know, so shall I tell you something that will please you?’ I answered: ‘How I need to hear it, son of the Prophet of God!’ He said: ‘My father Muhammad ibn `Ali>my father `Ali ibn Musa> my father Musa ibn Ja`far> my father Ja`far ibn Muhammad>my father Muhammad ibn `Ali>my father `Ali ibn al-Husain>my father al-Husain ibn `Ali> my father `Ali ibn Abi Talib, who said: ‘The Prophet of God said to me: ‘O `Ali, write the following.’ I said: ‘What shall I write?’ He said: ‘Write: In the name of God Merciful and Compassionate. Faith is that which rests firmly in hearts and is confirmed by acts. Islam is what tongues pronounce and what makes marriages licit.’ Abu Du`ama said: ‘O son of the Prophet of God, I truly do not know which is more admirable, the substance of that Hadith or its chain of transmitters.’ He replied: ‘It is a Hadith written down on paper, in the hand of `Ali ibn Abi Talib, and as dictated by the Prophet of God, which is handed down in our family, the young from the old.’”

3080. Al-Mas`udi said: In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we mentioned the story of `Ali ibn Muhammad with Zainab the Liar, in the presence of al-Mutawakkil, and how `Ali descended into the pit of wild beasts, how they humbled themselves before him, and how Zainab recanted her claim that she was the daughter of al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, alleging that God had prolonged her life until that time. It is also said that `Ali died poisoned.

3081. Al-Mas`udi said: In the year 253 [867], and during the caliphate of al-Mu`tazz, Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir died in the middle of the month of Dhu'l Qa`da, thirteen days after the murder of Wasif, with the moon in eclipse. He was a man unequalled in his age for his liberality, generosity, literary attainments, extensive memory, sound counsel, eloquent tongue, and royal bearing in an assembly. Regarding him, al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Tahir composed the following verses from a longer poem:

*The moon was eclipsed, as was the Emir,
And the moon reappeared, but the Emir remained hidden.
The moon resumed its light as it shone again,
But the light of the Emir will not return.
O two eclipses that night of ill-omened Sunday,
May good fortune cause you to cease!
He was one as sharp as the edge of the sword,
Or as the fire whose faggots have burst into flames.*

3082. Abu'l `Abbas al-Mubarrad said: "One day Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir sat down to relax with his boon companions. Present was Ibn Talut, his vizier, the closest person to him and most frequent attendee at his intimate gatherings. Muhammad said to him: 'We must have a third person attending today, one who is delightful company, and pleasant to converse with. Who do you think this person should be? Spare

me from one who is immoral, ignobly born or obsequious.’ Thinking hard, Ibn Talut finally said: ‘O Emir, I just thought of a person whose company would not tire us, one who is free from the boring conduct of boon companions and the stuffy character of intimates. He is easy company if you wish and quick in repartee if you command him.’ ‘Who is he?’ He asked. Talut answered: ‘Mani the Crackpot.’ ‘An excellent suggestion! Let those in charge of the twenty-eight quarters of the city look for him and bring him here at once.’

3083. “Soon thereafter, the man in charge of the Karkh quarter picked him up and took him to the door of the Emir. He was then taken in charge, his hair was clipped, he was given a bath, was made to wear clean clothes, then led into the presence of the Emir. Mani said: ‘Peace be upon you, O Emir.’ Muhammad answered: ‘Upon you peace, O Mani. Did it not occur to you to visit us when we were longing for you to do so and our hearts were drawn to you?’ Mani replied: ‘The longing is intense, the love is always present, but the distance is long, the veil is hard to penetrate, and the gatekeeper is bad-tempered. Had permission to enter been easy, visiting you would be easy.’ Muhammad said: ‘Your excuse was smoothly expressed so let your permission to enter be made smooth. Mani will not be denied entrance at any time of day or night.’ He then permitted him to sit down and he did so. He called for food, ate, washed his hands then sat in his assigned seat.

3084. “Muhammad had longed to hear the singing of Nanusa, the slave girl of the daughter of al-Mahdi. She was summoned and she first sang the following:

I shall never forget that day when they departed,

Bearing with them my tears for the beloved, so intense was my passion.

Say, when their caravan has departed at night:

These are just young camels being chanted to, and may it not be the end of love.

Mani said: ‘Well sung, and I ask you in the name of the Emir to add the following:

*I rose, deep in thought and my tears suspended
In an eye socket, long accustomed to harm and hardship.
That Emir, with all his power, did not come to my aid,
Against an unjust person who went far in abandoning and warding me off.*

3085. “She sang these verses. Muhammad said to him: ‘Are you in love, Mani?’ He was embarrassed and Ibn Talut winked at him to say nothing because he would lose respect for him, so Mani replied: ‘Some enchantment and longing which had been hidden then appeared. But can there be any passion once grey hairs have become visible?’ Muhammad then suggested to Nanusa to sing the following verses:

*They screened her from the wind because I had said:
O wind, carry my greetings to her.
Had they been content with veiling, it would have been an easy matter,
But they forbade her to speak when a wind blew.*

She sang these verses, and Muhammad became enchanted, called for a large vessel of wine, and drank. Mani said: ‘If only that poet had added the following verses to it:

*I breathed deeply and said to my phantom in sleep:
Ah, if you visit her phantom from time to time,
Give her a warm greeting from me for I fear,
To my chagrin, that they will prevent her from sleeping.*

Had that poet added the above verses, he would have kindled a hotter fire in the innermost parts of the body, and one that pierced more deeply the heart thirsting for cold water. Furthermore, the structure of the poem

would have been better arranged and the poetic theme would attain a proper conclusion.'

3086. "Muhammad said: 'Well spoken, Mani!' He ordered Nanusa to attach the two verses by Mani to the two earlier verses and to sing them together. She then sang the following two lines:

*My two friends, stay for a while,
And keep company with one stricken with love.
We never pass by Zainab's abode,
Without the tears revealing our hidden secret.*

Muhammad found the lines delightful. Mani said: 'Had I not been afraid of transgression, I would have added to them two other lines that no intelligent person could possibly fail to admire when he hears them.'

Muhammad said: 'O Mani, our longing to hear the best of what you can bring forth overrides any fear of transgression. Let's hear what you've got.'

3087. "Mani recited:

*A gazelle like a new moon; were she to glance at a rock,
She would leave it utterly crushed.
And when she smiles, you'd imagine you were seeing
A flash of lightning, or pearls in a string.*

Muhammad said: 'Well done, Mani! Now improvise an addition to the following verses:

*Delights will not be complete unless they are such
As delight Nanusa.
She sang a melody which let loose a tear,
Imprisoned in the jail of patience.*

Mani said:

*How can one bear separation patiently,
From a girl to whom you do an injustice if you describe her as a peacock.*

*You'd be equally unjust if you call her a green twig
Planted in the garden of paradise.*

*Nor is it just if we compare her
To a jewel buried in the sea.*

Mani then fell silent. Muhammad said: 'He was not unjust in describing her.' Mani said:

*She is too august to be described, since no conception
Or attribute to describe her can possibly be perceived.*

3088. "Muhammad said: 'Well done.' Nanusa said: 'I owe you thanks, O Mani. May the times favor you, may your friends be compassionate, may happiness accompany you and may what you fear forsake you. May God prolong all this through prolonging the life of him through whom we all met here. When she said: 'May your friends be compassionate' Mani answered in verse:

I have no friend to show me compassion:

My soul has abandoned all falsehood.

I am bound to the benevolence of one

Whose rope is bound to glory.

I am blessed by the benevolence of one,

Whose nature is molded of goodness.

Ibn Talut then signaled to him to leave and Mani got up, reciting:

A king unequalled,

Adorned by noble and generous followers.

A Tahirid he is as he rides out in his processions,

His benevolence is spread to all people.

O Abu'l `Abbas [Muhammad], preserve the sanctity of learning,

Whose edge is dented by time.

3089. "Muhammad said: 'We owe you thanks though we have not yet shown you any benevolence.' He turned to Ibn Talut and said: 'Neither

the sordidness of a person nor his contemptible appearance nor the eye that recoils from what it sees can erase the element of learning to be found in a person. Salih ibn `Abd al-Qaddus put it well in his verses:

*Do not be impressed by one who keeps his clothes tidy,
Protecting them from dust, while his honor is violated.
A young man might become poor, and you'd see him,
Wearing dirty clothes though his honor is washed clean.*

Ibn Talut said: 'I never met anyone as quick-witted as him [Mani] for when the slave girl said to him 'May your friends be compassionate' he at once recited:

*I have no friend to show me compassion:
My soul has abandoned all falsehood.*

So Muhammad continued to send Mani a regular salary until he died."

3090. Al-Mu`azz heard that al-Mu'ayyad was plotting against him and that he had drawn to his side a number of clients. So he imprisoned al-Mu'ayyad and Abu Ahmad, these two being full brothers, and al-Mu'ayyad was commanded to remove himself from succession. He was given forty lashes with the rod until he finally consented and gave official witness of his renunciation. Al-Mu`azz then learned that a group of Turks had conspired to free al-Mu'ayyad from prison. On Thursday, eight days remaining from the month of Rajab, in the year 252 [August 8, 866], al-Mu'ayyad was brought out dead from prison, and judges and jurists were summoned to see his body and attest that there were no signs of torture on his body. It is also claimed that he was wrapped in a blanket made of sable, both ends of which were tightly tied up until he died.

3091. Abu Ahmad's imprisonment was made more severe. Between his arrival in Samarra and with all the signs of respect shown to him there, and his imprisonment was a period of six months and three days. He was then conveyed to Basra, thirteen days remaining from the month of

Ramadan, and fifty days after the murder of al-Mu'ayyad. Isma`il ibn Qabiha, full brother of al-Mu`tazz, was then designated as crown prince in place of al-Mu'ayyad. The commanders of the clients then met with al-Mu`tazz and requested him to show good will towards Wasif and Bugha, and he consented.

3092. In this year, Zurafa, chief of the palace of al-Mutawakkil in Egypt, died.

3093. Isma`il ibn Yusuf al-`Alawi had come to dominate Mecca, and died in that year [i.e. 252/866]. He was succeeded by his brother Muhammad ibn Yusuf who was twenty years older than him. Because of him, the people of Mecca suffered great hardship that year. Al-Mu`tazz sent Abu'l Saj al-Ushrusanni to al-Hijaz, Muhammad ibn Yusuf fled, and many of his followers were killed.

3094. In that year, al-Hasan ibn Zaid al-Hasani attacked Sulaiman ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir, driving him out of Tabaristan. In that year too, `Isa ibn al-Shaikh al-Shaibani came to Samarra from Egypt with much money and seventy-six descendants of Abu Talib, from the progeny of `Ali, Ja`far and `Aqil. They had fled al-Hijaz fearing civil strife and the harsh conditions there, and arrived in Egypt, so were conveyed to Samarra from Egypt. Al-Mu`tazz ordered them to be provided for and to be released once he had ascertained what had happened to them, then appointed `Isa ibn al-Shaikh as governor of Palestine.

3095. In that year, namely 253 [867], Safwan al-`Uqaili, governor of Diyar Mudar, died in prison in Samarra. In that year too, the Farghanis and Turks in Karkh Samarra killed Wasif the Turk, whereas Bugha escaped them. Meanwhile, the rebellion of Musawir the Kharijite grew in intensity, and Salih ibn Wasif was appointed in place of his father Wasif.

3096. In the year 254, Bugha left Samarra heading towards Mosul. The clients then attacked and plundered his residence while the army with him

broke up in disorder. So he came down in a boat in disguise, but some Maghribi troops arrested him near the bridge in Samarra, killed him and exhibited his head in Samarra. This was Bugha the Younger. The severed head was then taken to Baghdad and exhibited on the bridge. As long as Bugha was alive, al-Mu`tazz could not enjoy sleep nor ever put away his weapons by day or night for fear of Bugha. He used to say: "I shall go on like this until my head is handed to Bugha or his head to me." He would also say: "I fear Bugha might descend upon me from the sky or come up to me from below the earth." Bugha had intended to come down secretly and at night to Samarra, and wean the Turks away from al-Mu`tazz through generous grants of money, and he ended up as described above.

3097. When the Turks saw that al-Mu`tazz was killing their leaders and employing deception to get rid of them, and that he preferred the Maghribis and Farghanis to them, they went in a body to see him. This took place four days remaining from the month of Rajab, in the year 255 [July 10, 869]. They began to berate him for his sins and censure him for his acts, and asked him for money. The person behind all this was Salih ibn Wasif along with other Turkish commanders. The caliph stubbornly denied he had any money. When al-Mu`tazz fell into their hands, Muhammad ibn al-Wathiq, surnamed al-Muhtadi, was summoned from Baghdad. He had been exiled to Baghdad by al-Mu`tazz and imprisoned there. He was conveyed to Samarra in a day and a night, and the clients met him on the road. Then he entered the palace and agreed that al-Mu`tazz be deposed, provided he was given security for his life and his family, wealth and children. Muhammad ibn al-Wathiq refused to sit on the throne or accept homage until he saw al-Mu`tazz and heard what he had to say.

3098. So al-Mu`tazz was brought in, wearing a filthy shirt and with a shawl on his head. When Muhammad ibn al-Wathiq saw him, he leapt up

and hugged him and they sat together on the throne. Muhammad ibn al-Wathiq said to him: "Brother, what is the problem?" He answered: "It's a burden that I cannot bear or do anything about, nor am I fit to rule." Al-Muhtadi wanted to act as an intermediary and make peace between him and the Turks but al-Mu`tazz said: "This is useless, and they will not accept me." Al-Muhtadi said: "Am I therefore free from my oath of homage to you?" He replied: "You are entirely free from it." When al-Mu`tazz declared him quit of his oath of allegiance, al-Muhtadi turned his face away from him, and had him removed from his presence and taken back to prison. He was murdered in prison six days after he renounced the caliphate, as mentioned at the start of this chapter.

3099. Poets have composed many verses and fine elegies about the deposition of al-Mu`tazz and his murder. Among these are the following verses by a poet of that time:

*O eye, be not niggardly with your tears,
And mourn for the best of these afflicted with calamity.
He was let down by a compassionate counselor,
And the hands of death dealt him a quick end.
The Turks hastened to avenge themselves upon him, and deposed him:
May I be the ransom for that person who was deposed!
They killed him unjustly, unfairly,
Though they found him a noble man, and without fear.
He was so handsome that he overshadowed the moon,
Yet you would find him humble of mien.
And the sun you'd see would lie still and not rise,
Unless it saw him at dawn.
They feared no army and no sword:
How sorrowful am I for that deposed and murdered man!
The Turks are now masters of the state,*

And the people are either looking on or obeying them.

But you shall see that God will overcome them,

And requite them with a frightful massacre.

3100. Another poet elegized him thus, selected from a longer poem:

My eyes overflowed with tears

When they told me that the Imam had been murdered.

They killed him unjustly, tyrannically, and by stealth,

As they dealt him a stormy death.

May God beautify that face, adding to its beauty,

And may God send his soul a gentle wind.

O Turks, you shall meet ever after with swords

That do not spare the wounded.

So get ready for the swords that will, in the end, take revenge,

For you have committed an ugly deed.

3101. Another poet recited these verses which come from a longer poem:

My eyes are shedding copious tears,

Now that they have seen the lord of mankind deposed.

My soul grieves for him! How highborn he was,

And how noble, whether following or followed!

They made him confess to a sin he did not commit,

And he fell at their hands, twisted and murdered.

Meanwhile his cousins and the cousins of his father

Maintained a humble attitude and abject acceptance.

It is not thus that kingship is properly established,

Nor thus that an enemy is invaded or that unity is achieved.

3102. Al-Mu`tazz was the first caliph to ride out in public wearing golden finery. Earlier caliphs of the Abbasid dynasty, and many of the Umayyad, would ride out wearing light finery of silver in their waist-bands, sword strings, saddles and bridles. But when al-Mu`tazz rode out in gold finery,

people imitated him in doing so. Before him, al-Musta`in had introduced the fashion of wide sleeves, which were unknown before him. They were now three *shibrs** in width or thereabouts, but he diminished the size of high and pointed caps which had grown to be as high as the headdress worn by judges.

3103. In the year 255 [869], `Ali ibn Zaid and `Isa ibn Ja`far al-`Alawi rose in revolt in Kufa. Al-Mu`tazz dispatched against them Sa`id ibn Salih, known as the chamberlain, with a very large army. The two Talibids were routed when their followers abandoned them.

3104. In an earlier section of this work, we made mention of the death of Isma`il ibn Yusuf ibn Ibrahim ibn `Abdullah ibn Musa ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with them all. We also mentioned the hardship and privations experienced in his days by the people of Medinah and other regions of the Hijaz, and what happened to his brother, Muhammad ibn Yusuf, after his death, and his wars against Abi'l Saj. When he was finally defeated by Abi'l Saj, he headed to al-Yamama and al-Bahrain which he conquered. His progeny succeeded him in rule until the present day, and are known as the Banu al-Ukhaidir. Later on, a son of Musa ibn `Abdullah ibn Musa ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, proclaimed a revolt in the region of Medinah.

3105. Al-Mas`udi said: In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman* we made mention of all other reports having to do with the revolts of the Talibids, and of those among them who died in prison or by poison or some other manner of murder. Among them were: Abu Hashim `Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, who was given a poisoned drink by `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan; Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn `Isa ibn Zaid ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, who was conveyed from Basra by Sa`id the chamberlain and confined in a prison until he died. With him was his

son `Ali, and when the father died the son was released. This occurred in the days of al-Musta`in, but other versions also exist; Ja`far ibn Isma`il ibn Musa ibn Ja`far was killed by Ibn al-Aghlab in the Maghrib.

3106. Then too, there was al-Hasan ibn Yusuf ibn Ibrahim ibn `Abdullah ibn Musa ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib. He was killed by al-`Abbas in Mecca. In the days of al-Mu`tazz, `Ali ibn Musa ibn Isma`il ibn Musa ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad was conveyed from Rayy and later died in prison. Sa`id the chamberlain conveyed Musa ibn `Abdullah ibn Musa ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib from Medinah, a man of incomparable piety and asceticism. With him was Idris ibn Musa. As Sa`id approached Zubala on the Iraq highway, a group of Arabs from the Fazara and other tribes gathered together to rescue Musa, so Sa`id had him poisoned and he was buried in that locality. However, the Fazara managed to rescue his son Idris ibn Musa.

3107. It was during the caliphate of al-Mu`tazz, in the year 252 [866], that civil strife erupted between the Bilaliyya and the Sa`diyya in Basra, which led to the revolt of the Master of the Zanj.

3108. Interesting reports, other than what we have cited above, exist about al-Mu`tazz which we set out in detail in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. Success comes from God.

Chapter 121

An account of the caliphate of al-Muhtadi Billah

3109. Al-Muhtadi, Muhammad ibn Harun al-Wathiq, received homage before noon on Wednesday, one night remaining from the month of Rajab, in the year 255 [July 13, 869]. His mother was a Byzantine manumitted slave called Qurb. His patronymic was "Abu `Abdullah." He was at the time thirty-seven years old, or thirty-nine in other accounts. At the time of his murder, in 256, he had not yet reached his fortieth year.

His reign thus lasted eleven months, and he was buried in Samarra. It is said that he was born in the year 218.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

3110. Despite the shortness of his reign, al-Muhtadi appointed a number of different viziers who thus escaped being murdered by him or otherwise punished. Among them was `Isa ibn Farrukhanshah.

3111. Al-Muhtadi built a dome with four doors which he called the Dome of Extraordinary Justice (*mazalim*) where he sat and settled complaints by both the commoners and the elite. He commanded the good and forbade evil, and forbade wine drinking and singing girls, and proclaimed justice. He would attend the congregational mosque every Friday, lead the prayers and deliver the sermon. Both the commoners and the elite found him too much to bear as he strove to lead them to the path of virtue. They thus found his rule hard to bear and were weary of his reign, so devised a plot to have him murdered.

3112. This happened in the following manner. Musa ibn Bugha the Elder was away in Rayy, preoccupied with fighting the Talibids like al-Hasan ibn Zaid al-Hasani and also the Dailam who had conquered Qazwin and killed its inhabitants. When Musa ibn Bugha heard about the killing of al-Mu`tazz and the role played by Salih ibn Wasif and the other Turks in his murder, he turned back from these regions and headed to Samarra, outraged by what had happened to al-Mu`tazz.

3113. In an earlier section of this work and under the history of al-Mu`tazz, we recounted the murder of al-Mu`tazz in general terms and did not explain in detail how he was murdered nor specified the different accounts of that murder. I find that biographers and historians who take care to record the history of dynasties offer different versions of how he died. Some claim that he died in prison during the caliphate of al-

Muhtadi, as narrated above, and that he died peacefully. Others state that he was starved to death in prison, while still others state that he was given an enema of boiling water, and this is why when his body was exposed to the public they found his stomach distended.

3114. However, the most widely accepted account among specialists in Abbasid history is that he was forced to enter the bath, which had been heated, and forbidden to leave it. There is then disagreement among these latter: some say he was left in the bath until he died, while others maintain that he was taken out of the bath when about to expire from the heat, then given an iced drink which dissolved his liver and intestines and he died at once. This took place on the second of Sha`ban in the year 255 [July 16, 869]. In our work *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we gave a full account of these reports and the divergent versions that exist of these events.

3115. When al-Muhtadi heard of Musa ibn Bugha's march on the capital, he objected vehemently and wrote to him to stay put and not leave his post, which needed his presence. Musa, however, ignored the caliph and quickened his march until he reached Samarra. This took place in the year 256. Meanwhile, Salih ibn Wasif and al-Muhtadi were running the state. As Musa drew near to Samarra, the plebs and riff-raff began to roam the streets shouting: "O Pharaoh, Moses [Musa] is here!" Salih ibn Wasif had distanced himself from al-Muhtadi when he learnt that Musa was coming. It is also said that al-Muhtadi wrote to Musa in secret to come to Samarra though it appeared as if he had written to him not to come. A Turkish commander called Bayikbak had also gained much power and authority at that time.

3116. Musa then entered Samarra and came to see al-Muhtadi as he sat dispensing justice in his dome. The hall was crowded with both elites and commoners. Musa's followers proceeded to expel all the commoners with great harshness, beating them with maces, axes and palm branches. The

commoners complained loudly and al-Muhtadi rose and left his seat, in protest against what was happening, but that did not stop them. So he left in anger and a horse was brought forward for him to ride on. He sensed that they intended treachery, then rode to the house of Yarjukh.

Meanwhile, Musa had left al-Muhtadi's residence when he saw the tumult of the commoners, but then he took up residence there, and made al-Muhtadi return, where he stayed for three days with Musa. Musa then made him swear solemn oaths that he would not act treacherously towards him.

3117. The majority of the army was with Musa ibn Bugha, a man of some piety and asceticism, to the point where the troops imitated his example, and he did not drink wine. Al-Muhtadi on the other hand was of a vicious disposition, and had an aversion to Musa. The matter was about to come into the open and become widely known, but Musa showed him kindness and the two of them plotted to kill Salih ibn Wasif. Fearing that Salih, having disappeared, was also plotting against them, Musa sent out spies to look for him until he found him. When Salih saw he was under attack he defended himself but was eventually killed, and his severed head was brought to Musa. Other accounts state that he was made to enter a very hot bath where he died, as was done to al-Mu`tazz.

3118. In the meantime, the revolt of Musawir the Kharijite grew in intensity and his army drew close to Samarra. The population of the city suffered great harm, the highways were no longer safe and the Bedouins made their appearance. So al-Muhtadi dispatched Musa ibn Bugha and Bayikbak against the Kharijite and rode out to bid them farewell, but the two commanders returned without engaging the enemy. Hearing of their return, al-Muhtadi left and camped at the Samarra bridge with a group of Maghribis, Farghanis and other militias, intending to fight Bayikbak. It is said that Bayikbak had shown Musa a letter written by al-Muhtadi to him

asking him to kill Musa, and that he had written to Musa a similar letter to kill Bayikbak. Having learnt of the plan to create antagonism between them, they abandoned their expedition and returned.

3119. Bayikbak then came within view of al-Muhtadi while Musa marched away from Samarra, avoiding direct confrontation with the caliph. A fierce battle ensued between al-Muhtadi and Bayikbak in which a great many were killed. Eventually Bayikbak was routed and al-Muhtadi gained victory, but an ambush set by Bayikbak sprang forward against al-Muhtadi, led by Yarjukh the Turk. Al-Muhtadi fled with his followers, entered Samarra, called upon the population to help him, and shouted loudly in the city's markets, but none came to his aid. With him was only a small contingent of his supporters.

3120. Despairing of victory, the caliph went to the house of Ibn Khai`una where he hid, but they attacked him, isolated him from his followers and took him to the house of Yarjukh. He was asked: "Do you wish to make people follow some revered example that they do not recognize?" He replied: "I merely want them to follow the example of the Prophet, his family and the rightly guided Caliphs." He was told: "The Prophet lived among people who had an ascetic attitude to this world and desired the afterlife. These included people like Abu Bakr, `Umar, `Uthman, `Ali and others. You on the other hand have as your followers Turks, Khazars, Farghanis, Maghribis and other non-Arabs who know nothing about their duties as regards the afterlife. All they care about is what they can grab quickly from this world. So how can you force them to follow that example?" There was a lot of talk back and forth between him and them, but then they appeared to have submitted to the caliph.

3121. As the matter was about to be settled, Sulaiman ibn Wahb, the state secretary, or someone else in another version, rose up and said: "Your views are wrong as is your strategy. Though he gave you assurances with

his tongue, his intentions regarding you are quite different.” He added: “He will decimate you all and disperse you.” When they heard these words, they changed their mind and fell upon the caliph with daggers. The first to wound him was a cousin of Bayikbak, who struck the veins of his neck, then fell upon him and lapped up the wound as the blood poured out, sucking the blood until he was sated. The Turk was drunk. When he finally quenched his thirst from the blood of al-Muhtadi, he rose up, the caliph having died, and said: “Comrades, I have drunk my fill of the blood of al-Muhtadi, as I have today drunk my fill of wine.”

3122. Al-Muhtadi’s murder is a disputed topic, but the most widely known account is the one we mentioned, that is, stabbed with daggers. Some say his testicles were squeezed until he died; others say he was placed between two large wooden planks, tied with ropes, and crushed to death; others say he was suffocated; still others claim he was wrapped up in a carpet and cushions and trampled to death. When he died, they carried his body around, weeping, and regretted his murder, after having ascertained his piety and ascetic manner of life. It is said that his murder took place on Tuesday, fourteen days remaining from the month of Rajab, in the year 255 [June 30, 869]. Musa ibn Bugha and Yarjukh the Turk were not involved with the other Turks in the caliph’s murder. The Turks had been incensed with al-Muhtadi for having killed Bayikbak. This latter had fallen into the hands of al-Muhtadi who had his head cut off and his body thrown to his comrades, while others claim he was killed during the battle, mentioned above, at the place called the Bridge of Samarra.

3123. When the caliphate first passed to al-Muhtadi, he brought out two state secretaries, Ahmad ibn Isra’il and Abu Nuh, to the People’s

Gate in Samarra on Thursday, the third of Ramadan, where each received five hundred lashes, as a result of which they died. They had committed certain acts which al-Muhtadi considered merited that punishment in accordance with the religious law.

3124. When al-Muhtadi was murdered, he left behind seventeen sons and six daughters.

3125. Al-Muhtadi had appointed Ahmad ibn al-Mudabbir in charge of the land-tax of Palestine. Much happened between these two men, all of which we set out in detail in our previous works where we also narrated the history of Ibn al-Mudabbir when he arrived in Palestine and what taxes he then sent to Samarra. It is said that al-Mu`tazz had first sent him to al-Sham. Interesting stories exist about Ahmad ibn al-Mudabbir and about his brother Ibrahim and his dealings with the Master of the Zanj, when the latter captured him.

3126. Al-Mas`udi said: Among the stories related of Ibn al-Mudabbir which have been widely appreciated and written down by people as part of the anecdotes about *tufailis* [uninvited guests] is the following. Ahmad ibn al-Mudabbir rarely sat down to enjoy the company of boon companions. Instead, he had only seven boon companions whose company he delighted in, to the exclusion of everyone else. He had carefully selected them, adopting them as his sole companions. Each man among them [reading *minhum*] was a specialist in some branch of knowledge in which he had no equal. There was at that time a gate-crasher, known as Ibn al-Darraj, who was a man of very wide culture, a great wit, and an accomplished *raconteur* of delightful stories. He kept trying until he finally found out the time that Ibn al-Mudabbir gathered together his boon companions. So he dressed up like these companions and inserted

himself into their ranks. Seeing him, the chamberlain of Ibn al-Mudabbir thought that his presence with them was with the knowledge of his master and the other companions, and did not find his mode of dress and bearing suspicious. When Ibn al-Mudabbir came out, he looked at him and said to his chamberlain: "Go and ask that man if he needs anything." The chamberlain was stunned by the mistake he'd made, and realized that he had been deceived. He knew that Ibn al-Mudabbir's punishment for this sort of blunder was death. Dragging his feet as he passed, he said to the gate-crasher: "The master is asking: Do you need anything?" "Tell him no," said the uninvited guest. Ibn al-Mudabbir said to the chamberlain: "Go back and ask him: What is the meaning of your sitting there?" The fellow replied: "I have just sat down, you objectionable fellow!" Ibn al-Mudabbir said: "Go back to him and ask him what sort of person he is." He replied: "Tell him I'm a *tufaili*, and may God show you mercy." "Are you truly a *tufaili*?" "Yes, and may God honor you." Ibn al-Mudabbir said: "A real *tufaili* is tolerated for intruding into private homes, spoiling their wish to be closeted with their boon companions and becoming acquainted with their secrets, provided the *tufaili* possesses a number of traits. For instance, he must be an accomplished chess and backgammon player, or else a good *oud* or mandolin player." He replied: "May God sustain you! I am good at all the things you mentioned." "What is your rank in all these accomplishments?" "The very highest in them all." So Ibn al-Mudabbir turned to one of his boon companions and said: "Play him at chess." The *tufaili* said: "What happens if I lose?" Ibn al-Mudabbir replied: "We kick you out of our house." "What if I win?" "We give you a thousand dirhams." The *tufaili* said: "It would be wonderful, may

God sustain you, if you could bring out the thousand dirhams. Their very sight will fortify my heart and offer certainty of victory.” The dirhams were brought out and the game began. The *tufaili* won the game and stretched forth his hand to take the money.

3127. At that point, the chamberlain, seeking to make good his earlier blunder, said: “May God honor the Master! This fellow claims he’s in the very highest rank, but the son of so-and-so, your servant, can beat him.” The youth was summoned, a game was played and the *tufaili* lost, so they said to him: “Be gone.” He said: “Bring forth backgammon.” It was brought forth and he played and won, but the chamberlain said: “The man he played against is not of the highest rank. Our gateman, so-and-so, can beat him.” The gateman was summoned and beat the *tufaili*. “Get out!” he was told. “Ah, master, but what about the *oud*?” A *oud* was brought which he played well and sang, delighting the gathering. But the chamberlain said: “Master, an old Hashemite lives close by who teaches singing girls and is more proficient than him.” The old man was summoned and turned out to be more delightful than him. So he was told: “Out!” “But what about the mandolin?” He was given a mandolin which he played more exquisitely than had ever been heard before, and sang marvelously. The chamberlain said: “God honor the Master, the fellow who is renting a house nearby is more skilled than him.” The man was summoned and turned out to be more skillful and entertaining than him.

3128. Ibn al-Mudabbir said: “We have done our very best for you but your skill is not good enough and expelled you shall be.” The *tufaili* said: “Master, I still have one last skill.” “What is that?” “Order that a cross bow with fifty lead pellets be brought to me, and let this

chamberlain be made to bend down on hands and legs, and I will shoot them all and hit his arse with each one. If I miss a single shot, you may cut off my head.” The chamberlain complained loudly but Ibn al-Mudabbir thought this would satisfy his desire to punish the chamberlain for having committed the mistake of admitting the *tufaili* into his assembly. So he ordered two saddles to be brought and mounted one on top of the other and had the chamberlain tied over them, then ordered a cross bow and pellets which were handed to the *tufaili*. The latter shot and hit the mark each time, after which the chamberlain was untied, moaning and groaning. The *tufaili* turned to him and said: “Is there anyone living near the Master’s gate who can do better than this?” He replied: “You cuckold! So long as my arse is the target, no!”

3129. Charming tales are told of the *tufailis*, like the story of Banan the *tufaili* with al-Mutawakkil and the almond cake, and how the number one and above is to be determined in marriage. We recounted the stories of other *tufailis* fully and completely in our two earlier works, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In this work, however, we merely cite some examples under this topic which went unmentioned in our earlier books.

3130. Al-Muhtadi had followed a policy of religious reform. He drew religious scholars near to himself, honored jurists and lavished his generosity upon them. He used to say: “O clan of Hashim, let me follow the example of `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz, so that I become among you like `Umar among the Umayyads.” He reduced expenditure on fine robes, furnishings, food and drink, and ordered all gold and silver vessels to be removed from the treasuries, broken up and minted into dinars and dirhams. He then ordered all pictures found in royal assemblies to be wiped clean, all rams and cocks kept for fighting in the presence of caliphs to be killed, and all the wild beasts held in captivity slaughtered.

All silken carpets and other furnishings not permitted by the religious law were removed. The caliphs before him used to spend ten thousand dirhams per day on their banquets, but he put a stop to this, and allocated one hundred dirhams per day to his meals and all other supplies of food. He fasted continuously and it is said that after he was murdered, his baggage was pulled out from the place where he was hiding. Among his belongings was found a locked chest. They imagined that it contained money or jewelry but when it was opened it was found to contain a woolen outer garment or, it is claimed, a garment of haircloth, and an iron collar. They asked his servants about these objects and were told: “When night came he wore that garment and collared himself, prostrated and prayed until dawn, and would sleep for one hour after late evening prayer then rise.”

3131. It is said that he was heard to say the following by some people close to him before he was murdered-- this was after his early evening prayers and near to his dinner time: “O God, an authentic Hadith from Your prophet is as follows: ‘There are three persons whose prayers are never veiled from God: the prayer offered by a just Imam—and I have striven to be just towards my subjects---the prayer of a person unjustly treated---and I am unjustly treated---and the prayer of one who is fasting until he breaks his fast---and I am fasting.’” He then cursed his enemies and prayed to be spared their evil.

3132. Salih ibn `Ali al-Hashimi said: “One day I attended a session of the Court of Extraordinary Justice held by al-Muhtadi. I appreciated the ease with which he was approached and how letters were issued in his name in all directions. I came close and stared at him as he examined the written petitions. When he looked up and saw me, I lowered my head and it was as if he knew what I was thinking so he said to me: ‘O Salih, I feel you are holding back something you would like to mention.’ I answered:

‘Yes, O Commander of the Believers.’ He was silent, and when he finished with his session he ordered me to remain behind then he himself rose and departed.

3133. “I waited for a long time before he summoned me. I entered to find him seated on a prayer rug. He said: ‘O Salih, will you tell me what’s in your heart or shall I tell you?’ I answered: ‘It would sound better if it comes from the Commander of the Believers.’ He said: ‘It’s as though you approved of what you saw during our session so said to yourself what sort of caliph is he if he did not maintain the dogma of his father regarding the Created Qur’an?’ I replied: ‘Yes.’ He said: ‘I held that dogma for some time until an old man was brought to see al-Wathiq who was a scholar of jurisprudence and Hadith from the town of Adana, on the Sham frontier. He was in chains and was tall and handsome. He greeted the caliph without fear and prayed briefly for the caliph’s wellbeing. In the eyes of al-Wathiq I detected a certain embarrassment and pity towards that man. He then said to him: ‘O Shaykh, answer the questions put to you by Abu `Abdullah Ahmad ibn Abi Du`ad.’ He said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, Ahmad is too weak to engage in debate.’ At this point, al-Wathiq’s pity and kindness towards him turned to anger and he said: ‘Abu `Abdullah is too weak in debate?’ He answered: ‘Easy, O Commander of the Believers! Would you permit me to speak to him?’ Al-Wathiq gave him permission.

3134. “The shaykh turned to Ahmad and said: ‘O Ahmad, what is it that you are calling upon people to embrace?’ Ahmad replied: ‘The dogma of the Created Qur’an.’ ‘This dogma that you have called upon people to embrace, namely the Created Qur’an: is it an essential part of faith so that faith can only be complete by embracing it?’ ‘Yes,’ replied Ahmad. ‘Did the Prophet of God call people to it or did he neglect to do so?’ ‘He neglected to do so.’ ‘Did the Prophet of God know this dogma or did he

not?’ ‘He knew it.’ ‘Why then do you call upon people to embrace that which the Prophet of God did not call on people to embrace, and spared them from embracing?’ Ahmad fell silent. The shaykh said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, this is the first point.’

3135. “After a while, the shaykh said to him: ‘O Ahmad, God says in his glorious book {Today I have perfected your religion, I have completed my bounty upon you and I have sanctioned Islam as your religion}.

However, you maintain that religion can only be complete when it embraces your dogma of the Created Qur’an. Who is more truthful: God when He maintains that the religion has been completed or you in maintaining that it is incomplete?’ Ahmad fell silent. The shaykh said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, this is the second point.’ After a while, he said: ‘O Ahmad, tell me about the following verse in the Book of God: {O Messenger, convey what has been revealed to you from your Lord}.

Now this dogma that you call upon people to embrace: was it part of what the Prophet conveyed to his community, or was it not?’ Ahmad fell silent. The shaykh said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, this is the third point.’

3136. “A while later, the shaykh said: ‘Tell me this, Ahmad. Given that the Prophet of God knew about this dogma of the Created Qur’an which you call upon people to embrace: Was he able to hold back on telling people about it or was he not?’ ‘He was able to do so.’ ‘What about Abu Bakr, `Umar, `Uthman and `Ali?’ ‘Yes,’ he answered. The shaykh turned to al-Wathiq and said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, if we are unable to do what the Prophet and his Companions were able to do, may God never grant us any ability.’ Al-Wathiq said: ‘Yes, may God never grant us any ability if we are unable to do what the Prophet of God was capable of doing.’ Al-Wathiq then said: ‘Unbind his chains.’

3137. “When his chains were being removed the shaykh began to pull them back. Al-Wathiq ordered them to leave him alone then said: ‘O

shaykh, why did you pull your chains back?’ He answered: ‘Because I had intended to tug at that chain and once I had it in my hands I specified in my will that it should be placed between my dead body and my shroud so that I can say: O Lord, ask your servant why he placed me unjustly in chains and terrified my family?’ Al-Wathiq wept as did the shaykh and every other person at that assembly. Al-Wathiq then said: ‘O shaykh, absolve me from all responsibility.’ He answered: ‘O Commander of the Believers, from the moment I left my house, I absolved you of all responsibility, out of respect for the Prophet of God and your kinship to him.’

3138. “The face of al-Wathiq registered his pleasure. He then said to him: ‘Stay here with me so I can enjoy your company.’ He replied: ‘My presence in that frontier town is more useful, but I am an old man and I do have one request.’ ‘Ask what you will.’ ‘Let the Commander of the Believers permit me to return to that place from which that unjust person drove me out.’ ‘Permission granted,’ said al-Wathiq. He ordered that a gift be handed to him but he refused to accept it. So from that moment on I [the narrator Salih] abandoned that dogma, and I believe al-Wathiq also abandoned it.”

3139. It is said that one day the inventories of the book depositories were shown to al-Muhtadi, on the back of which some verses had been composed by al-Mu`tazz and written in his own hand:

I have come to know the medical cure for my pain,

But I do not know the cure for love and deceit.

I was anguished by love but I endured my fever,

And am amazed at my endurance and my anguish.

If pain distracts someone from his love,

My pain does not distract me from loving you.

I never grow tired of my love, and may I always be with my beloved,

And my beloved always with me.

Al-Muhtadi frowned and said: “These are just the excesses of youthful ardor.” Al-Muhtadi would often recite the first line of these verses.

3140. Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Raba`i, a man who was a frequent companion of al-Muhtadi and was a good conversationalist and knowledgeable about history, said: “I used to keep al-Muhtadi company at night. One night al-Muhtadi said to me: ‘Do you recall the story of Nawf which he recounted when he used to keep `Ali ibn Abi Talib company at night?’ I replied: ‘Yes, O Commander of the Believers. Nawf recounted the following: ‘One night I saw `Ali going in and out all the time and gazing up at the sky, then he said to me: ‘Nawf, are you asleep?’ I replied: ‘No, but rather gazing constantly from this night onwards, O Commander of the Believers.’ He said: ‘O Nawf, blessed are they who have an ascetic attitude to this world and who desire the other world. They are those who take God’s earth as their carpet, its soil as their clothes, its waters as their perfume, the Book of God as their guide, and prayer as their garment. They turn away completely from the world as was done by the Messiah Jesus son of Mary, upon whom peace. O Nawf, God inspired the following to his servant Jesus: ‘Tell the Israelites not to enter My houses of worship except with humble hearts, downcast eyes and clean hands, and let them know that I do not answer the prayers of any of them or any of my creatures who have committed an injustice.’”

3141. Muhammad ibn `Ali added: “I swear that al-Muhtadi wrote down that report in his own hand. I used to hear him in the middle of the night, having sought solitude with his Lord in a room he kept for the purpose, weeping and saying: ‘O Nawf, blessed are they who have an ascetic attitude to this world and who desire the other world.’ He would then recite that report to the end. This went on until the Turks murdered him as is well known.”

3142. Muhammad ibn `Ali continued: “One day, when alone with him, I said to al-Muhtadi, after having talked at length about the calamities of the world and those who either embraced it or turned away from it and adopted an ascetical attitude: ‘O Commander of the Believers, how can a rational person who can grasp with his mind the afflictions of this world, its speedy reversals, its transience, and the way in which it deceives those who run after it--- how can such a person love this world or feel at ease in it?’ Al-Muhtadi said: ‘This is only natural. Man was created from this world, so the world is his mother. He grew up in it, so it is his way of life. In it his livelihood was determined, so it is his life. To it he returns, so it is his burial place. In it he merits paradise, so it is the origin of his happiness. This world is the path of the righteous to paradise. So how can that person not like a path that carries those who pass along it to paradise, an eternal and blessed place where he lives for ever if he is destined to be one of its denizens?’”

3143. It is also said that these words were uttered by `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, may God be pleased with them all, in answer to a person who had asked him that same question. The words are taken from a discourse by the Commander of the Believers `Ali ibn Abi Talib where he praises the world and rebukes those who censure it, as already recounted in an earlier section of this work, where we discussed his asceticism and his life history.

3144. The revolt of the Master of the Zanj in Basra took place in the year 255 [869], during the caliphate of al-Muhtadi. He pretended that he was `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn `Isa ibn Zaid ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, but most people think that this pedigree is fictitious and deny its veracity. He came from a village in the region of Rayy, called Warzanin, and his actions demonstrated that what he was accused of, namely his belonging to the Azariqa sect of the Kharijites,

was in fact true. Thus, murdering women, children, old men and others who do not deserve to be killed is proof that he belonged to that sect. An oration is attributed to him where he begins by saying: “God is great! God is great! There is no god but God! God is great! There is no judgment except the judgment of God.” All sins were in his view equivalent to polytheism. His supporters were the Zanj. His revolt began at Bi’r Nakhl, a locality between the town of al-Maftah and the Karkh of Basra, on the night of Thursday, three days remaining from the month of Ramadan, in the year 255 [September 8, 869]. He seized Basra in the year 257 [871] and was killed on Saturday, the second of Safar, in the year 270 [August 11, 883], during the caliphate of al-Mu`tamid `ala Allah.

3145. Many books have been written about his history and wars. The first to write his history, how his affair began, how he ended up in the land of Bahrain and his story with the nomads, was Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Sahl, nephew of al-Fadl ibn Sahl, known as *Dhu’l Ri’asatain* [The Man with the Two High Ranks], the companion of al-Ma’mun. He was the man who had that famous story with the caliph al-Mu`tadid, as will be explained later, and how the caliph placed him on a spit, like a chicken, and roasted him until his skin began to bloat and pop. People have made mention of the Master of the Zanj when discussing “those who wore white”^{*} and their books. In our book *al-Awsat*, we recounted his entire history and how the conflict began between the Bilaliyya and the Sa`diyya in Basra, making it unnecessary to repeat it here. In later sections of this work, we shall make occasional mention of him where appropriate and recount the manner of his death.

3146. Al-Mas`udi said: In that year, i.e. 255, or else 256, `Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz died in Basra in the month of Muharram. No literary man or scholar has authored as many works as him, despite the fact that he was a partisan of `Uthman. Abu’l Hasan al-Mada’ini wrote many books but

Abu'l Hasan simply transmitted what he'd heard, whereas the books of al-Jahiz, despite his well known prejudice, scrape the rust from the mind and bring to light clear proofs. This is because he composed them in the best and clearest manner and expressed his ideas in the most eloquent style. If he feared that his reader or listener might grow bored, he would switch from seriousness to jesting, and from profound wisdom to a witty anecdote.

3147. Among his excellent works is *al-Bayan wa'l Tabyin*, which is his most distinguished work. This is because he combined in it both prose and verse, both the finest poems, the choicest stories and the most eloquent speeches. Anyone who wishes to read nothing else would find it sufficient. There is also his *Kitab al-Hayawan*, *Kitab al-Tufailiyyin*, and *Kitab al-Bukhala'*. But all his books are of utmost perfection except where he displays sectarian enmity [i.e. to `Ali] or tries to disparage a rightful cause. But no Mu`tazilite, early or late, is more eloquent. He was the pupil of Ibrahim ibn Sayyar al-Nazzam*, with whom he studied and from whom he learnt.

3148. Yamut ibn al-Muzarra`, nephew of al-Jahiz, said: "A group from his [Jahiz's] Basra friends went in to see him during his final illness.

When they asked how he felt he replied in verse:

I am sick from two places,

Sicknesses and debt.

He added: 'I suffer from contradictory illnesses, some of which are thought to be fatal. But the greatest of them all is ninety something years', meaning his age. Yamut added: 'He used to spread sandalwood and camphor on his right side because it felt so hot. But if scissors were to cut into the other side of his body, he would have felt nothing, so paralyzed and cold it was.'"

3149. Ibn al-Muzarra` continued: “I once heard him say: ‘I saw a man in Basra going to and fro, running errands for people. I said to him: ‘You have exhausted your body, ruined your clothes, made your horse skinny, and worn out your servant. There is no rest or relaxation for you. If only you could cut down a bit!’ He replied: ‘I have heard birds singing in the evening high on trees, and listened to charming singing girls accompanied by strings, but never enjoyed anything as much as the sound of thanks from one I had done a favor to, or for whom I’d performed some service.’”

3150. Yamut would not visit the sick, fearing that people would find his name [“he dies”] to be ill-omened. Charming reports exist about him and he has composed some fine poetry. He had resided in Tiberias, in the land of al-Urdunn, in al-Sham, where he died, sometime after the year 300. He was a careful scholar and researcher and a skilled polemicist.

3151. He has a son called Muhalhil ibn Yamut ibn al-Muzarra`, who is a distinguished poet of the present time, i.e. the year 332. About him his father Yamut composed the following verses:

*O Muhalhil, I have experienced both good and evil fortune in my time,
And difficult times confronted me.*

I contended with men in every quarter,

But only the riffraff and swine submitted to me.

The most painful thing I hide in my heart,

Is the manner in which a noble person is bitten by corrupt times.

Enough sorrow it is to lose a man of ancient pedigree,

While the sons of slaves sit on thrones.

I made my eye to remain awake after having closed them in sleep,

Fearing their loss once I’m dead.

The grace of the Almighty consoles me,

By having someone like you, whether I die or I live.

And when your bones grow strong after my death,

May an evil calamity never strike you down.

Say: My father was generous with his knowledge,

And if asked: Who is your father, say Yamut.

Men near and far will then acknowledge your scholarship,

A scholarship no liar can deny.

3152. Charming reports are told of al-Muhtadi, which we recounted in our earlier works. God guides to success.

Chapter 122.

An account of the caliphate of al-Mu`tamid Billah

3153. Al-Mu`tamid, Ahmad ibn Ja`far al-Mutawakkil, received homage on Tuesday, fourteen nights remaining from the month of Rajab, in the year 256 [June 19, 870]. He was twenty-five years old. His patronymic was "Abu'l `Abbas". His mother was a Kufan manumitted slave called Fityan. He died in the month of Rajab in the year 279 [892], so his caliphate lasted twenty-three years.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

3154. When the caliphate passed to al-Mu`tamid, he appointed `Ubaidullah ibn Yahya ibn Khaqan, formerly the vizier of al-Mutawakkil, as his vizier. When `Ubaidullah died, he appointed al-Hasan ibn Makhlad. Thereafter, the vizierate passed to Sulaiman ibn Wahb then to Sa`id.

3155. Al-Mu`tamid bestowed robes of honor on his brother Abu Ahmad al-Muwaffaq and on Muflih on Thursday, the first of Rabi` I, in the year 258 [January 16, 872] then dispatched them to Basra to fight the Master of the Zanj. Muflih the Turk defeated the Master of the Zanj on Tuesday, twelve nights remaining from Jumada I, in the year 258 [April 1, 872].

However, an arrow struck Muflih in his temple, and he died the following

day, a Wednesday. He was taken to Samarra for burial and Abu Ahmad abandoned the war against the Master of the Zanj.

3156. In the year 260 [873-4], and during the caliphate of al-Mu`tamid, Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib died. He was twenty-nine years old. He is the father of the Expected Mahdi, the twelfth Imam among the Qat`iyya faction of the Imamis, who are the majority Shi`ites. These have disagreed as to the identity of the Expected One from the Prophet's family following the death of al-Hasan ibn `Ali, and have split into twenty factions. We mentioned the arguments adduced by each faction and the views each of them espoused in our two books, *Sirr al-Hayat* and *al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat*, as well as their views on occultation* and other matters.

3157. Al-Muhtadi had sent Qabiha, mother of al-Mu`tazz, together with `Abdullah ibn al-Mu`tazz, Isma`il ibn al-Mutawakkil, Talha ibn al-Mutawakkil and `Abd al-Wahhab ibn al-Muntasir, to Mecca. When the caliphate passed to al-Mu`tamid he ordered them to be sent back to Samarra.

3158. In the year 262 [875-6], Ya`qub ibn al-Layth al-Saffar* moved towards Iraq at the head of a very large army, then camped at Dayr al-`Aqul on the banks of the Tigris between Wasit and Baghdad. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we recounted how Ya`qub ibn al-Layth began his career in the land of Sijistan and how he, as a youth, was a coppersmith [*saffar*]; how he joined the volunteer troops of Sijistan to fight the Kharijites; how he attached himself to Dirham ibn Nasr; the story of Shadruq, the city of the Kharijites beyond Sijistan, known as Awq; how his fortunes progressed and how he entered the land of Zabulistan, which is the land of Fairuz ibn Kabak, king of Zabulistan; his story with the messenger of the king of India on the bridge at Bust and his entry into the

cities of Herat and Balkh; the trick he employed to enter Nishapur and how he seized Muhammad ibn Tahir ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir ibn al-Husain; his invasion of Tabaristan and his fight against al-Hasan ibn Zaid al-Hasani and what we have earlier described as regards the history of Hamza ibn Adrak, the Kharijite, and his history in the days of `Abdullah ibn Tahir, after whom the Hamziyya sect of the Kharijites are named; and we ended by narrating the history of Ya`qub ibn al-Layth from its beginning until its end, with his death in the land of Jundishapur in the region of al-Ahwaz.

3159. When Ya`qub ibn al-Layth camped at Dayr al-`Aqul, al-Mu`tamid went out on Saturday, the third of Jumada II, in the year 262 [March 4, 876], and camped in a locality called al-Qa'im, in Samarra, leaving his son al-Mufawwid as his deputy in Samarra. Arriving at Sib Bani Kuma on Thursday, the fifth of Rajab of that year [April 5], al-Mu`tamid joined battle against al-Saffar on Sunday, the ninth of Rajab [April 9], at a place called Addarbud, between al-Sib and Dayr al-`Aqul. He defeated al-Saffar, plundered his camp and captured some ten thousand riding animals. Al-Mu`tamid had breached upon them the canal called al-Sib, which flooded the desert, and al-Saffar realized that he had been tricked and defeated.

3160. That day, al-Saffar had charged the caliph's commanders some tens of times. Ibrahim ibn Sima was drowned and al-Saffar had with his own hands killed many. He stabbed Muhammad ibn Utamish, thinking he was a mere servant and said to his companions "I never saw in their camp a servant like him." That day al-Saffar had moved against the right wing, commanded by Musa ibn Bugha, and killed many, among whom was the Maghribi commander known as al-Mubarqa`. Eventually, al-Saffar managed to escape with his closest companions, pursued by the army of al-Mu`tamid and the inhabitants of the villages and the region of al-

Sawad. Most of his treasury and equipment was captured, and Muhammad ibn Tahir ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir, who had been in chains, was set free. He had been captured in Nishapur, as mentioned above, along with `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn Quraish. Al-Muwaffaq, who commanded the center of the caliphal army, came up to Muhammad ibn Tahir, untied his chains, bestowed robes of honor upon him, and restored him to his earlier post.

3161. It is claimed that the defeat of al-Saffar that day was due, in addition to the breaching of the canal and the drowning of his cavalry, to the fact that Nusair al-Dailami, client of Sa`id ibn Salih, the chamberlain, was hiding with his troops in small boats in the middle of the Tigris. Approaching the rear of the army of al-Saffar where was the bulk of his army, he disembarked from the small boats and set fire to the camels, mules, donkeys and horses. Al-Saffar had some five thousand Bactrian camels, trotters and others. The camels bolted in the camp as did the mules and donkeys. The lines of battle in the army of al-Saffar panicked when they saw and heard the tumult in their camp with the main body of the army behind them, so al-Saffar was defeated, as already mentioned.

3162. It is said that Ya`qub ibn al-Layth composed some verses while on that march, claiming that he had rebelled after having been offended by al-Mu`tamid and his clients who had neglected the duties of religion and ignored the danger of the Master of the Zanj. These verses are:

I own Khurasan and the districts of Faris,

Nor do I despair of owning Iraq.

If the commandments of religion are lost or ignored,

Becoming tattered like ruined sites,

I shall march out and, with God's help, shall succeed and win victory,

And he who carries the banners of right guidance needs no guardian.

3163. Al-Saffar died on Tuesday, seven days remaining from the month of Shawwal in the year 265, as already mentioned, in Nishapur. He left behind in his treasuries fifty million dirhams and eight hundred thousand dinars. He was succeeded by his brother `Amr ibn al-Layth.

3164. Ya`qub ibn al-Layth's conduct and behavior towards his troops was unheard of among earlier Persian kings and others, early or late. The obedience to his orders and loyalty of his troops was due to his generosity and acts of kindness to them though they were also filled with awe of him.

3165. Of stories current among people as regards their obedience to him is that he was once in the land of Faris and permitted his army to pasture their animals. Then an order came for immediate evacuation of that locality and his crier went out announcing an end to pasturing. A follower of his was seen hurrying towards his riding animal which was still chewing grass, and which the man pulled out of the animal's mouth for fear it would continue to chew after the order had been announced. The man approached the animal and said to it in Persian: "The Commander of the Believers *dawabra aztar buridand*," which means stop the animals from pasturing in the meadows. It is also reported that a man in his army, an officer of rank, was seen with his armor on but without any shirt between his armor and his skin. When asked why this was so, he replied: "The Emir's crier announced that we were to wear our armor. I was naked at that moment, washing myself from sexual intercourse, so I did not bother to wear clothes but put my armor on at once."

3166. Whenever a man came to see Ya`qub seeking to enter his service and wishing to attach himself to him, he would stare intently at him. If he liked his looks, he investigated his circumstances and attempted to find out if he had any skill in archery or in swordplay or such like. If he found something he liked about him he would ask him about his life and

situation, where he came from, and who he was with. If he liked what he heard, he would say to him: “Tell me truthfully what you possess by way of money, baggage and weaponry.” Having determined all this, he would send out people specially appointed for the purpose to sell all his possessions and turn them into gold or silver. This would be handed over to the man and his name would be inscribed in the Register (*Diwan*). He would then satisfy all his needs with respect to clothing, weaponry, food, drink, and riding animals such as mules and donkeys, and from his own stables, so that the man would lack for nothing in accordance with his station and rank.

3167. If thereafter he was displeased with the man’s conduct or changed his mind about selecting him, he would divest him of all he had bestowed upon him so that he would leave his army as he had entered it, carrying the gold and silver belonging to him. However, if the man’s arm has been cut off, he would pay him an additional sum from his personal treasury and would not deny him any of his earlier possessions. All riding animals belonged to Ya`qub, and all were fed by him. He had grooms and keepers to look after them, except for the animals belonging to individuals, although he himself was their owner.

3168. He built a wooden hut that resembled a throne. Wherever he went, he would often sit inside it and from it would overlook his camp, the feeding of his riding animals, and observe any errors committed by his agents. If he saw anything he disapproved of, he would quickly redress it. He had carefully selected a thousand men for their obvious worth and valor in war, and made them bearers of golden shafts, each shaft containing one thousand *mithqals* of gold. Next to them in uniform and valor was a second contingent bearing shafts of silver. On feast days or on days when it was necessary to impress an enemy or to celebrate, these

shafts were handed over to their bearers. The shafts themselves had been cast in gold and silver in readiness for times of crisis.

3169. Some of his intimates who knew well his style of living were asked about what he did when alone, who were his boon companions, and whether he spent the night in anyone's company. These replied that he told no one what was on his mind, nor did anyone know his policy or intentions. Most of the day he spent by himself, thinking of what he planned to do, and outwardly pretended to be other than what he inwardly thought. He associated no one in his decisions, and consulted no one. His sole entertainment and occupation was to select young boys whom he would train, then discipline them, call for them, and hand over something like thongs which he had made for them and watch them fighting over it in his presence. This was how he spent most of his time once he had finished the management of state affairs.

3170. When al-Saffar waged war against al-Hasan ibn Zaid al-Hasani in Tabaristan---this was in the years 260 or else 259 [872-4]---al-Hasan was routed and al-Saffar was in hot pursuit, messengers arrived from the caliph with a letter from al-Mu`tamid. As al-Saffar's troops were returning from their pursuit of al-Hasan ibn Zaid, a messenger said to al-Saffar, having observed how obedient were his troops and how bravely they had fought: "O Emir, I never saw a day like this one!" Al-Saffar replied: "Stranger still is what I am about to show you." Approaching the former camp of al-Hasan ibn Zaid, they found the purses of money, equipment, weapons, vessels and everything else abandoned behind in his camp when he was routed, but exactly as it was. No follower of al-Saffar had been implicated in carrying away any of it or even coming anywhere near it, but instead they camped nearby where they could be seen precisely where al-Saffar had ordered them to stop. The messenger said:

“This is a policy and a program which the Emir trained them to follow until he got them to do exactly what he wanted from them.”

3171. He never sat on anything but a piece of hair-cloth, about seven *shibrs* in length by two *dhira`s* in width or more. Next to him was his shield on which he leant, but there was nothing else in his tent. If he wanted to sleep at night or by day, he lay on his shield and pulled up a standard which he then used as a pillow. He most often wore a kaftan with a narrow neck like a dove’s ring.

3172. It was his habit to assign ranks to his commanders, chiefs and grandees as they entered the door of his tent, whereby he could observe them as they made their entrances. They would pass through the ropes of the tent openings to a tent set up whose location was invisible to him but he could observe their entrances and exits. If he needed to summon any of them or talk to them or order or forbid any of them, he would call for the person concerned and issue his orders to him. Their entrances were designed so as to be observable by him rather than allowing them to come into his presence to greet him. None could directly approach the door of his assembly except a man of his intimates known as al-`Aziz or his brothers. Behind his tent was another tent close to the openings of his own tent where his bodyguard of pages was quartered. If he needed to issue an order he would shout and they would come to him. Otherwise, he never left that place by day or night, and these pages did not stand by his head. His own tent was placed inside other roped tents where five hundred pages did their rounds and slept near the inside of his tent. Each of these pages had a trustworthy guardian entrusted with observing their conduct to prevent any unseemly activity or vice, the guardians being held responsible for any infraction.

3173. Each day, twenty lambs were slaughtered for him, cooked in five large copper cauldrons. He also had stone cauldrons which held the food

he found delectable. Each day he consumed a meal of rice, a *khabisa* [dates in butter] or *faludhaj* [wheat and honey] in addition to the five cauldrons. All are heavy foods. He would eat from them and distribute the rest to the pages within his encampment then to the troops nearby, according to their rank.

3174. A person who brought him a message from the caliph said: “O Emir, a person of your eminence has nothing in his tent except your personal weapons and a rug of haircloth on which you sit?” He answered: “A leader of men is emulated by his followers in his conduct and behavior. If I were to use the furnishings you mention I would overburden the pack animals and my soldiers would imitate me in my style of life. However, we need every day to cross deserts and mountain passes, valleys and plains, and we cannot but travel light.”

3175. He rarely used mules in his army, which had five thousand Bactrian camels and many more gray donkeys resembling mules. These donkeys are known as *Saffariyya*, and carried the loads instead of mules. The reason for this is that wherever his army camped, camels and donkeys would be left to graze, but mules could not be left to do so.

3176. Al-Mas`udi said: Surprising deeds and military stratagems and tricks are reported about Ya`qub ibn al-Layth al-Saffar and his brother `Amr ibn al-Layth, which we recounted, after ascertaining their accuracy, in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In this work, we merely mention excerpts of matters not reported in our earlier works.

3177. In the year 264 [877-8], and during the caliphate of al-Mu`tamid, Musa ibn Bugha died. A poet who had praised him in a poem but received no reward composed the following verses:

Musa has died, but this means nothing to me;

When his death was announced, I was not troubled in any way.

Likewise, the death of one who never did me any good,

While he lived, does not bother me.

3178. In that year, i.e. the year 264, Abu Ibrahim Isma`il ibn Yahya al-Muzani, author of *al-Mukhtasar min `Ilm Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi`i*, died in Egypt, on Thursday, six days remaining from the month of Rabi` I, of that year [December 4, 877]. In that year too Abu `Abdullah Ahmad ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn Wahb, nephew of `Abdullah ibn Wahb, the companion of Malik ibn Anas*, died. He transmitted Hadith from his uncle `Abdullah ibn Wahb, who transmitted from Malik. In that year too, Yunus ibn `Abd al-A`la al-Sadafi died in Egypt, aged ninety-two. In that year also, Abu Khalid Yazid ibn Sinan died in Egypt, and Bakkar ibn Qutaiba, the judge, prayed over his body.

3179. Al-Muwaffaq set out in the month of Safar in the year 267 [September, 880] to fight the Master of the Zanj. Al-Muwaffaq sent his son Abu'l `Abbas ahead in the month of Rabi` II to Suq Khamis. Al-Sha`rani, a follower of the Master, had fortified that place with a large crowd of the Zanj. Abu'l `Abbas conquered that place and seized everything in it, capturing many other places and killing all the Zanj in them. Al-Muwaffaq headed to al-Ahwaz, repaired what the Zanj had destroyed, then returned to Basra. He kept fighting the Master of the Zanj until the latter was killed. Thus, his rule had lasted fourteen years and four months, during which he killed the young and the old, the male and the female, burning and destroying. In a single battle in Basra, he killed three hundred thousand people.

3180. After that battle in Basra, al-Muhallabi had become a prominent follower of the Master of the Zanj. He set up a pulpit in the place called the Cemetery of the tribe of Yashkur. He would lead the prayers every Friday, then deliver a sermon during which he called for the overlordship of the Master of the Zanj, then call down God's mercy upon Abu Bakr and `Umar but make no mention of `Uthman or `Ali. He would then curse

the Abbasid tyrants, together with Abu Musa al-Ash`ari, `Amr ibn al-`As, and Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufian, as reported earlier in this work, where it was stated that he subscribed to the views of the Azariqa wing of the Kharijites.

3181. When those who remained in Basra accepted and acquiesced in what al-Muhallabi had done, they were gathered together on a Friday and al-Muwaffaq put them to the sword. Some escaped with their lives, others were killed or drowned. Many people vanished into houses or wells, and would appear at night, chase dogs, mice and cats, slaughter and eat them. They thus obliterated these animals and found nothing else to eat. If any of them died, they would eat him, and they would carefully watch out for each other's death. If any person could overpower his companion, he would kill and eat him, and yet they lacked drinking water.

3182. It is reported that a woman of that city was attending a dying woman who had her sister with her. A group of people had surrounded the woman waiting for her to die so they could eat her flesh. The woman in that report said: "No sooner was she dead than we proceeded to cut up her flesh and eat her. We were at the river, at the watering place called Mashra`at `Isa ibn Abi Harb, when the sister of the dead woman arrived in tears, carrying the head of her sister. When told: 'Woe to you! Why are you crying?' She replied: 'They surrounded my sister and did not leave her to die a decent death but cut her up, and were then very unfair to me, giving me nothing of her flesh except her head!'" Here was a woman complaining of unfairness in their dealing with her sister! Many similar incidents are reported, even more horrific than what we have cited here.

3183. In the camp of the Master of the Zanj the situation was so dire that women descended from al-Hasan, al-Husain, al-`Abbas and other Hashimites, or from Quraish or other prominent Arab lineages, would be sold as slaves for two or three dirhams. Each would be publicly identified

by the seller as “This girl is the daughter of so and so!” Thus each Zanj man would end up having ten or twenty or thirty concubines whom he could copulate with, and who would act as domestic servants to Zanj women. A woman from the progeny of al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, who was in a Zanj household, once plaintively appealed to the Master of the Zanj to remove her from her Zanj master to another, or to set her free. He responded: “He is your master and is more entitled to be in charge of you than anyone else.”

3184. People have debated the number of people killed during these years, with maximum and minimum numbers cited. The maximalists assert that the Master of the Zanj killed more people than can ever be counted or tallied, and that their number is known only to the World of the Unseen, given the many cities, countries and villages he had conquered and whose inhabitants he’d slaughtered. The minimalists claim he killed five hundred thousand people. Both groups however are merely indulging in guesswork and conjecture, for this is a matter that cannot be accurately determined or verified.

3185. As mentioned above, the Master was killed in the year 270, in the caliphate of al-Mu`tamid. Following that event, al-Muwaffaq dispatched Sa`id ibn Makhlad in the year 272 [885-6] to fight al-Saffar, appointing him as commander of the troops at his disposal, and going out with him to bid him farewell. When Sa`id reached the land of Faris he began to act in a tyrannical fashion and his power increased. One day, he left al-Mada’in and had himself cupped while wearing his sandals and with his thick garment still on. This reached al-Muwaffaq together with reports about his tyrannical conduct.

3186. Regarding this matter, Abu Muhammad `Abdullah ibn al-Husain ibn Sa`d al-Qutrubulli composed a long poem of which we remember the following verses:

*He glowered when he became tyrannical,
And embraced the religion of the Persians,
And he got himself cupped,
While wearing his sandals and his thick garment.*

3187. Al-Muwaffaq then dispatched him to Wasit and he remained a vizier for seven years until he was arrested along with his brother `Abdun the Christian. A slave woman of Sa`id died after he was imprisoned. She had been a dominant influence over his life, and was called Ja`far. A few days later, the mother of al-Muwaffaq died. The poet `Abdullah ibn al-Husain ibn Sa`d recited the following verses:

*Ja`far headed the caravan [of the dead] then said:
I bring you news of death.*

The mother of the Emir answered and said:

We come to you as your first visitor.

Sa`id will soon be coming to you:

His death is approaching rapidly.

3188. When Sa`id's possessions were evaluated, such as his own slaves, furnishings, robes of honor, weaponry and equipment belonging solely to him and not including what was owned by his brother `Abdun, these came to three hundred thousand dinars. His income from all his estates amounted to a million and three hundred thousand [dirhams]. Sa`id died in prison in the year 276 [889-90].

3189. In the year 270 [883-4], Abu Sulaiman Dawud ibn `Ali al-Isbahani, the jurist, died in Baghdad. That year also witnessed the death of Abu Ayyub Sulaiman ibn Wahb, the state secretary, and also the death of Ahmad ibn Tulun in Egypt. This last took place on Saturday, the tenth of Dhu'l Qa`da in the year 270 [May 10, 884]. He was sixty-five years old. Ahmad ibn Tulun had ruled Egypt as its governor for seventeen years.

Ten months separated the capture of the Master of the Zanj and the death of Ahmad ibn Tulun.

3190. When Ahmad ibn Tulun lost hope of living, he arranged for his son Abu'l Jaysh to succeed him by paying him homage. When Ahmad died, Abu'l Jaysh Khumarawayh ibn Ahmad ibn Tulun renewed the oath of allegiance to himself. In 271 [884-5], al-Muwaffaq dispatched his son Abu'l `Abbas to fight Khumarawayh and a battle took place in al-Tawahin, in Palestine, on Tuesday, fourteen days remaining from the month of Shawwal of that year [April 5, 885]. Abu'l Jaysh Khumarawayh was defeated and Abu'l `Abbas captured his entire camp. Khumarawayh fled with some of his commanders until he reached Fustat, leaving behind his page Sa`d al-A`sar. Sa`d then fought and defeated Abu'l `Abbas, captured his camp and killed his senior commanders and companions. Abu'l `Abbas fled headlong until he reached Iraq. Khumarawayh appointed `Ali ibn Ahmad al-Madhara'i as his vizier.

3191. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Ahmad al-Madhara'i is the person currently---i.e. in the year 332---imprisoned by al-Ikhshid Muhammad ibn Tughj*. He had been his vizier as also his son Husain ibn Muhammad. When al-Ikhshid appointed Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn Khalaf ibn Tayyab and abandoned Damascus for Fustat, he arrested him and his brother Ibrahim ibn Khalaf and appointed as vizier Abu'l Hasan Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab.

3192. In the year 270 [883-4], al-Rabi` ibn Sulaiman al-Muradi, the *muezzin*, companion of Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi`i, and transmitter of most of his books, died in Egypt. Abu `Abdullah al-Hasan ibn Marwan al-Misri and others>al-Rabi` ibn Sulaiman, who said: "Al-Shafi`i asked Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Kufi to lend him some of his books, but the latter failed to send them. So al-Shafi`i wrote him the following verses:
Say to one whom eyes have never seen his like:

*Whoso has seen him has never seen one superior to him.
We determined this in talking to him, and in assessing his mind,
For that which his mind encompasses exceeds all perfection.
Scholarship forbids its practitioners to withhold it from those worthy of
it,
So perhaps he will extend that knowledge to those fit to receive it.*

Muhammad ibn al-Hasan then sent him most of the books he wanted to borrow.”

3193. Al-Mu`tamid obtained homage for his son Ja`far and gave him the title al-Mufawwid ila Allah. Al-Mu`tamid had decided on a life of pleasure and private entertainment while his brother al-Muwaffaq managed to gain ultimate power over the running of the state. He then isolated al-Mu`tamid and kept him in detention, and held him under strict supervision in Fam al-Sulh. He had previously escaped to the Haditha of Mosul, so al-Muwaffaq sent Sa`id to Samarra and wrote to Ishaq ibn Kandaj who sent al-Mu`tamid back from the Haditha of Mosul.

3194. In the year 264 [877-8], Ahmad ibn Tulun left Egypt intending to raid, and led numerous troops and volunteers who joined him from Egypt and Palestine. Before he arrived in Damascus, its governor, Amajur the Turk died, so Ahmad entered the city and seized the governor's possessions and treasuries. He then headed to Homs and thence to the region of Antioch while his vanguard reached Alexandretta on the Mediterranean. He himself reached the place called Baghras in the Amanus mountains, with the volunteers and raiders reaching the frontier of al-Sham ahead of him. He then turned back, in a move no one had anticipated, until he camped at Antioch, held at that time by Sima al-Tawil with a strong garrison of Turks and others.

3195. In an earlier section of this work, we recounted the story of the building of Antioch, its wall, the king who built it and a description of

that wall which stretched across plain and mountain. Before the arrival of Ibn Tulun at Antioch, a series of battles had taken place between Sima and Ahmad al-Mu'ayyad in the regions of Jund Qinnasrin and al-`Awasim, in al-Sham. Sima had done great harm to the population of Antioch with his executions and seizures of wealth. Ibn Tulun camped at one of the gates of the city known as Bab Faris, opposite the market. His troops surrounded the city while his page, known as Lu'lu', camped at one of its gates known as the Sea Gate.

3196. Lu'lu' then left the army of Ibn Tulun and joined the caliph, seeking an assurance of security, and arrived to find al-Muwaffaq fighting the Master of the Zanj. In our earlier works we described what happened to Lu'lu' and the killing of the Master of the Zanj as well as the conflict which arose between the followers of Lu'lu' and the followers of al-Muwaffaq, and which group killed the Master of the Zanj. The situation that day was about to lead to open conflict between the two groups so that the following ditty was being recited in the camp of al-Muwaffaq:

Say whatever you like,

It was Lu'lu' who won the victory.

3197. The end of the year 264 found Ibn Tulun camped at Antioch. He captured the city in 265 by stealth, with the help of some people inside the city who had mounted its wall by night through trickery, and one of whom then descended near the mountain and the Faris Gate. He then came to Ibn Tulun, who by that time had abandoned hope of conquering the city because of its fortified location and impregnable walls, and promised him that it could be captured. Ibn Tulun dispatched a contingent of his troops with the man, and they mounted the wall at the point where the man had descended, while Ibn Tulun mobilized his troops and made all necessary preparations. Sima was meanwhile in his residence. As

dawn broke, the Tulunid troops had mounted the wall, shouted “God is great!” then descended upon the city. Amidst much tumult and shouting, Sima rode off with any followers quick enough to follow him, but a woman standing on a roof threw down a millstone which killed him instantly. Some who knew him then cut off his head and brought it to Ibn Tulun. Ibn Tulun entered the city through the Faris Gate and stopped at a fountain nearby. With him was al-Husain ibn `Abd al-Rahman the judge, known as Ibn al-Sabuni al-Antaki al-Hanafi. The army of Ibn Tulun pillaged the city for a while and did extensive harm, then this was stopped at the second hour of the day.

3198. Ibn Tulun then left, heading to the frontier of al-Sham, and arrived in Massisa and Adana, but the people of Tarsus, led by the page Yazman, resisted him, and he could not find any ploy to conquer it. Having intended to raid Byzantine territory, he suddenly turned back, and it is said, and God knows best, that he did so because he heard that his son al-`Abbas had rebelled against him so was afraid that he might be cut off from Egypt. So he marched rapidly until he entered Fustat. Al-`Abbas, fearing his father, fled to Barqa in the Maghrib, carrying with him whatever he could by way of treasure, money and equipment. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman* we described the correspondence between Ibn Tulun and his son al-`Abbas.

3199. Yazman the page died in Christian territory, beneath a fortress called Kawkab, while raiding with a Muslim army. He had been a client of al-Fath ibn Khaqan. His body was carried to Tarsus where he was buried near the Jihad Gate. This took place in the middle of the month of Rajab in the year 278 [October 23, 891]. With him on that raid were a number of caliphal commanders like al-`Ujayfi and Ibn Abi `Isa, this latter being in charge of Tarsus. Yazman was a dedicated *jihad* warrior by land and sea, and had with him a group of naval fighters of

unprecedented courage. The Christians suffered much at his hands and feared him greatly, and they would take refuge in their fortresses whenever he appeared. Throughout the Sham and Jazira frontiers, and except for `Umar ibn `Ubaidullah ibn Marwan al-Aqta`, governor of Malatiya, and `Ali ibn Yahya al-Armani, governor of the Sham frontiers, none was more daring against the Byzantines than Yazman the page.

3200. `Umar ibn `Ubaidullah al-Aqta` and `Ali ibn Yahya al-Armani died in the same year as martyrs. This took place in the year 249 [863], in the caliphate of al-Musta`in. `Umar ibn `Ubaidullah was on a raid that year leading a contingent from Malatiya. He met the king of the Byzantines leading an army of fifty thousand troops. The two sides fought very hard and `Umar and all but a few of his contingent met a martyr's death. This took place on Friday, the middle of Rajab, of that year [September 3, 863]. `Ali ibn Yahya al-Armani had left the Sham frontier when he was appointed governor of Armenia. Dismissed from that post, he arrived in the territory of Mayyafariqin, in Diyar Bakr, where he had some estates. Then the call to arms was sounded and he left rapidly as Byzantine troops approached. `Ali and some four hundred of his troops were killed, though the Byzantines did not know it was `Ali ibn Yahya al-Armani whom they had killed.

3201. A Byzantine man, who had embraced Islam and become a good Muslim, told me that the Byzantines had painted in one of their churches pictures of ten Muslim warriors known for their courage, daring and clever stratagems against the Christians. Among them was the man sent by Mu`awiya to Constantinople who managed to capture the patrician of the city, beat him in retaliation, and return him to Constantinople. Among them too was `Abdullah al-Battal, `Umar ibn `Ubaidullah, `Ali ibn Yahya al-Armani, al-Ghuzail ibn Bakkar, Ahmad ibn Abi Qutaifa, and Qurbiyas al-Bailaqani [Karbeas], governor of the city of Tephrike [*Ibriq*], which

today is under Byzantine rule. He was the patrician of the Paulicians [*Bayaliqa*] and died in 249. There were also pictures of Chrysocheres [*Khuris Kharis*], brother [reading *akhh*] of Qurbiyas; Yazman the page in a procession with his men surrounding him, and Abu'l Qasim ibn 'Abd al-Baqi. We described the doctrine of the Paulicians and their beliefs, and that it is a dogma which mixes Christianity with Magianism. At this time, i.e. the year 332, they have joined the Byzantines. We dealt with their history in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

3202. As for the story of Mu`awiya and the man he sent to Constantinople, and who managed to capture the patrician and bring him back from Constantinople, it is as follows. The Muslims were once on a raid in the days of Mu`awiya, and a group of them were made captive. They were then taken before the king and some Muslim captives spoke. A patrician standing near the king went forward and slapped the face of the speaker, causing him pain. That speaker was from Quraish, so he called out in a loud voice: "O Islam! Where are you, O Mu`awiya? You have abandoned us, caused our frontier posts to be lost and made the enemy dominant over our homes, our very blood and our honor!" The news reached Mu`awiya who was deeply troubled and refrained from eating any delicacies of food or drink. He shut himself off from people and did not reveal his designs to anyone. After careful reflection and deliberating the best means of trickery, he arranged for a prisoner exchange between the Muslims and the Byzantines, which included the man from Quraish. When the latter arrived in Muslim territory, Mu`awiya summoned him and showed him much kindness then said to him: "We did not abandon you or forget you or allowed your blood to be shed or your honor to be disgraced."

3203. Meanwhile, Mu`awiya was still contemplating how to carry out his stratagem. Finally, he sent for a man he knew who lived on the Damascus

coast, in the city of Tyre. He was a man who had often raided by sea and was a person of great vigor who could speak some Greek. He summoned him, closeted himself with him, revealed his intentions to him, and asked him to devise a careful plan of execution. They agreed that Mu`awiya would pay the man an enormous sum of money with which he was to buy all sorts of exotic objects, furnishings, perfume, jewelry and similar things. He then had a boat built for him with a remarkable design and whose speed no other boat could match. The man sailed in it until he arrived on the island of Cyprus where he contacted its governor and told him that he had a slave woman for the Byzantine king and intended to trade with Constantinople and in particular with the king and his intimates. The Byzantine king was duly informed of these circumstances and the man was given permission to come to Constantinople. So he sailed up the Gulf of Constantinople until he arrived in the city. In an earlier section of this book, when discussing the seas, we specified the distance of this Gulf and how it abuts on both the Mediterranean and the Black Seas. Arriving in Constantinople, the man sent gifts to the king and all his patricians and traded with them, buying and selling. But he gave nothing to the patrician who had slapped the Quraish man, doing so deliberately. The man from Tyre acted with great care, as was specified to him by Mu`awiya. He then left Constantinople and sailed back to al-Sham with orders placed with him by the king and the patricians as to specific items that they wanted him to buy for them, and which they carefully specified.

3204. Arriving in al-Sham, he went to see Mu`awiya in secret and told him what had happened. All the required items and others they had expressed a liking for were bought for him. Mu`awiya then said to him: “When you return, that patrician will complain to you for neglecting him in your bounty and for insulting him. So tender your apologies to him and

show him kindness by offering him special gifts, and put him in charge of your affairs and make him supervise all your dealings. Then pay close attention to what is asked of you as you return to al-Sham and your status and situation will grow in prestige with them. Once you carry out well all that I have ordered you to do, and you know what that patrician requests from you and what he orders you to buy for him, we will then lay our trap accordingly.”

3205. When the man from Tyre returned to Constantinople, carrying everything requested of him and more, his status with the king, patricians and courtiers grew even more elevated. One day, as he sought to enter to see the king, the patrician waylaid him in the palace and said to him:

“What wrong have I done to you, and what have others done to deserve your attentions and your granting of all their requests, but all the while ignoring me?” The man from Tyre replied: “Most of those you’ve mentioned took the initiative in contacting me. I am a stranger here, and when I go in to see the king or enter this city, I disguise myself so as not to be recognized by Muslim prisoners or spies. If they find out what I am doing and inform the Muslims, this will mean my death. But now that I know that you’re interested in what I do, none but me will take care of your needs, and none will receive better treatment, neither king nor anyone else. So let me have your orders and anything else you might need from the lands of the Muslims.” He then presented him with a valuable gift of carved glass, perfume, jewelry, exotic items and cloth.

3206. So the man continued to journey from the Byzantines to Mu`awiya and vice versa with the king and the patricians placing their orders with him, but Mu`awiya was still at a loss as to how to set his trap, and this went on for some years. Finally, the patrician said to the man from Tyre as the latter was about to set off for the lands of Islam: “I would like you to do me a very big favor for which you will earn my gratitude. I want

you to buy for me a *susanjird* carpet with its pillows and cushions, and these to be multi-colored, red and blue and so forth, and be of such and such description, no matter what it costs.” The man from Tyre promised that he would fulfill all his desires. It was the habit of that man, whenever he came to Constantinople, to have his boat go ashore near the residence of the patrician, who owned a splendid estate with a luxurious residence and a charming park, some miles distant from Constantinople and overlooking the Gulf. The patrician spent most of his time in that park, while the estate was situated at the mouth of the Gulf, next to the Mediterranean and Constantinople.

3207. The man from Tyre then travelled in secret to see Mu`awiya and to inform him what had happened. Mu`awiya brought him a *susanjird* carpet with its pillows, cushions and couch, and the man took these back, along with all the other orders for items from the lands of Islam that he had received. Mu`awiya had by then instructed him as to how to set his trap. The man from Tyre had now become like one of the Byzantines in familiarity and friendship, and the Byzantines are known for their cupidity and greed. Entering the Gulf from the sea with a good wind behind him, and approaching the estate of the patrician, the man from Tyre asked the boatmen and ship owners he met about the patrician and was told he was in his estate. The Gulf stretches for about three hundred and fifty miles between the Mediterranean and the Black seas, as already noted earlier in this work. The two banks of that Gulf are full of estates and built up areas, and ships and boats, too numerous to be counted, go back and forth carrying all sorts of cargoes and foodstuffs to Constantinople from these regions.

3208. Learning that the patrician was in his estate, the man from Tyre spread out the carpet on board his ship and in the center of its deck, and arrayed it well as a seating arrangement with all its pillows and cushions.

Below deck sat the rowers with their oars tied up and idle. No one could see that they were below deck unless some of them appeared on deck going about their work. The wind had caught the sail and the boat was speeding through the Gulf like an arrow flying from a bow. A person on shore could barely get a good look at it since it was running so fast and so straight. Coming within sight of the residence of the patrician, he found him sitting in his belvedere with his women, drunk, totally enchanted and in a state of extreme merriment. When the patrician caught sight of the ship, he began to shout and sing in happiness at its arrival. The ship drew up beneath the residence and lowered its sails so that the patrician could see the inside. When he saw the beauty of that carpet and its furnishings, all arrayed like a flower garden, he could not restrain himself but came down to the shore even before the man from Tyre had disembarked, and came aboard. As soon as he was securely on board and coming near the carpeted area, the Tyre man struck the deck with his heel right above those beneath the carpet to make ready, this being the signal between him and the rowers below deck.

3209. No sooner was that signal given than the oars came out and the boat was speeding away, soon reaching the middle of the Gulf and heading straight out to sea. Shouts were heard but it was not immediately clear what had happened, so nothing could be done. By nightfall, the boat had left the Gulf and reached the open sea. The patrician had been tied up. The wind was favorable and the man's good luck held out as he crossed the sea. On the seventh day, he reached the coast of al-Sham and glimpsed land. The patrician was taken from the boat and on the thirteenth day stood before Mu`awiya, who was delighted that the trap had worked and victory was won. Mu`awiya then summoned the man from Quraish and when he came the gathering was also attended by the elite. They all sat in their proper places and the assembly was full of

people. Mu`awiya then turned to the Quraish man and said: “Get up and avenge yourself upon this patrician who slapped your face on the carpet of the great ruler of the Byzantines. We have not abandoned you nor have we allowed your blood to be shed or your honor to be disgraced.” The Quraish man stood up and approached the patrician, at which point Mu`awiya said to him: “Take care not to exceed in your vengeance what was done to you and avenge your self accordingly. Do not exceed what he did to you and make sure you observe what God stipulated as regards reciprocity of harm.” The Quraish man slapped him several times and punched him in his throat. He then fell upon Mu`awiya, kissing his hands and sides, and said: “Those who chose you as ruler did not do so in vain, and those who hoped for great things from you have not been disappointed. You are a king who cannot bear injustice. You protect your domains and care for your subjects.” He proceeded to pray for him and praise him at great length.

3210. Thereafter, Mu`awiya treated the patrician with much kindness, gave him robes of honor, was generous to him and gave him the carpet, adding many other objects and gifts to the Byzantine king. He said to him: “Go back to your king and tell him the following: I witnessed the king of the Arabs instituting justice on your carpet and avenging his subjects right inside your realm and domains.” To the man from Tyre he said: “Take him back until you reach the Gulf where you are to set him down together with his servants and pages who had boarded with him.” They were all conveyed to Tyre, treated with respect, then put on board ship. The wind was favorable and on the eleventh day they came within sight of the land of the Byzantines and near the mouth of the Gulf. The patrician had been chained by those who were in charge of him, so he and his followers were set ashore, and the man from Tyre turned his ship around and left.

3211. The patrician was taken at once to see the king, carrying the gifts and furnishings. The Byzantines were delighted that he had come back safely and congratulated him for having escaped captivity. The king much appreciated Mu`awiya's gesture towards the patrician and the gifts he had sent him, and no Muslim prisoner was ever treated badly during his reign. The king said: "He [Mu`awiya] is the most cunning of kings and the craftiest of all Arabs. This is why the Arabs chose him as their leader and to manage their affairs. I swear to God, had he devised a ploy to capture me, he would have succeeded."

3212. In an earlier section of this work, we recounted the history of Mu`awiya in broad terms and, in our earlier works, mentioned the delegations of men and women who came to see him from all cities, although we have already treated the history of Mu`awiya in brief in this book. There are interesting reports regarding the Byzantine kings and patricians and their contacts and dealings with the kings of the Umayyads and the caliphs of the Abbasids in such matters as major military expeditions, raids and so forth. Likewise, and in our earlier works, we dealt in detail with the history of the populations living on the Sham and Jazira frontiers, carrying the story down to the present, i.e. the year 332. In an earlier section of this work, we dealt in brief with their history, ages, battle-days and short biographies, and we also dealt with the kings of various nations and their biographies.

3213. Al-Mas`udi said: Al-Mu`tamid was very fond of entertainments, and especially gambling and all sorts of amusements and diversions. `Ubaidullah ibn Khurradhbeh* stated that he once entered into his assembly where he found several of his companions who were men of reason, learning and intellectual subtlety. Al-Mu`tamid asked him: "Tell me, who first invented the *oud*?" Ibn Khurradhbeh replied: "O Commander of the Believers, many theories have been advanced

regarding this topic. The first to use the *oud* was Lamech [Lamak] son of Methushael [Mattushayail] son of Mehujael [Mamuayl] son of Irad [ʿIrada] son of Enoch [Akhnukh] son of Cain [Qayin] son of Adam.

Lamech had a son whom he loved excessively and when he died, he tied him to a tree where his limbs were eventually torn apart, leaving only his thigh, leg, foot and toes. So he took planks of wood, pared them, made them very thin and glued them together. The soundboard he fashioned like a thigh, the neck like a leg, the pegbox like a foot, the pegs like toes and the strings like veins. He then plucked its strings and mourned for his son, and the *oud* began to resonate. Al-Hamduni recited:

*Here is an object that speaks with a tongue but has no heart,
As if it is a thigh attached to a foot.*

In talking, it reveals someone else's innermost thoughts,

Just as a pen, in speaking, reveals someone else's innermost thoughts.

Jubal [Yubal] son of Lamech was the first to play the drums and tambourines, and Zillah [Sila] daughter of Lamech invented musical instruments like the lute while the people of Lot invented the mandolin to seduce young boys.

3214. "The shepherds and Kurds then invented wind instruments so that when their flocks dispersed they would whistle to them and these would gather together again. The Persians then adopted the flute to accompany the *oud*, the reed to accompany the mandolin, the oboe to accompany the drum and the instrument called *mastij* for the cymbals. The Persians sang with *ouds* and cymbals, both instruments being their invention. They also invented scales, rhythms, *maqati`* [intervals ?] and royal *turuq* [tones?].

These scales are seven in number; the first is *skaf/bandistan*;

then *ibrin* which is most used for the lowest [*sufla*] strings; then *bihar*

which is the most expressive in its intervals; then *amrasa/abrina*, which is the most inclusive of pretty melodies and the most ascending and

descending from scale to scale; then *madarusnan/madharwasban*, the heaviest and slowest in changing from melody to melody; then *saikad/al-qubba* which is quickest in its *adraj* [scales?]; then *shaisam/shasam* which is plucked with the fingers and is *muthqal* [heavy?]; then *juba`ran/asbras*, which is *mudraj* [scaled ?] and confined to a single melody.*

3215. “The singing of the people of Khurasan and nearby lands was performed with the *wanaj* [veena?] which has seven strings and its rhythms resemble the rhythm of the cymbals. The singing of the people of Rayy, Tabaristan and Dailam was with mandolins, and the Persians preferred the mandolin to most other instruments. The natives of Iraq and northern Jazira sang with *ghandurat** whose rhythms resemble those of the mandolin.

3216. “Findarus [Pindar?] the Byzantine said: ‘The strings were made four in number to correspond to the four humors. Thus, the *zir* [highest string] corresponds to yellow bile, the *muthanna* [second string] corresponds to blood, the *muthallath* [third string] corresponds to phlegm and the *namm* [lowest string] corresponds to black bile.’ The Byzantines have as instruments the *urghun* [organ], which has sixteen strings, has a far-reaching sound and was invented by the Greeks; the *silyani* [harp?] which has twenty-four strings and means a “thousand sounds”; the *lura* [lyra], which is the same as our *rabab* [rebec], which is made of wood and has five strings; the *qithara* [guitar], with twelve strings; the *silinj* [bagpipe] made from calf skin: all these being instruments of various designs. They also have the *urghun* [organ] which has pipes made of skins and iron.

3217. “The Indians have the *kankala* [ektara] which has one string stretched over a gourd and can replace both the *oud* and the cymbals.

3218. “Among the ancient Arabs, the cameleer’s chant preceded singing. Mudar ibn Nizar ibn Ma`add had fallen from his camel while on a journey and broken his hand so he cried out: ‘Oh my hand! Oh my hand!’ He had a beautiful voice and when the camels heard it they became pliant and were happy to travel. So the Arabs adopted that chant and turned it into the poetic *rajaz* meter, turning his words into a chant. A cameleer would thus chant:

Ya hadiya, ya hadiya

Wa ya yadah, ya yadah. [Oh guide, oh guide/ oh his hands, oh his hands]

So the cameleer’s chant was the first kind of singing and trilling among the Arabs. Then singing was derived from the cameleer’s chant and also the moaning of Arab women for their dead. No nation, after the Persians and Byzantines, was more fond of musical instruments and music than the Arabs.

3219. “The type of singing called *nasb* [sweeter than cameleer’s chant] was of three kinds: *al-rukhani*, the heavy *sinad*, and the light *hazaj*. The first singers among the Arabs were the two *jaradas* [locusts] who were singing girls in the era of `Ad and belonged to Mu`awiya ibn Bakr, the Amalekite. The Arabs used to call the singing girl *al-karina* and the *oud al-mizhar*. The singing of the people of the Yemen with their musical instruments and their rhythms were of a single kind. Their singing was of two kinds: *hanafi* and *himiari*, the *hanafi* being more pleasing.

3220. “Of singing, Quraish knew only the *nasb*, until al-Nadr ibn al-Harith ibn `Alqama ibn Kalada ibn `Abd Manaf ibn `Abd al-Dar ibn Qusayy went to Iraq to visit Chosroes in al-Hira, where he learnt to play the *oud* and to sing in accompaniment. Returning to Mecca, he taught its people, and they in turn adopted singing girls.

3221. “Singing relaxes the mind and softens the disposition, excites and brings joy to the spirit, cheers the heart, and makes the miser generous.

Along with date wine, it helps to overcome the sorrow that wracks the body, giving it energy and dissipating grief. When singing is performed in solitude, it can effect all these changes of disposition. The superiority of singing to speech is like the superiority of speech to muteness, and of health to sickness. A poet recited:

*When your sorrows take hold, there is nothing to send against them
Save wine and the melody of strings.*

How wise is that man who reached that conclusion, and what a philosopher was he who figured it out! What an obscurity has he brought to light! What a deeply buried fact has he unearthed! What an art has he defined! What knowledge and virtue has he been the first to describe! That man must be unique in his day and age, and the greatest hero of his time!

3222. “Ancient kings used to fall asleep while being sung to, in order that joy might flow in their veins. The kings of the Persians never slept unless they were enjoying some pleasurable song or some delightful nightly entertainment. The Arab woman would not put her child to sleep while he was crying for fear that grief might spread through his body and into his veins. Instead, she would converse with him and make him laugh until he goes to sleep happy and contented, so that his body can grow, his color and blood can become pure and undisturbed, and his mind grows to be fine and discerning. Singing brings comfort to a child and his tears turn into laughter. Yahya ibn Khalid ibn Barmak said: ‘Singing is that which enchants you and makes you dance, and that which makes you weep and grieve. Everything else is mere tribulation and anxiety.’”

3223. Al-Mu`tamid said: “You have spoken well, and described the subject fully. Today, you have set up a market for singing and a feast day for musical instruments. Your words are like an embroidered robe with many colors where red, yellow, green and all other colors converge. But

tell me: What is the definition of a skillful singer?” Ibn Khurradadhbeh replied: “A skillful singer, O Commander of the Believers, is one who has full control over his breathing, is subtle in his sudden changes of tone, and masters various kinds of singing.” Al-Mu`tamid asked: “How many kinds of enchantments (*tarab*) are there?” He replied: “They are of three kinds, O Commander of the Believers. There is first the kind of enchantment that moves one and incites a certain liberality of spirit that refreshes the soul and natural disposition when music is heard. The second kind of enchantment is one that causes nostalgia and sorrow, especially the verses that have to do with days of youth, longing for a homeland or elegies for loved ones who have departed. The third kind is one that produces serenity of soul and delicacy of feelings especially when listening to music that is excellent in composition and proficient in skill. You will notice that someone who knows nothing about music will not be pleased but will be occupying himself with something else. He will thus be like some hard boulder or solid and inanimate body, and it would be the same whether he is living or dead. A large number of ancient Greek philosophers and sages, O Commander of the Believers, have stated that he who suffers some sickness in his sense of smell hates the smell of perfume, and he whose senses have grown coarse and crude hates the sound of singing, busies himself elsewhere and censures and denounces it.”

3224. Al-Mu`tamid said: “What is the role of rhythm, the kinds of plucking of the strings and the diverse sorts of melodies?” Ibn Khurradadhbeh replied: “Ancient authorities*, O Commander of the Believers, have stated that rhythm is for singing what prosody is for poetry. They have explained rhythm and described it in certain terms, giving each kind certain names. Rhythm is of four kinds: heavy and light first [?], heavy and light second [?], first *raml* and light [?], and *hazaj* and

light. Rhythm [*iqā`*] is meter because the verb *awqa`a* means to measure. What is without rhythm is without measure, and this means either being too slow or too fast in rhythm. The first heavy is plucked three by three: two heavy and slow followed by one pluck. The light heavy second is plucked twice in succession, one slow and two together. The light *raml* is plucked two by two together with a stop in between each couple. The *hazaj* is one pluck after another equal in clasp. Light *hazaj* is one equal pluck after another and in one harmony but lighter than *hazaj*.

3225. “Plucking the strings comes in eight forms: The first and second heavy and light. The light of the first heavy of these two is called *makhuri*. It was so called because Ibrahim ibn Maimun al-Mawsili, who was a Persian but lived in Mosul, would often sing in this manner in wine shops [*mawakhir*]. Then *raml* and its light ...[lacuna in ms.] From each of these ways of plucking one can branch off into free trilling. The place of the fingers differs in each, producing distinct styles known as *al-ma`sur* [squeezed], *al-makhbul* [disordered], *al-mahthuth* [hurried], *al-makhdu`* [concealed] and *idraj* [quavering].

3226. “According to most nations and most wise men, the *oud* is Greek in origin, constructed by geometricians to resemble the natures of man. If its strings are modulated in noble measures, it corresponds to natures, and thus enchants. Enchantment means turning the soul back to its natural state in one single thrust. Each string is like the one next to it and like its third. The *dastban* [nut] next to the nose is placed on the line of the ninth from among the strings. That which is next to the bridge is laid out on the line of the fourth from among the strings. These, O Commander of the Believers, are general remarks concerning rhythm and its definitions.”*

3227. That day, al-Mu`tamid was delighted and bestowed robes of honor on Ibn Khurradadbeh and his boon companions in attendance, but preferring him to them. It was a day of pleasure and happiness. The

following morning, al-Mu`tamid summoned those who were in attendance the night before and when seated in their proper places said to a person in attendance from among his companions and singers:

“Describe dancing to me and its various kinds, and also the admirable qualities in a dancer and his skills.” The person who was asked replied: “O Commander of the Believers, the inhabitants of diverse regions and lands have different modes of dancing, such as the people of Khurasan and others. There are in total eight rhythms in dancing: light, *hazaj*, *raml*, light *raml*, light and heavy of second heavy, and light and heavy of first heavy.

3228. “The dancer needs to possess certain qualities in his nature, his physical make-up and his performance. As regards his nature, he has to be light in spirit and well attuned to rhythm and should seek to be joyful in his performance and in how he functions. As regards his physical make-up, he needs to be long in the neck and its sides, charming in his coyness, disposition and swinging of hips, has a slim waist, is light on his feet, is well coordinated in his body parts, tightly girdled, able to swing around the borders of his garment, can breathe well, relax, endures long exertion, has slim feet and soft toes and the ability to separate them when moving, and his ability to command various modes of dancing such as the dance called *ibil* and the dance called *kura*. His body joints should be supple, his twists and turns should be rapid, and the sides of his body should be pliant. As regards his performance, he needs to be proficient in the various types of dancing and perform well the rules of each dance. He should be able to turn well and to fix his feet firmly as they turn. His right and left leg should move in unison and be like one movement. Placing the feet and raising them have two aspects: the first is that this should be coordinated with the rhythm, and the other is to defy the rhythm. The more accomplished and better performance is one which is coordinated

with the rhythm, for this delights and charms in equal measure. Defying the rhythm however is best done when what is coordinated with the rhythm is done as the dancer rises high, and defying the rhythm as the dancer descends.”

3229. Al-Mas`udi said: The gatherings, debates and assemblies of al-Mu`tamid have been recorded in various works of literature. Among the topics recorded are eulogies of the boon companion, his virtues and the censure of drinking date wine in solitude, and what has been said about this subject in prose and verse; what has been said about the moral disposition of the boon companion, his characteristics, his honesty, his freedom from frivolousness, and contending with one another regarding this topic in verbal and written exchanges; the number of kinds of drinking in large groups; the nature of music, its divisions and types; the origin and early principles of singing among the Arabs and other nations; reports about celebrated singers, ancient and modern; the way assemblies are organized and the ranks assigned to leaders and followers; how boon companions are placed in an assembly and the greetings to be exchanged. This is reflected in the verses composed by al-`Atawi:

*Extend your greetings to those who greet you,
Those who, if you don't give them to drink, say to you: Give me to drink!
The following day finds them dead drunk in their own heaven,
And by night they are fallen in battle but not dead.
Between this time and that is a drinking bout,
Unequaled by the caliph's bouts, and full of merriment and delights.*

3230. We treated all these subjects in detail in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, especially subjects not treated above in this work such as the kinds of drink; the use of dried fruits and nuts when placed in bowls and platters and arranged in carefully laid out rows, and the ranks thereof; a description in general of the refinements associated with cookery that

need to be known to both employees and men of culture, such as the various dishes engendered, a knowledge of their kinds and the proportions of spices and seasonings; the kinds of conversation; the washing of hands in the presence of a ruler and how to leave his assembly; how cups are passed around and what has been said about this by earlier authorities as regards the kings and others of various nations; what has been said about light and heavy drinking and reports concerning this subject; how one petitions rulers and asks for gifts during drinking bouts; the outward appearance of a boon companion and how he should behave, and how the ruler should behave towards the boon companion; the difference between leaders and led, and the boon companion and the person whom he accompanies, and the reason why the boon companion [*nadim*] acquired that name.

3231. Then again, there is the proper conduct in playing chess and the difference between chess and backgammon, and reports thereof, as well as indications from tradition; the names of wine among the Arabs and why it was prohibited; the disputes among people regarding prohibiting other kinds of wine by analogy; a description of wine vessels; who drank wine in pre-Islamic times and who held it to be forbidden; a description of drunkenness, and what people have said as to how it occurs, and whether this comes about from God or from His creatures; and other related topics. Here, we merely mention these subjects in brief in order to call attention to our treatment of them in our earlier works.

3232. Abu'l `Abbas al-Mu`tadid was then in prison. When his father al-Muwaffaq left for the mountain, he placed him in charge of the vizier Isma`il ibn Bulbul. The vizier tightened his confinement until al-Muwaffaq returned from Adharbaijan in poor health, near to death and bloated. He was put in a specially built box made of wood, and covered with silk cloth, at the bottom of which were bowls containing ointment.

Men would take turns carrying that box. He arrived in Baghdad on Thursday, two nights having passed from the month of Safar in the year 278 [May 16, 891]. He remained for a few days in Baghdad but his health deteriorated and rumors of his death were widespread. Isma`il ibn Bulbul left al-Muwaffaq's house, despairing of his recovery. He then sent word to Kafhaman, or to Baktamir in another version, who was in charge of al-Mu`tadid in al-Mada'in, at less than a day's distance from Baghdad, to bring al-Mu`tadid and al-Mufawwid, his son, to Baghdad. That same day al-Mu`tadid entered Baghdad. Isma`il then learnt that al-Muwaffaq had recovered so he, along with al-Mu`tadid and al-Mufawwid, boarded a fast boat and descended to the house of his children.

3233. The royal servants Yanis, Mu'nis and Safi al-Harami, together with other servants and domestics of al-Muwaffaq, had brought out Abu'l `Abbas from his prison and took him along to al-Muwaffaq. Then Isma`il ibn Bulbul, al-Mu`tadid and al-Mufawwid were brought and there was much commotion among army commanders and clients. The populace and other servants were quick to plunder the house of Isma`il ibn Bulbul, and no house of a notable or a senior state secretary escaped plunder. The bridges were cut, prison doors were opened and every single person in a dungeon or in chains was freed. It was a horrific and very serious event.

3234. Both Abu'l `Abbas and Isma`il ibn Bulbul received robes of honor after which they headed home. Isma`il found nothing on which he could sit on in his house until al-Shah ibn Mikal sent him some furniture to sit on and arranged for his food and drink. Isma`il had gone quickly through the public treasuries, and was excessive in his expenditures, gifts, robes of honor and handouts. He was particularly generous to Arab tribes to whom he extended hospitality and remuneration, and he favored the Arab tribe of Shaiban and other clans of Rabi`a, claiming that he himself was a man from Shaiban. He further demanded the collection of a land-tax for a

year whose tax was in doubt, so the subjects were overburdened and there were many who prayed for his demise.

3235. Al-Muwaffaq lasted three more days then died on the night of Thursday, three days remaining from the month of Safar in the year 278 [June 9, 891]. He was forty-nine years old. His mother was a former Byzantine slave called Ashar. His own personal name was Talha, and regarding him a poet recited:

*When he finally arrived beneath the shadow of kingship,
And matters of state were firmly in his hands, and people either followed
willingly or were forced to do so,
The hand of fate fell upon him:
Thus does fate deal with mankind.*

3236. Following the death of al-Muwaffaq, al-Mu`tadid took charge of public affairs in place of his father al-Nasir, i.e. al-Muwaffaq. He removed Ja`far al-Mufawwid from succession and Isma`il ibn Bulbul took over the vizierate after much instability in Baghdad. Abu `Ubaidullah ibn Abi'l Saj and his servant Wasif played a very important role in the events of that time during which Isma`il ibn Bulbul was arrested. Abu'l `Abbas then sent after `Ubaidullah ibn Sulaiman ibn Wahb, bestowed robes of honor upon him and restored him to his post as state secretary. This took place on Tuesday, three days remaining from the month of Safar in the year 278 [June 10, 891]. Isma`il ibn Bulbul was then subjected to all kinds of torture. Around his neck was hung an iron shackle in which was a knob of iron, both weighing one hundred and twenty *ratls*. He was made to wear an outer garment of wool dipped in grease of trotters, and with him was tied the head of a dead man. He remained in this state until he died in the month of Jumada I in the year 278 [August, 891]. He was then buried in his garment and chains. Al-

Mu`tadid ordered that all vessels in his treasuries be broken down, minted and distributed to the army.

3237. Al-Mas`udi said: Al-Mu`tamid had sat down to a meal and drank a morning draught on Monday, eleven days remaining from the month of Rajab in the year 279 [October 15, 892]. In the afternoon, food was brought in and he said: "O Mushkir---the man in charge of his kitchen---what did the heads do to their necks?" He had, since the night before, asked to be served heads of sheep from which the necks had been severed, and this was done. Sitting at the meal with him was one of his boon companions called Quff al-Mulaqqim [the mouth feeder], and another called Khalaf al-Mudhik [the clown]. The first to stretch forth his hand to the heads was al-Mulaqqim, who proceeded to pull out an ear from a sheep's head, insert it in a loaf of bread, dip it in spices and shove it into his mouth, and began to eat in earnest. The clown on the other hand would pluck out the flesh on the jaws and the eyes. So they finished the meal as did al-Mu`tamid and scraped the flesh from all the bones. Al-Mulaqqim, who was the first to eat, died at night, the clown died before dawn and al-Mu`tamid was found dead in the morning, having joined the other two.

3238. Isma`il ibn Hammad, the judge, entered into the presence of al-Mu`tadid, wearing black, and greeted him with the caliphal greeting, being the first person to do so. Witnesses were brought forward among whom was Abu `Awf, al-Husain ibn Salim and other trustworthy notaries, and they approached al-Mu`tamid's body. Badr, the royal servant of al-Mu`tadid, said: "Do you see any sign of life in him? He died suddenly, and what killed him was his infatuation with date wine." They examined him and found no sign of life in him so he was washed, shrouded, and put in a coffin that had been prepared for him, was carried to Samarra and buried there.

3239. It has been stated, and God knows best, that the cause of his death was that he and the others were served some sort of poison in their drink, a type called *bish*, which is imported from India, the mountains of the Turks and Tibet. It may also be found in spikenard, and comes in three varieties and possesses unusual qualities.

3240. Charming stories are related about al-Mu`tamid and the events of his days such as the wars in Khurasan against al-Saffar and others, the events surrounding the descendants of Abu Dulaf in the land of the Jibal, the events surrounding the Arabs and the Tulunids, the events in Diyar Bakr in the land of Asr and elsewhere, the role played by Ahmad ibn `Isa ibn al-Shaikh, and the incidents in Yemen, all of which we described in detail or in general outline, as also what took place every year during his caliphate, in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. This makes it unnecessary to repeat that information in this book.

Chapter 123

An account of the caliphate of al-Mu`tadid Billah

3241. Abu'l `Abbas Ahmad ibn Talha, al-Mu`tadid Billah, received homage the day in which al-Mu`tamid died. This was on Tuesday, twelve days remaining from the month of Rajab, in the year 279 [October 14, 892] (*sic*). His mother was a former Byzantine slave called Dirar. He died on Sunday, nine days remaining from the month of Rabi` II, in the year 289 [April 3, 902], so his caliphate lasted nine years, nine months and two days. He died in Baghdad, aged forty-seven. It is also claimed that he assumed the caliphate aged thirty-one and died in 289, as stated above, aged forty and some months, all of which reflects the differences among chroniclers and what they recorded in their own days. Success comes from God.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

3242. When the caliphate passed to al-Mu`tadid, all civil wars ceased, order was restored to all lands, fighting ceased, prices fell, turmoil came to an end, and all rebels made their peace with him. He was a victorious ruler who brought about order, to whom east and west submitted and most enemies and rebels surrendered. He succeeded in capturing Harun the Kharijite. The most powerful figure in the kingdom and the man in charge of the caliphate was his client, Badr. Information from all the regions came back to him and he had charge of the armies and their commanders.

3243. Al-Mu`tadid left behind in his treasuries nine million dinars and forty million dirhams. In his stables, he left twelve thousand beasts of burden including mules, fast asses, donkeys, and camels. He was a miser and penny pincher who looked into the sort of expenditures that even commoners refrain from doing.

3244. `Abdullah ibn Hamdun, who was his boon companion and intimate friend and whose company al-Mu`tadid found congenial when alone, related that the caliph ordered one *oka** to be reduced from every loaf of bread distributed to his household members and others who received regular subsidies, and that this should start with his own bread since his servant girls were given a number of loaves containing three or four or more *ladha* [folds?]. Ibn Hamdun added: "At first I was surprised by that order. Then, when I investigated the matter, I found that a large sum of money is saved each month by that order." He further instructed his wardrobe keeper to choose for him the best Susi and Dabiqi garments to be worn exclusively by him.

3245. Nevertheless, he was a man who showed little mercy, was very courageous, a blood-shedder and very determined to mutilate whomever he executed. If angry with a senior commander or one of his intimate pages, he would order a hole in the ground to be dug in the presence of

the person concerned, then have him hung in it upside down, have the hole filled with earth with the man's lower half exposed to view, have the earth stamped firmly down, and left like this until the person's spirit departed from his backside. Among other tortures that are said to have been practiced by him was that the man concerned would be tied by the shoulders and chained, then cotton would be inserted in his ears, nose and mouth, bellows would be inserted in his backside until he bloats and his body is greatly enlarged, his backside would be stopped with cotton, then he would be bled from the two veins above his eyebrows after having turned into something like a large mountain, and his spirit would depart from that place. At other times, the person to be executed would be placed, naked and chained, at some place in the furthest end of the palace and shot with arrows until he dies. He built underground dungeons and filled them with all sorts of instruments of torture, appointing Najah al-Hurami to oversee these tortures.

3246. He coveted only two things: women and buildings. He spent four hundred thousand dinars on his palace known as al-Thurayya, which had a length of three *farsakhs*.

3247. He confirmed `Ubaidullah ibn Sulaiman in his post as vizier. After his death, he appointed al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah to succeed him.

3248. In that year, i.e. 279, al-Mu`tadid rode out on the feast day of al-Fitr, a Monday, to a mosque he had built near his residence. He led the prayers of the people and after the first *rak`a* [genuflection in prayer], he uttered the formula "God is great" six times, while in the second *rak`a* he uttered it only once. He then ascended the pulpit but failed to find the words to express himself, and no one could hear his sermon. About this incident, a poet recited:

*The Imam could not speak or pronounce a clear sermon to the people,
A sermon which might have dealt with the licit or the illicit.*

This came about through shyness,

And not through weak intellect or being reduced to silence by an adversary.

3249. In that year [i.e.279], there arrived from Egypt al-Hasan ibn `Abdullah, known as Ibn al-Jassas, as a messenger from Khumarawayh [ruler of Egypt], bearing many gifts, large sums of money and embroidered garments. He arrived to see al-Mu`tadid on Monday, the third of Shawwal [December 27, 892]. Al-Mu`tadid bestowed robes of honor upon him and seven other men with him. Ibn al-Jassas then proposed marriage between the daughter of Khumarawayh and `Ali al-Muktafi [son of al-Mu`tadid] but al-Mu`tadid said: "He [Khumarawayh] merely wants to be honored through marriage with us, but I shall enhance that honor by marrying her myself." So he married her, and Ibn al-Jassas took charge of arranging her trousseau.

3250. It is said that her trousseau included jewels such as had never been assembled at the residence of any caliph. Ibn al-Jassas removed a portion of this treasure and informed Qatr al-Nada, daughter of Khumarawayh, that what he removed was held in trust by him in case she needed it.

When she died, he retained that jewelry which then became the source of his wealth and income. Thereafter, Ibn al-Jassas was to suffer great calamities in the days of al-Muqtadir, including his arrest and the wealth seized from him for that and other reasons.

3251. Al-Mu`tadid, then at the town of Balad, sent the bridal dower to Khumarawayh. This consisted of a million dirhams, together with furnishings, perfumes and exotic items from India, China and Iraq. To Khumarawayh personally he sent a purse containing valuable jewelry such as pearls, rubies and other precious stones together with a sash, a crown, and a diadem, or, in another version, a cap and mace [?] [*kirzan*]. These objects arrived in Egypt in the month of Rajab, in the year 280. Al-

Mu`tadid then came down from the town of Balad and Mosul, after having sent down to Baghdad the objects described above by river.

3252. Abu Sa`id Ahmad ibn al-Hasan ibn Munqidh related the following incident: “One day, I went to see al-Hasan ibn al-Jassas, and found him with a basket before him, lined with silk, in which were precious stones from which were made beads strung on a string. I found their sight very attractive and I guessed that their number on each string was more than twenty. So I said to him: ‘May I be your ransom! How many stones are there on each string?’ He replied: ‘A hundred stones, each weighing exactly like the others, neither more nor less. Each string weighs exactly the same as the others.’ I also found with him golden ingots that were being weighed in scales usually used for timber.

3253. “As I left him, I was met by Abu`l `Ayna` who said to me: ‘O Abu Sa`id, how was that man when you left him?’ I described to him what I had witnessed so he raised his head to heaven and said: ‘O God, if You will not equate between me and him in wealth, then equate us in blindness!’ He then began to weep. I said to him: ‘What’s the matter with you, O Abu `Abdallah?’ He replied: ‘Do not be shocked by what I said. Had you seen what I have seen, you would have said much worse things.’ He added: ‘I thank God for my present condition! By God, O Abu Sa`id, I never thanked God for my blindness except in these days.’ I asked a person who was familiar with the circumstances of Ibn al-Jassas: ‘With what was that basket of precious stones embossed?’ He answered: ‘With a red ruby more valuable perhaps than everything else beneath it.’”

3254. Abu`l `Ayna` died in the year 282, in Basra, in the month of Jumada II. His patronymic was “Abu `Abdullah”. In that year, he had been in a boat sailing down from Baghdad to Basra which carried eighty people. The boat sank and the only survivor was Abu`l `Ayna`, who was blind. He hung on to the side of the boat and was brought out alive,

although all his fellow passengers had drowned. Having survived, he entered Basra and then died. Abu'l `Ayna' had the quickest tongue and the readiest wit of all his contemporaries. Charming stories are related of him, as also delightful verses exchanged with Abu `Ali al-Basir and others, which we quoted in our earlier works.

3255. He once attended the assembly of a vizier and they discussed some Barmakids and their generosity and liberality. The vizier then said to Abu'l `Ayna', who had spoken at length about their generosity and munificence: "You have been excessive in your praise of them, but this simply reflects what paper sellers and others well disposed to them have written down." Abu'l `Ayna' replied: "And why, O vizier, might paper sellers not lie also about your own generosity and munificence?" The vizier fell silent and the people in the assembly were amazed at his boldness.

3256. One day he sought permission to see the vizier Sa`id ibn Makhlad, but the chamberlain told him that the vizier was busy. He waited but when permission was slow to arrive he said to the chamberlain: "What's the vizier doing?" "He's praying," said the chamberlain. Abu'l `Ayna' said: "You're right. What is novel always delights." He was alluding to the fact that the vizier was a recent convert to Islam.

3257. Abu'l `Ayna' once entered to see al-Mutawakkil in his palace called al-Ja`fari. This was in the year 246. Al-Mutawakkil said to him: "What have you to say about this palace of ours?" He said: "People have built residences in this world, but you have built the world in your residence." The caliph liked that answer then asked him: "What about your drinking date wine?" He replied: "I am too weak to drink a little of it and am embarrassed if I drink much." The caliph said: "Let's change the subject and come and keep us company." He said: "I am a blind man and the blind person has fast bodily gestures and strays from his intended

purpose. He is seen but cannot see. Everyone in your assembly serves you but I need someone to serve me. Then, again, I cannot be sure that you might be looking at me with the eye of contentment but your heart is angry or with the eye of anger but your heart is content. Since I cannot distinguish between these two states, I am as good as dead, so I choose safety rather than expose myself to perdition.”

3258. Al-Mutawakkil said: “We have heard that you uttered some obscenities.” He replied: “O Commander of the Believers, the Almighty both praised and cursed. In praise, He said: {Excellent was he as a servant and ever repentant}. In cursing, He said: {Every contemptible oath-swearer, every backbiter, spreader of slander} If obscenity is not like the scorpion which stings both the prophet and the Jew, then there is no harm in it. A poet recited:

If I am not sincere in doing virtuous deeds,

And I do not curse those who fail to be generous, the mean and the blameworthy,

How can I know the true nature of good and evil?

May God then cleave my hearing and my speech!

The caliph asked: “Where are you from?” He replied: “From Basra.”

“What have you to say about Basra?” He answered: “Its waters are salty and bitter, its heat is tormenting, and the climate becomes pleasant when the climate of hell becomes pleasant.”

3259. The caliph’s vizier `Ubaidullah ibn Yahya ibn Khaqan was standing above Abu’l `Ayna’s head so the caliph asked Abu’l `Ayna’: “What have you to say about `Ubaidullah ibn Yahya?” He answered: “An excellent servant who divides his time between obedience to God and serving you.” At that point, Maimun ibn Ibrahim, head of the Bureau of the Royal Posts, entered, so the caliph asked: “What have you to say about Maimun?” He answered: “A hand that steals and an arse that farts.

He is like a Jew half of whose wealth has been stolen: bold but restrained. His good deeds are an affectation and his bad deeds are in his nature.”

The caliph laughed at this, gave him a gift and dismissed him.

3260. In the year 283 [896], gifts arrived that were sent by `Amr ibn al-Layth al-Saffar. These included one hundred mounts from the colts of Khurasan, numerous fast camels, many chests and four million dirhams. With all these gifts there arrived also a statue made of brass in the shape of a woman with four hands, on which were two sashes of silver embossed with red and white precious stones. In each hand, she carried small statues with hands and faces, and decked with ornaments and precious stones. The statue was mounted atop wheels specially constructed for its size and pulled by fast camels. All this was now conveyed to the residence of al-Mu`tadid. The statue was then taken to the Hall of the Police on the eastern side and exposed to the public for three days then returned to the residence of al-Mu`tadid. This took place on Thursday, four days having passed from the month of Rabi` I, of that year [April 21, 896]. The commoners called that statue “Diversion” because it diverted them from their normal activities after they had stared at it for all those days.

3261. `Amr ibn al-Layth had carried that statue away from some cities he had conquered in the land of India beyond Bust, Ma`bar and Bilad al-Dawar, which at present, i.e. in the year 332, are frontier posts facing pagan lands and other nations, both settled and nomadic. Among the settled are the lands of Kabul and Bamiyan which abut on the territories of Zabulistan and al-Rukhkhaj. In an earlier section of this work, and under the chapter devoted to past nations and ancient kings, we mentioned that Zabulistan is known as the land of Fairuz ibn Kabak, king of Zabulistan.

3262. In the days of Harun al-Rashid, `Isa ibn `Ali ibn Mahan had penetrated into Sind and its mountains, Qandahar, al-Rukhkhaj and Zabulistan, in pursuit of the Kharijites, where he killed and conquered lands never conquered before. Regarding these conquests, the blind poet known as Ibn al-`Udhafir al-Qummi recited:

*`Isa has almost become another Two-Horned [Alexander the Great]
Having reached the furthest extent of the two Easts and the two Wests.
He did not bypass either Kabul or Zabulistan
And lands around, all the way to the two Rukhkhajs.*

3263. In an earlier section of this work we discussed the reports that have to do with the fortresses of Fairuz ibn Kabak, king of the land of Zabulistan. These fortresses, as established by careful scholars and others who have travelled extensively on earth, are the most impregnable, impenetrable and highest fortresses on earth, their wonders more numerous than any other. We also described the wonders of these lands all the way to the land of al-Tabasin and Khurasan and how they adjoin Sijistan, and gave an account of the wonders of the East and the West, both lands and seas, and their diverse nations with their diverse physical appearance and morals.

3264. The people of Basra had come to see al-Mu`tadid on board boats coated with grease and lime, as is done on their river boats. On board were a large number of their orators, theologians, grandees, noblemen and scholars. Among them was Abu Khalifa al-Fadl ibn al-Hubab al-Jumahi, a client of the Jumah clan of Quraish, who later became a judge. They had come to complain to al-Mu`tadid about the calamities of the time, a drought that had afflicted them and the injustice of their governors which had plagued them. They were loud in their protestations and tumult on the Tigris. So al-Mu`tadid sat to hear their complaints from behind a screen, ordering the vizier al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah and other state

secretaries of the government bureaus to sit where he could hear their speeches and their complaints against the bureaus of government. He then gave permission to the Basrans to enter.

3265. They entered, Abu Khalifa in the lead, wearing blue [reading *zurq*] *taylasan**, with hoods over their heads, attractive beards, and smart appearance. Al-Mu`tadid admired their looks. The first among them to speak was Abu Khalifa who said: “Our property has been devastated, and all that one can see has withered away. The station of the star called *`awwa*’ *broke its promise, the constellation Gemini has sunk, and calamities have befallen us. Disasters surround us from every side, and every individual amongst us is enveloped in darkness. Our estates are utterly destroyed and our castles have been razed to the ground. If you regard us with the eyes of the Imam, your days will be orderly and people will obey you, for no one can deny us, Basrans, every virtue, and no one can compete with us in every noble deed.” He continued to speak like this in rhymed prose and at great length.

3266. The vizier said to him: “I presume you are a tutor.” He replied: “O vizier, it is the tutors who made you sit where you’re sitting.” The vizier asked him: “How much alms-tax is to be paid on five camels?” Abu Khalifa responded: “You have asked the expert on this topic. For five camels the alms-tax is one sheep. For ten camels, two sheep.” He then proceeded to detail the alms-tax due on camels and to mention where disputes arose concerning them, and went on to discuss cows and sheep, doing so with eloquent tongue and attractive speech, but succinctly and clearly. Al-Mu`tadid, who had heard all this and laughed much, sent a servant to tell the vizier: “Write down all that they need and ask for, and do not dismiss them until they are satisfied and thankful. For this fellow is a demon thrown up by the sea, and it is persons like him who should come to see kings.”

3267. Abu Khalifa had not learned grammar formally, but it was like a second nature to him after having used it constantly since his early youth. He was also prominent as a figure in the chain of transmitters of Hadith. Reports and charming anecdotes have been recorded about him. Among these is the following story. A land-tax official in Basra had been dismissed from his post and he himself had been dismissed from his office of judge. The tax official sent word to Abu Khalifa that Mabriman the grammarian and colleague of Abu'l `Abbas al-Mubarrad was to visit him that day for a picnic in some canals and orchards. The messengers came early in the morning to invite Abu Khalifa and his friends to join the picnic. So they all sat in a pleasure boat, conversing pleasantly, after having changed their clothes and outward appearance. Coming to a canal in Basra, they found an attractive orchard, so they moored their boat, went ashore and sat beneath some palm trees by the mouth of that canal. Food was then served to them. It was the season of *bari*, that is, the time when dates become ripe so are pressed down in receptacles to become dry dates. At that time orchards are full of people who work in the date industry like hired laborers, farmers and others.

3268. Having finished eating, one of them said to Abu Khalifa, without uttering his patronymic for fear he might be recognized by the hired laborers and other workers mentioned above: “Tell me, and long life to you, about the following verse in the Qur’an: {O believers, guard yourselves and your families against a Fire}. That letter *waw*, what is its grammatical status?” Abu Khalifa replied: “Its status is nominative and the verb *qu* [guard] is an imperative when addressed to a group of men.” “So how do you address a single man or two men?” He replied: “To a single man, you say *qi*, to two men you say *qiya*, and to a group of men *qu*.” He asked: “What about when addressing a single woman, two women and a group of women?” Abu Khalifa replied: “To a single

woman, you say *qi*. To two women you say *qiya* and to a group of women you say *qina*.” “What if one is in a hurry and wishes to address single, dual and plural males, and single, dual and plural females?” Abu Khalifa, speaking fast, said: “*Qi, qiya, qu, qi, qiya, qina*.”

3269. A group of laborers working nearby heard that exchange and were outraged. They said: “You heretics! You dare to read out the Qur’an as though you were clucking chicken?” They then fell upon them and beat them, and Abu Khalifa and his companions could only escape from their clutches after a great deal of hardship.

3270. In our book *al-Awsat*, we recorded the witty stories of Abu Khalifa and the words he addressed to his she-mule when it threw him off, and what he said to the burglar who broke into his house, plus other similar tales. Abu Khalifa died in Basra in the year 305 [917-18].

3271. In the year 286, and in the month of Rabi` I [March/April, 899], al-Mu`tadid camped at Amid. This took place following the death of Ahmad ibn `Isa ibn al-Shaikh `Abd al-Razzaq, upon which his son, Muhammad ibn Ahmad, fortified himself in that city. So al-Mu`tadid encircled the city with his troops and laid siege to it. `Alqama ibn `Abd al-Razzaq>Rawaha ibn `Isa ibn `Abd al-Malik >Shu`la ibn Shihab al-Yashkuri, who said: “Al-Mu`tadid sent me to Muhammad ibn Ahmad to reason with him. When I went to see him, news of this reached Umm al-Sharif [aunt of Muhammad ibn Ahmad] who sent word to me and said: ‘O Ibn Shihab, how was the Commander of the Believers when you left him?’ I replied: ‘I swear to God, I left him a great king, just in his judgments, calling to virtue, constantly performing good deeds, mighty against the wicked, submissive to truth, and fearing blame from none when carrying out God’s commandments.’ She replied: ‘He is indeed laudable, deserves all your praise----and necessarily so. For how can he be otherwise when he is the shadow of God cast over His earth, God’s

deputy who is entrusted with His creatures, and the one through whom God brought about the triumph of His religion, the revival of God's moral code, and the firm establishment of His religious law?'

3272. "She then said to me: 'How did you find our ruler---meaning her nephew Muhammad ibn Ahmad?' I answered: 'He's a conceited youth, dominated by counselors weak in judgment whose views he follows and whose opinions he listens to. They lie to him in flowery language and will lead him to an end he will regret.' She said to me: 'Would you carry back to him a letter? Perhaps we can solve the problem caused by his weak-minded counselors.' I answered: 'Yes.'

3273. "She then wrote him a charming and subtle letter whose tone was very wise and whose advice was obviously sincere, ending the letter with the following verses:

*Accept the advice of a mother with a painful heart,
Fearing for you and out of compassion, so speak the truth,
And ponder my words with care, for if you do,
You will find them to be a good guide.
Do not trust men who carry rancor in their hearts,
A rancor that breeds hatred and envy.
They are like ewes, who are indolent in their paddocks,
But when they feel safe, you'd imagine them lions.
Treat this sickness since its remedy is available,
Now that your physician has stretched forth a helping hand.
Give the caliph what will make him contented with you,
And do not hold back from him any wealth, family or child.
Give the Yashkuri [Ibn Shihab] an answer such as will protect him from
evil,
And will make no one gloat over his misfortune.*

3274. “So I [Ibn Shihab] took this letter to Muhammad ibn Ahmad but when he read it, he tossed it back to me saying: ‘O Yashkuri, states are not run according to the opinions of women, nor is power to be managed according to their reasoning. Go back to your master.’ I went back to the Commander of the Believers and told him exactly what had happened. He said: ‘Where is the letter of Umm al-Sharif?’ I produced it and when he read it he liked both her verses and her logic, then added: ‘By God, I hope that through her intercession many lives will be spared.’ When Amid was finally conquered and Muhammad ibn Ahmad surrendered on condition that his life would be spared once the fighting had grown more fierce, the Commander of the Believers sent me a message inquiring about the fate of Umm al-Sharif. I replied that I had no knowledge of her, so he said: ‘Go with this royal servant and you will find her among her womenfolk.’

3275. “I went off and when she saw me she unveiled her face and recited:

The calamities of time, its changes and its oppression,

Have finally removed the veil.

Time demeaned the powerful amongst us,

And our hardy and courageous heroes.

I offered advice but was not obeyed,

Though I very much insisted on obedience.

But fate denied us any other outcome,

Except dispersal or being sold into slavery.

I wonder: will we ever be seen

United, once again?

She wept, struck one hand upon the other, then said: ‘O Ibn Shihab, by God it was as if I could see then what I see now! We belong to God and to Him we shall return!’ I said to her: ‘The Commander of the Believers has sent me to see you because he has a high regard for you.’ She said:

‘Do you mind delivering this letter to him with all that it contains?’ I said: ‘Yes.’

3276. “She wrote him the following verses:

*Tell the caliph, the Imam acceptable to God,
A son of caliphs, descended from Quraish of the Bitah:
Through you God restored order to this land and its people,
Following its corruption and a long lapse of time when it was in disorder.
That dome of power has, through you, been demolished,
Which, had it not been for you, though first through God, would not have
been demolished.
God showed you what you liked to see, and may you never see what you
do not like,
So begin earnestly to forgive and to extend your pardon.
Oh ornament of the world, and full moon among its kings,
Spare the life of one who treated me unjustly and corruptly,
For the sake of one who sought to put matters right.*

I carried this letter to the Commander of the Believers, and when the verses were recited to him he admired them and ordered that chests of clothes be delivered to her together with a large sum of money, and the same to her nephew Muhammad ibn Ahmad. Through her intercession, he pardoned many of her people who had committed major crimes and richly deserved punishment.”

3277. In the year 279 [892-3], al-Mu`tadid wrote to Ahmad ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Abi Dulaf ordering him to march against Rafi` ibn al-Layth. Ahmad ibn `Abd al-`Aziz then set out and the two armies met in Rayy, seven days remaining from the month of Dhu`l Qa`da in that year [February 14, 893]. The battle lasted some days, then Rafi` was defeated and fled. The army of Ibn Abi Dulaf put their enemies in chains and

plundered their camp. News of this victory arrived in Baghdad on the sixth day of Dhu'l Hijja of that same year [February 27, 893].

3278. In the year 280, a man was arrested in Baghdad named Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Sahl, nephew of al-Fadl ibn Sahl, the “Man with the Two High Ranks”. He was nicknamed Shailama. With him was `Abdullah ibn al-Muhtadi. This Muhammad ibn al-Hasan is the author of works on rebels who wore white, and is also the author of a work on the history of `Ali ibn Muhammad, the Master of the Zanj, as already mentioned in this work. Some soldiers who had sought safe-conduct from the troops of the Alid [i.e. the Master of the Zanj] had betrayed him, and lists were discovered with him containing the names of men from whom Muhammad had obtained homage for some figure from the progeny of the Talibids. These men had plotted to declare a rebellion in Baghdad on a specific day and to assassinate al-Mu`tadid. When the plotters were led in before the caliph, those who were with Muhammad ibn al-Hasan refused to confess, saying: “As for the Talibid, we do not know his identity and our homage was taken without us seeing him. This man--- meaning Muhammad ibn al-Hasan---was the intermediary between us.”

3279. Al-Mu`tadid ordered their execution but spared Shailama hoping he might lead him to the Talibid, and released `Abdullah ibn al-Muhtadi, having become convinced of his innocence. He then started on Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, using all means at his disposal to get him to reveal the identity of the Talibid in whose favor he had obtained the homage of the men, but Muhammad refused. A lengthy conversation ensued between him and al-Mu`tadid, during which he said to al-Mu`tadid: “If you were to roast me on a fire, I would not tell you more than what I already did, nor reveal the identity of the person on whose behalf I accepted homage and whose Imamate I recognized. So do with

me what you please.’ Al-Mu`dadid replied: “We will not torture you except in the manner you yourself have mentioned.”

3280. It is reported that he was impaled on a long iron spit which was inserted in his backside and exited from his mouth, and its two ends were placed on a raging fire until he died in the presence of al-Mu`dadid, all the while cursing him and calling him the foulest of names. The better known version is that he was placed on three spears and tied to their ends with his shoulders fastened, and then placed over a fire but without touching it directly while still alive. He was turned and roasted just like a chicken or a piece of meat, until his body began to split open. He was then taken and placed on a cross between the two bridges on the western side of the city.

3281. In that year, al-Mu`dadid marched out in pursuit of the Bedouin of the Shaiban tribe. They had been very unruly and caused much harm. He defeated them near al-Jazira and the river Zab in a place called Valley of the Wolves. He killed, captured and enslaved them, then marched on to Mosul. In that year too, Abu `Ubaidullah ibn Abi`l Saj conquered al-Maragha in Adharbaijan, arrested `Abdullah ibn al-Husain, seized his wealth and later on killed him. That year also witnessed the death of Ahmad ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Abi Dulaf.

3282. In that year, Muhammad ibn Thawr conquered Oman, marching there from Bahrain. He met the Ibadī Kharijites in battle who were some two hundred thousand in number. Their imam was al-Salt ibn Malik who was in the territory of Nizwa, in Oman. Muhammad defeated the Ibadis, killing a very large number of them, and carried their heads back to Baghdad where they were exhibited on the bridge.

3283. In that year al-Mu`dadid entered Baghdad, arriving from al-Jazira. In that year too `Amr ibn al-Layth entered Nishapur, while the daughter of Muhammad ibn Abi`l Saj was conveyed to Badr, the royal servant of al-Mu`dadid. In our book *al-Awsat*, we mentioned how Ibn Abi`l Saj had

married his daughter to Badr in the presence of al-Mu`tadid, what happened thereafter to Ibn Abi'l Saj, and how he left the approaches to Khurasan and headed to Adharbaijan.

3284. In that year, Isma`il ibn Ahmad, following the death of his brother Nasr ibn Ahmad, marched to the land of the Turks, after having taken over Khurasan, and conquered the city known as their capital. He took prisoner Khatun, wife of their king, together with some fifteen thousand Turks, and killed ten thousand of them. It is reported that the king there is called Tankiz, which is the name of every one of their kings. I think he belonged to a race called Kharlukhiyya. In an earlier section of this work, we discussed in brief the history of the Turks, their races and their lands, and did this also in our earlier works.

3285. In the year 281[894-5], war broke out in the land of the Jabal [i.e. al-Jibal] between Wasif, page of Ibn Abi'l Saj, and `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz. We recorded his history in our earlier works. In that year, al-Mu`tadid had set out to the Jabal after receiving certain news from the east, including the story of Muhammad ibn Zaid al-`Alawi al-Hasani, ruler of Tabaristan. The caliph put his son al-Muktafi in charge of Rayy, where he made him reside, then added to his domains Qazwin, Zanjan, Abhar, Qumm and Hamadhan. Al-Mu`tadid then returned to Baghdad, after having put `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz in charge of Isbahan and Karaj Abi Dulaf. In that year too, al-Hasan ibn `Ali entrusted the domains in his charge to al-Muktafi, and went to see al-Mu`tadid, carrying a lot of spoils.

3286. In that year, Tughj ibn Shabib, father of al-Ikhshid, who is now, i.e. in the year 332, the ruler of Egypt, marched at the head of a large army from Damascus, entered Tarsus as a conqueror, and conquered Malawriya, next to the land of Burguth and Darb al-Rahib.

3287. In that year, al-Mu`dadid besieged Hamdan ibn Hamdun who had fortified himself in his castle known as al-Sawwara, near `Umr al-Za`faran. Ishaq ibn Ayyub al-`Anbari quickly submitted to al-Mu`dadid and joined his army, while al-Husain ibn Hamdan ibn Hamdun and his followers sought safe-conduct from al-Mu`dadid. In a later chapter of this work we shall report the history of Hamdan ibn Hamdun; how he ascended the Judi mountain and crossed the Tigris with his Christian secretary; how he entered the camp of al-Mu`dadid by night and went to see Ishaq ibn Ayyub, who then took him to see al-Mu`dadid; and how al-Mu`dadid then destroyed that fortress on which Hamdan had spent enormous sums of money. His full name is Hamdan ibn Hamdun ibn al-Harith ibn Mansur ibn Luqman, and is the grandfather of Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn `Abdullah, whose title is *Nasir al-Dawlah*, at this time, which is the year 332. We shall also mention how al-Husain ibn Hamdan pursued Harun the Kharijite then captured him in that locality.

3288. Al-Mas`udi said: In the year 282 [895-6], Abu'l Jaysh Khumarawayh ibn Ahmad ibn Tulun was slain in Damascus in the month of Dhu'l Qa`da. At the foot of the mountain [Qasiyun] he had built a palace below Dayr Murran. One night he was drinking with Tughj when some of his slaves carried out that murder. These slaves were then arrested after having escaped for many miles, and were killed and crucified. Others were shot with arrows. Still others had the flesh scraped off their thighs and backsides, and the black slaves of Khumarawayh ate their flesh. In our work *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we discussed the history of these slaves, whether black, Slav, Byzantine or Chinese. This is because the people of China often castrate their children, as do the Byzantines. We also discussed the contradictory characteristics of eunuchs, what happens to them when that body member is cut off, and how their nature

is affected thereby, and also what people have said about this subject and about the character traits of eunuchs.

3289. Al-Mada'ini reported that Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan once entered to see his wife Fakhita, a woman of wisdom and strong character. With Mu`awiya was a eunuch. She was unveiled but when she saw the servant she covered her head. Mu`awiya said: "He's only a eunuch." She replied: "O Commander of the Believers, does the fact that he is mutilated make licit for him what God declared to be illicit?" Mu`awiya pronounced the formula "We belong to God, and to Him we shall return" and realized that what she said was true. Thereafter he would only allow old and decrepit servants to enter to see his womenfolk.

3290. People have discussed eunuchs and mentioned the difference between the fully castrated (*majbub*) and the partially castrated (*maslub*), and it is claimed that they are male in female company and female in male company. But this is totally false and without substance. They are men, and losing a body member does not make them what is alleged above. Nor does the fact that their beards do not grow turn them into what is described. Those who claim that they resemble women must maintain that their Creator has changed their creation, since He created them men, not women, and male, not female. The crime done to them does not change their essential nature or change what God created them to be. In our earlier works, we discussed the reason why eunuchs are without odor in their armpits and what philosophers have said about this subject, since eunuchs rarely have smelly armpits, which is one of their merits.

3291. Abu'l Jaysh Khumarawayh was then carried in a coffin to Egypt, and news of his murder reached Egypt on Sunday the fifth of Dhu'l

Hajja. He had been murdered five nights remaining from the month of Dhu'l Qa`da [January 15, 896]. His son, Jaysh, whose patronymic Khumarawayh carried, received homage the following day, a Monday. Abu'l Jaysh was brought to Egypt, removed from the coffin and placed on a platform at the gate of the city. His son, the Emir Jaysh and other commanders and clients came out and were led in prayer by the judge Abu `Abdullah Muhammad ibn `Abda, known as al-`Abdani, who prayed over his body during the night. Abu Bishr al-Dulabi>Abu `Abdullah al-Bukhari, who was an Iraqi Qur'an reciter, who used to recite the Qur'an in the homes and cemeteries of the Tulunid family, said: "The night the body of Khumarawayh was brought forward for burial, I was among seven others reciting the Qur'anic chapter called "Smoke." As he was being taken down from his elevated dais and lowered into his grave, we had just arrived in our recitation of that chapter at the following verses: {Seize him and hurl him into the pit of Hell, then pour over his head a torment of boiling water. Taste it, you who are mighty and noble!} So we lowered our voices and conflated our words, being embarrassed in the presence of those who were attending the burial."

3292. Among the stories reported having to do with al-Mu`tadid's prudence and cunning is that he one day ordered the Treasury to pay certain contingents in the army ten large bags of money. These were then carried to the house of the army's paymaster in order for him to pay them out. That night, the house of that person was broken into through a hole in the wall and the ten bags disappeared. The following morning, the paymaster saw the hole in the wall but not the money bags, so he summoned the head of the guard, who at that time was Mu'nis al-Fahl, and said to him: "This money belongs to the

caliph and the army, and if you do not produce it or the man who dug that hole and took the money, the Commander of the Believers will hold you responsible for its loss. So make every effort to find it and the burglar who dared to steal it.” Mu’nis went to his assembly and summoned all the “Repentants” and police. The “Repentants” are the old and retired heads of the various gangs of burglars who had repented in their old age. If any burglary took place they knew who had done it, and revealed their identity, and might sometimes divide the money between them and the burglars. So Mu’nis addressed them sternly, threatened and scared them. They then dispersed in the alleyways, markets, shops, wine shops, butcher shops, and gambling places. Soon thereafter, they brought back a thin man, weak in body, wearing tattered clothes and clearly impoverished. They said: “Sir, this is the man who did it. He’s a foreigner and not from this city.” All of them agreed that he was the man who bored the hole and stole the money.

3293. Mu’nis then turned to him and said: “Woe to you! Who are your accomplices? Who helped you? Where are your fellow burglars? I cannot imagine that you would be capable by yourself of hauling away ten bags of money in one night. There must have been about ten of you, or at least five. Tell me where the money is, and if it is still in one piece or if it has been distributed among your accomplices.” The man simply denied the charge and said nothing else. So Mu’nis spoke kindly to him, promising to reward him generously if he confessed and threatening him with all sorts of torments if he did not. But the man kept denying the charge. Mu’nis, growing angry and despairing of his confession, began to punish and chastise him. He had him whipped, and struck with cudgels, clubs and truncheons on

his back, stomach, backside, head, soles of his feet, ankles and muscles, to the point where there was no longer any place on his body to beat him. He was thrashed until he became unconscious and could not speak, but still refused to confess to anything.

3294. When al-Mu`tadid heard about this, he summoned the head of the guard and asked him about the money and he told him what had happened. He said to him: "Woe to you! You arrest a thief who stole ten money bags from the treasury, you beat him almost to death, and the money is still missing? What happened to the cunning of men?"

He answered: "O Commander of the Believers, I have no access to the realm of the supernatural, and had no other recourse with the man than what I've already tried." The caliph ordered him to bring the man forward, and he was carried to him in a mat and placed before him, after having recovered consciousness. When the caliph questioned him, he denied any knowledge of the theft, so he said to him: "Woe to you! If you die, this will not benefit you, and if you survive all this beating I will not allow you to get to the money. I hereby give you my solemn assurance that you will receive enough money to improve your living conditions and be well satisfied." But the man persisted in his denial, so the caliph said: "Get me the physicians." When they appeared, he said to them: "Take this man away, nurse him as gently as possible and treat him with creams, a good diet and constant medical attention, and make sure he is fully recovered as soon as possible." So the man was transferred to their care.

3295. The caliph then disbursed money among his troops in place of what had disappeared, and it is reported that the man recovered his health in a few days. The physicians then fed him and gave him to

drink as best they could, made him sleep on soft beds and perfumed him until he recovered completely, and regained his strength, color, and spirit. This was mentioned to the caliph so he ordered him to be brought to him. Asked how he felt, he prayed for the caliph's welfare and thanked him, saying: "I am fine as long as God grants life to the Commander of the Believers." Asked about the money, he reverted to denial, so the caliph said: "Woe to you! It can only be one of two things. You could either have taken all the money yourself or some of it must have passed on to you. If you've taken it all, you will spend it on eating, drinking and entertainment and I doubt whether you'll be able to spend it all before you die. When you die, you will be held to account for the crime you committed. If only part of the money has come to you, we will forgive you, so confess and reveal the names of your accomplices, for I will execute you if you don't confess. What is left of the money after your death will be of no use to you, and your accomplices couldn't care less about your death. If you confess, I will pay you ten thousand dirhams, and a similar sum from the toll keepers at the bridge, and will appoint you a member of the "Repentants" and grant you a salary of ten dinars a month, sufficient to cover your food, drink, clothing and perfume. You will become a respected man and escape both execution and sin."

3296. The man continued to deny his involvement. The caliph got him to swear by God and he did so. He brought out a copy of the Qur'an and asked him to swear on it, and the man did so. The caliph said: "I shall find the money, and once I've done so, after all these oaths you've taken, I will surely kill you and cannot possibly spare your life." But the man continued to deny any involvement so the caliph said: "Place your hand on my head and swear by my life." The

man placed his hand on the caliph's head and swore by his life that he had not taken the money, that he was falsely accused, and that the "Repentants" had washed their hands of him. Al-Mu`tadid said: "If you are lying, and I execute you, will I be absolved from shedding your blood?" "Yes," replied the man.

3297. Al-Mu`tadid then ordered that thirty black men be put in constant charge of him, and placed where he can see them and they him, doing so in shifts. Days would pass where he would be sitting but not allowed to rest his arms or back or lie or go to sleep. Each time he nodded off, his jaw would be struck or his head bashed, until he grew weak and near death, at which point the caliph ordered him to be brought into his presence. Once again, he repeated what he'd said previously to him and made him swear by God and other solemn oaths, and the man swore to all this and to other oaths he had not sworn to before, repeating that he had not stolen the money, and did not know who did. Turning to the people in attendance, al-Mu`tadid said: "My heart tells me he is innocent and that he is telling the truth, and that the 'Repentants' knew who had done the deed, but we have sinned where this fellow is concerned." The caliph asked the man to absolve him and he did so. He then ordered a meal to be brought in and cold drinks, then commanded him to sit, eat and drink. The man began to eat, and was constantly encouraged to do so and given morsels to taste. He was then repeatedly given to drink until he could no longer eat or drink anything. Incense and perfume were brought in with which he was regaled, and finally a feather mattress was made ready for him to lie upon and go to sleep.

3298. Once he had lain back, relaxed and fallen asleep, the caliph ordered that he be disturbed and abruptly woken up. He was carried

from where he was and brought to the caliph, drowsy and his eyes still heavy from sleep. So the caliph said to him: "Tell me: how did you manage that burglary? How did you bore a hole in the wall? How did you come out? Where did you take the money? Who was with you?" He answered: "I was all alone. I came out of the hole I had bored, and there was a bath-house opposite with a large heap of thorns for the fire. I took the money, lifted that heap of thorns, dried grass and reeds, placed the money beneath, and covered it well. It is still there." The caliph ordered him returned to his bed where he was laid out on it, then commanded that the money be recovered, and it was recovered in full. Mu'nis al-Fahl, the vizier and the caliphal companions were now summoned, with the money placed under a carpet to the side of the assembly. The caliph ordered the thief to be woken up after having slept well and was no longer drowsy. In front of everyone there, the caliph once again asked him the same questions as before and the man denied all knowledge, so he ordered the carpet removed and the money was revealed. "Woe to you!" said the caliph, "Is this not the money? Did you not do this and that?" Having repeated to him what he had told him, the thief could say nothing.

3299. The caliph then ordered his hands and legs securely bound, then a bellows was brought, inserted in his backside and pumped, cotton was inserted in his ears, mouth, and nose and the bellows kept pumping. His hands and legs were then untied and he was held by the hands after becoming as bloated as the most bloated of skins. All his body members were enlarged as was his body, and his eyes had become enlarged and about to pop from his head. When about to burst, a physician was commanded to bleed him in two veins above

his eyebrows, on his forehead. Wind and blood surged out with a whistling sound until he lay still and died. That sight was one of the most frightful torments seen that day. It is said that the money bags were full of gold and were more in number than we described above. 3300. Ibn al-Maghazili was a man from Baghdad who would stand by the roadside and tell people funny stories and jokes. He was so talented that all who saw or heard him could not stop laughing. He said: "One day, during the caliphate of al-Mu`tadid, I stood near the royal gate and began to tell my jokes and stories. A servant of the caliph came and stood in the ring of people around me. So I started to tell jokes about royal servants, which he liked and much appreciated, then departed. Soon thereafter he reappeared and, holding my hand, said: "When I left your ring, I entered into the caliph's presence, remembered your jokes and began to laugh. The caliph was angry and said, 'Confound you! What is the matter with you?' I replied: 'O Commander of the Believers, there's a man at the gate called Ibn al-Maghazili who tells jokes and stories. There's not a joke about Bedouins, Najdis, Nabatis, Zutt, Zanj, Sindis, Turks or Meccans that he did not relate, mixing this with stories that make even the bereaved mother laugh and the reserved man frivolous.' The caliph ordered me to admit you into his presence and I shall take half of any present you receive from him."

3301. "Greedy for a generous present, I said: 'Sir, I am a poor wretch with a family to feed. God has graciously favored me by introducing me to you, so how about taking only a sixth or a quarter of the present?' He refused, insisting on half. Eager for the royal present, I consented. He then took me by the hand and ushered me into the caliph's presence. I greeted the caliph properly and stood where I

was asked to stand and he returned my greeting. He was reading a book, most of which he read while I stood before him. Finally, he shut the book, raised his head to me and said: 'Are you Ibn al-Maghazili?' 'Yes, O Commander of the Believers,' I responded. He said 'I have been told that you tell wonderfully funny stories and marvelous jokes.' I answered: 'Yes, O Commander of the Believers, for necessity is the mother of invention. I collect stories about people that are close to their hearts and seek their reward, and so make my living.' He said: 'Let's hear what you've got and do your best. If you make me laugh I will give you 500 *dirhams*. If I do not laugh, what will you owe me then?' I replied: 'Affliction and utter failure, O Commander of the Believers. I have nothing to offer but my backside, which you can beat as long as you wish, as much as you wish, and with anything you wish.' He said: 'Fair enough. If I laugh, I will give you what I promised, and if I don't I will have you beaten ten times with that pouch.'

3302. "I said to myself, here's a ruler who uses something light and easy to punish with.' I looked around and saw a soft leather pouch hanging in a corner of the hall. So I said to myself: I must be right, after all, and what can there be in that pouch except air? If I make him laugh I win, and if I fail, ten lashes with a pouch filled with air is no great torment. So I began my funny tales and jokes, embellishing them as I went along. There was no story or joke about Bedouins, grammarians, hermaphrodites, judges, the Zutt, country folk, Sindis, the Zanj, royal servants, Turks, ruffians, or villains that I failed to tell. Finally, my repertoire was exhausted and my head was splitting. So I became listless and piped down. The caliph said: 'Let's hear more of your tales.' He had been sitting there glowering and not even smiling. Meanwhile every royal servant and page who had been standing

behind me had disappeared, having almost died laughing. I said, 'O Commander of the Believers, I swear I have gone through all my repertoire, my head is splitting and my livelihood is at an end. I swear I've never seen someone like you, but I have one last joke'. 'Let's hear it,' he said. I said, 'O Commander of the Believers, you promised you would make my present ten lashes. I now ask you to please double these lashes and add ten extra.'

3303. "He was about to laugh then restrained himself and said, 'Done.' He then ordered a page to grab my hands. I exposed my backside and received one lash from that pouch which felt like some mountaintop had collapsed on top of me. The pouch, it turned out, was full of round pebbles like brass balls. After ten lashes, I felt as if my neck was about to be severed from my shoulders. My ears buzzed and I could no longer see clearly. When I'd received ten lashes, I cried out, 'My lord, a word of advice!' The beating halted although twenty lashes were clearly on their way. 'Speak,' said the caliph. I said, 'My lord, there is nothing in religion more laudable than keeping faith or uglier than treachery. To the royal servant who brought me here I had promised half my present, be it little or much. Through his generosity, the Commander of the Believers, long may he live, has doubled that present. I have now received my half, but the other half remains to be given to your servant.' The caliph fell back laughing and then remembered all the jokes he had heard and refrained from laughing at them, and began thumping the floor with his hands, writhing and holding his belly up in his hands. When he finally recovered his composure, he said, 'Summon that servant.'

3304. "He ordered him to be lashed. The servant was tall in stature. He said, 'O Commander of the Believers, what crime have I

committed?' I answered, 'This is my prize and you are my partner in it. I have received my portion of it and there remains your portion.' When he began to be beaten and to feel the pain, I stepped forward and began to reproach him: 'I told you I was a poor fellow with a family to support. I complained to you of my want and my wretched state and I pleaded with you to take only a sixth or a quarter of the prize but you insisted on taking half. Had I known that the Commander of the Believers, long may he live, would award his prizes in the form of lashes, I would have given you the whole prize.' The caliph started laughing again at my remarks to his servant. When the beating ended, and the caliph recovered from his laughter, he pulled out from where he sat a pouch in which there were 500 dirhams and said to the servant who was about to leave: 'Stop! I had prepared this for you but your big mouth and your greed was such that you brought in a partner with you. I might well have denied him that reward.' I said, 'O Commander of the Believers, but what happened to keeping faith and to the ugliness of treachery? I had hoped you'd pay it all to him, and have him slapped ten more but give him the five hundred dirhams.' The caliph divided the sum between us and the two of us departed."

3305. In the year 282 [895-6], Isma`il ibn Ishaq, the judge, died, as also al-Harith ibn Abi Usama and Hilal ibn al-`Ala' al-Raqqi.

3306. In the year 283 [896], al-Mu`tadid travelled to Takrit, while al-Husain ibn Hamdan marched with an army of clients to fight Harun the Kharijite. A major battle ensued and was won by al-Husain ibn Hamdan, who brought Harun as a prisoner to al-Mu`tadid, without having granted him safe-conduct. With Harun was his brother. Al-Mu`tadid then entered Baghdad where ceremonial domes had been

set up for him and the roads were decorated. Al-Mu`tadid arranged his troops in military order at the Shammasiyya Gate, arraying them in the best and most perfect fashion, and they marched through Baghdad until they reached the palace known as al-Hasani. Al-Mu`tadid then bestowed robes of honor on al-Husain ibn Hamdan and tied a golden collar around his neck, then bestowed other robes of honor on a number of his knights and chiefs of his followers and family, and had them paraded in public in recognition of their achievement and courage in war.

3307. Al-Mu`tadid then had the Kharijite mounted on an elephant and wearing an embroidered outer garment with a tall silken hood, with his brother behind him on a Bactrian camel wearing the same, and had them marching behind al-Husain ibn Hamdan and his followers. Al-Mu`tadid then followed, wearing a black garment and a tall and pointed hat, and riding a Sana'i mare. Riding to his left was his brother `Abdullah ibn al-Muwaffaq, and behind him his royal servant Badr, his vizier Abu'l Qasim `Ubaidullah ibn Sulaiman ibn Wahb, and his son al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah. The people were loud in their prayers for his welfare, but, as they moved from the eastern to the western side of the city, they were so numerous and teeming that the upper truss of the bridge collapsed on top of a boat filled with people. That day, about a thousand people died, both known and unknown by name, and bodies were removed by hooks or by divers. The tumult and screams of people were very loud on both banks of the river.

3308. While this was happening to people, a diver brought out the body of a boy wearing very expensive gold and jewelry. Observing the scene was an old man of handsome appearance who now came

forward, beating his face so much that his nose bled. He rolled in the dust and pretended the boy was his son. In his lamentations he would repeat: "O my master, you have not really died, now that they have brought you out whole and sound, not yet eaten by the fish! Oh, my beloved, you are not dead! If only my eyes had been treated to a sight of you just once before you died!" He then took the body, put it on a donkey and left. No sooner had the people observed this scene than a merchant, well known for his wealth, came up, having heard the news, certain that the boy was in their hands. He did not care about the fine clothes and jewelry he was wearing, but simply wanted to see him, shroud him, pray over him and bury him. When the people told him what had happened, he and the other merchants with him were astonished and shocked. Asking about the old man and making inquiries, there was no trace of him anywhere.

3309. The "Repentants" at the bridge identified the old man, and told the boy's father that there was no hope of ever finding his son. They mentioned that he was an old man whose tricks and cunning had caused them to despair, and related the following story about his deceit, wickedness and guile. One day, early in the morning, that old man had gone to see a notary public, celebrated for his distinction and wealth. With him he carried an empty urn which he carried on his back together with an axe and a basket of palm-leaves, and was dressed in scruffy clothes. Speaking not a single word, he proceeded to tear down with his axe the shops standing by the door of the notary public's house, which he demolished, then would select the useful bricks and put them to the side. When the notary public heard the sound of the axe and the demolition he came out to see what was happening and found the old man tearing down the shops right by his

door. He said to him: "Servant of God, what on earth are you doing? Who told you to do this?" The old man went on with his demolition, paying no attention to the notary and saying not a word to him. The neighbors collected as this conversation was taking place, stayed the old man's hand and one of them nudged him while another pushed him away. Turning upon them, he said: "Confound you! What's the matter with you? What do you want from me? Aren't you ashamed of yourselves? You interfere in this manner with an old man?" They replied: "What interference? Confound you! Who ordered you to do what you're doing?" He replied: "Woe to you! The owner of the house told me!" They said: "Here's the owner, and he's been talking to you." He answered: "No, by God, he's not the owner." When they heard his words and saw that he was scatterbrained, they took pity on him and said: "He must either be mad or else duped by some neighbors of the notary public who are jealous of the wealth that God has bestowed upon him. They must have put the old man up to this." Having stopped him from further demolition, he went to the urn he had put to the side, inserted his hand into it as though he'd stored his clothes in it, then cried out and began to weep. The notary was certain that some trickster had stolen his clothes, so asked him: "What has been stolen from you?" He replied: "A brand new shirt I bought yesterday, together with a bed cover and some trousers." Everyone took pity on him and the notary invited him in, gave him clothes and many dirhams, and the neighbors gave him the same, and he departed with his loot.

3310. That old man was known as the "Vulture" and his patronymic was Abu'l Baz (Father of Falcon). Remarkable tales and clever tricks are told about him. For example, he was the man who was used by al-Mutawakkil when he made a bet with Bakhtishu`, the physician, that if he succeeded

in stealing a designated object in his house in the course of three specified nights of that month, Bakhtishu` would give ten thousand dinars to the treasury of the caliph. If he failed to do so, Bakhtishu` would obtain an estate specified in that bet. The old man, then still in the prime of youth, was introduced to al-Mutawakkil, and he compacted with him that he could steal an object from the house of Bakhtishu` that the latter could not deny belonged to him. Bakhtishu` during these three nights had surrounded his house with guards and fortified it. The “Vulture” used very subtle trickery and managed to steal Bakhtishu` himself, put him in a box, and bring him to al-Mutawakkil. It was a very amusing tale, for he pretended to be a messenger from Jesus son of Mary who had descended from heaven upon Bakhtishu`, using lighted candles, together with other ruses he employed such as mixing a sedative with the food he offered to the guards that night. We described all this in our *Akhbar al-Zaman*. In his tricks and guiles that old man surpassed the most accomplished tricksters and swindlers, both before and after his days.

3311. Strange tales are told of the tricks employed by those who practice alchemy that has to do with gold, silver and precious stones like pearls; with the manufacture of all kinds of elixirs like the one known as *al-Farrar* and so forth; with turning mercury into silver; and with their other tricks and deceptions that involve instruments and processes like the cucurbit and still with evacuation tube, the alembic, distillation, calcination, boric, lumber, coal and bellows. We discussed all these topics in detail and demonstrated the kinds of tricks involved and how these are manipulated in our work *Akhbar al-Zaman*. We further mentioned the verses composed by these alchemists and what they attributed to earlier authorities like the Greeks and Romans such as Queen Cleopatra (*Qalubatra*) and Mariya, and what Khalid ibn Yazid ibn

Mu`awiya had to say on the subject. Among alchemists, Khalid is considered a prominent figure of their craft, as in the verses he composed:

*Take talc from silica [ashaqq?]
And what is produced from pounding,
And something that resembles boric,
And estimate it without making a mistake.
If you love your master,
You will gain supremacy over creatures. **

3312. Ya`qub ibn Ishaq ibn al-Sabbah al-Kindi composed an epistle on this subject which he divided into two main chapters. In it, he argues that humans cannot do what nature alone can do, and in which he exposes the tricks and deceits of alchemists, entitling that epistle “A refutation of those who claim to manufacture gold and silver from other than their lodes.” This epistle of al-Kindi was in turn refuted by the philosopher Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi*, author of the medical work entitled *Al-Mansuri on the Craft of Medicine*. This work is in ten chapters. He demonstrated that the arguments of al-Kindi were false, and that humans can indeed manufacture these precious metals. Al-Razi wrote several books on this theme, devoting each work to a particular aspect of the craft of alchemy such as mineral stones and *al-shu`r* [saffron?] as well as other methods of procedure. This is a subject about which men have disagreed since ancient times, from the days of Qarun* and his activity as well as others. We on the other hand seek refuge in God from such delusions which corrupt the brain, obscure the light of understanding, and darken skin color through ascending vapors and the smell of vitriol and other inanimate substances.

3313. In the year 283, and in the month of Sha`ban [September/October, 896], an exchange of prisoners took place between the Muslims and the Byzantines which began on a Tuesday. In that year also, Jaysh ibn

Khumarawayh ibn Ahmad ibn Tulun marched out with his armies from al-Sham to Egypt. Later on, Tughj rebelled against him in Damascus. In that year too, Khaqan al-Muflihi, Bunduqa ibn Kumushjur and Ibn Kundaj left the army of Jaysh and headed to Wadi al-Qura, then on to Baghdad where al-Mu`tadid bestowed robes of honor upon them.

3314. In that year, disturbances broke out in Egypt, during which `Ali ibn Ahmad al-Madhara'i was killed. He is the father of Muhammad al-Madhara'i who is now, i.e. the year 332, under arrest in Egypt. Jaysh was arrested and his brother Harun ibn Khumarawayh was set up in his place. Jaysh had been an object of discontent because he had shown preference to his page, Najh, known as al-Tuluni, and to his brother Salama, known as al-Mu'taman. This Salama later on acted as chamberlain to a number of caliphs including al-Qahir and al-Radi, and I think he is now, i.e. the year 332, with the caliph al-Muttaqi.

3315. In the year 283 [896], Abu `Amr Miqdam ibn `Amr al-Ru`ayni died in Egypt, two days remaining from the month of Ramadan. He was a distinguished jurist and a senior follower of Malik. In that year too al-Mu`tadid appointed Yusuf ibn Ya`qub as judge in Baghdad, bestowed robes of honor on him and delegated him to the eastern side of the city.

3316. In that same year, al-Mu`tadid arrested Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib ibn Marwan al-Sarakhsi, friend of Ya`qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi. Al-Mu`tadid handed him over to his page, Badr. He sent a force of men to his house who seized all his wealth and interrogated his slave women about his treasury until they brought it all out. The total value of gold, silver and furniture seized came to one hundred and fifty thousand dinars. Ibn al-Tayyib had been market superintendent in Baghdad. His reputation as a philosopher is widely acknowledged, and he is the author of several excellent tomes on philosophy and history. His manner of execution has been the subject of dispute, as also the reason why al-Mu`tadid had him

executed. We discussed everything that has been said on this matter in our book *al-Awsat*, making it unnecessary to repeat it here.

3317. In that year, news arrived that `Amr ibn al-Layth had killed Rafi` ibn Harthama. In the year 284, the head of Rafi` was brought to Baghdad where it was exhibited on a stake for an hour then returned to the residence of government.

3318. In this year, the people of Baghdad rebelled against the government. This was because the people of Baghdad used to shout at the royal black servants: “You there, cleft one! Pour some water and empty some flour, you disobedient one! You who are long in the leg!” So the servants in the royal residence gathered together and told al-Mu`tadid about the harassments they had to endure in all alleyways, lanes and streets from the commoners, both young and old. Al-Mu`tadid then ordered a number of commoners to be arrested and whipped, so they became restless and rebellious.

3319. In that year an apparition appeared in various forms before al-Mu`tadid and in his palace. At times, he would appear as a monk with a white beard and dressed in monk’s habit; at others he appeared as a handsome youth with a black beard dressed other than in his first guise; at still others he appeared like an old man with a white beard dressed like a merchant; at yet others he would appear with sword drawn when he killed a royal servant. Doors would be securely locked but the apparition would still be visible to al-Mu`tadid, whether he sat in a room, a courtyard or elsewhere. He would appear at times on the heights of the royal residence he had built. People talked about this at great length, and the affair became very well known among both elite and commoners. Travellers carried the news to all regions, and each person gave his own version of the matter.

3320. Thus, one person would argue that this was a rebellious demon who challenged the caliph and appeared in order to aggravate him. Another would argue that this was a believing *jinni* who witnessed the evil and bloodshed being done and so appeared in order to restrain the caliph and prevent him from committing further misdeeds. Still others claimed that this was the doing of a servant of the royal household who had fallen in love with a female slave, so used a scientific trick brought about by certain drugs which he swallowed, making him invisible. But all this was mere speculation and guesswork. As his own anxieties grew, al-Mu`tadid summoned the exorcists and became ever more desperate and oppressed at heart. He then killed and drowned a number of his male and female servants and whipped or imprisoned others. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we discussed that incident and what was related from Plato in that regard. We also mentioned the story of Shaghab, mother of the caliph al-Muqtadir, and the reason why al-Mu`tadid had her thrown in jail and wanted to cut off her nose and mutilate her.

3321. In this year, news arrived of the death of Abu Laila al-Harith ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Abi Dulaf, a death inflicted by his own sword during a battle. He had been shouldering his sword when his horse stumbled and his own sword killed him. `Isa al-Nawshari removed his head and sent it to Baghdad.

3322. In the year 285 [898], Salih ibn Mudrik al-Ta'i, together with the clans of Nabhan, Sinbis and others from Tai', attacked the pilgrimage caravan, which was led by Jay' the Elder. A major battle ensued between Salih and the Tai' against Jay', at a place called Qa` al-Ajfur. The caravan scattered and the pilgrims were put to the sword, while many other pilgrims died through thirst and murder, and Jay' received many wounds. That day, the Arab nomads would chant in the *rajaz* meter:

None have ever seen a battle like that of al-Ajfur,

With people lying dead and graves being dug.

Some two million dinars were robbed from the pilgrims.

3323. In that year, i.e. 285, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad [Ibrahim al-Harbi], the jurist and Hadith master died on the western side of the city. He was eighty-five years old. He died on Monday, seven days remaining from the month of Dhu'l Hijja [January 9, 899], and was buried next to the Anbar Gate and the street called the Ram and Lion. He was a man of honesty, learning, eloquence, generosity and chastity, and lived a life of asceticism, piety and devotion to God. Yet, despite these qualities of asceticism and devotion, he was a cheerful man, witty and easy-going, and lacked any haughtiness or pride. He might say amusing things to his friends that sounded appropriate coming from him which would have sounded inappropriate coming from anyone else. He was the foremost scholar of Baghdad of his days, the wittiest of them all, the most ascetical among them, and their most authoritative source of Hadith. He delivered legal judgments to the whole people of Iraq and held an assembly each Friday in the congregational mosque on the western side of the city.

3324. Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Jabir narrated the following story: "I used to attend the circle of Ibrahim al-Harbi every Friday. Sitting together with us in that circle were two youths of exceeding beauty and handsome dress [reading *al-bazza*], sons of some merchants in the al-Karkh quarter. They dressed exactly the same as if they were two souls in one body.

Whenever they stood up, they did so in unison and the same was true when they sat down. One Friday, only one of them showed up, yellow in the face and with his eyes crestfallen. I assumed that the absence of the other may have been due to some cause which explained the demeanor of the one who was present. The following Friday, the one who was absent before showed up but not the one who had been present, but the same

yellow face and crestfallen demeanor were observed upon him too, so I concluded that this was due to their being separated because of the intimacy between them. Each Friday, the two would race each other to the circle in the mosque and whoever came first would sit down, while the other would remain standing. So I concluded that my previous guess about the true nature of their relationship was correct. One Friday, one of them appeared and sat amongst us, while the other came later and stood observing our circle, his tears choking him as I could see from the gaze in his eyes. I then saw that he was carrying in his left hand small slips of paper, one of which he then transferred to his right hand and flung it into the middle of the circle. He then slipped through the people, looking shy and embarrassed, as I and others sitting in that circle followed him with our eyes. Sitting to my right was Abu `Abdullah `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn Hawthara, then in the prime of youth.

3325. "That slip of paper then fell into the hands of Ibrahim al-Harbi, who caught it, spread it out and read it. It was his custom, whenever a piece of paper reached him which contained a request for prayer for the person who wrote it, whether sick or otherwise, to pray aloud for that person, and for those who attended his circle to murmur 'Amen' to his prayer. Having read that piece of paper, he pondered its contents carefully because he had seen the person who tossed it, then said: 'O God, bring them together, and join their two hearts, and let this be an act that draws close to You and wins Your approval.' As was customary, those present murmured 'Amen' to his prayer. He then inserted the paper between his index and thumb and tossed it to me. I contemplated what it contained, having looked out for it after I'd clearly seen the person who tossed it. In it was written:

*May God forgive a servant of His who, through his prayer,
Assisted two close friends who had always been most affectionate,*

*Until a slanderer spread a false rumor about their love,
Setting one against the other, and thus their friendship ended.*

The piece of paper stayed with me. The following Friday, the two of them attended together and were no longer yellow in the face or crestfallen, so I said to Ibn Hawthara: 'It looks as though that prayer has produced the desired response from God, and that the prayer of the master was effective, God willing.' That year, I went on pilgrimage and saw the two of them in a state of ritual purity between Mina and `Arafat. I kept seeing them being devoted to one another until they grew old. I believe that they belonged to the class of embroidered silk merchants or some other trade in al-Karkh."

3326. Al-Mas`udi said: I myself heard that story from Ibrahim ibn Jabir, the judge, before he was appointed judge. At that time, he was living in Baghdad and suffering from poverty which he used to bear up with through contentment with God, and would prefer poverty to riches. Soon thereafter, I was to meet him in Aleppo, in the province of Qinnasrin and al-`Awasim, in al-Sham. This was in the year 309 [921-2]. I found him to be the exact opposite of what he had been before. Now appointed as a judge, he valued and honored riches above poverty. I said to him: "O judge, what of that story you used to narrate about the governor of Rayy, who once told you that he was torn in mind about the status of the poor and the rich, and that you saw in your dream the Commander of the Believers `Ali ibn Abi Talib?" He said to me: "O so-and-so, how decorous is the humbleness of the rich before the poor, as a way of thanking God!" I replied: "More decorous still is the feeling of superiority by the poor over the rich, as a way of trusting in God." He said: "All creatures are subject to the providence of God and cannot escape His edicts in all that they do." Before that time, I would often hear him, while he was poor, censuring those who coveted worldly gain and

mentioning a report from `Ali to the effect that `Ali used to say: “Son of Adam, do not suffer the burden of a day yet to come on the day where you are. For, if tomorrow will not bring about your end, it will provide you with your livelihood. Know that if you were to gain something over and above your livelihood, you would be putting it in store for someone else.” Later on, he would ride on the most expensive of horses, and I was told that he had forty Tustari dresses sewn with gold and silver thread made for his wife, together with other such garments, and cut exactly to the same size, and that he left behind a great deal of wealth to be inherited by others.

3327. In that same year, i.e. 285, Abu'l `Abbas Muhammad ibn Yazid, better known as al-Mubarrad, died. This took place on Monday, two nights remaining from the month of Dhu'l Hijja [January 14, 899]. He was seventy-nine years old. He was buried in the cemeteries of Bab al-Kufa, on the western side of Baghdad. In the year 286, Muhammad ibn Yunus al-Kudaimi, the Hadith scholar, died. His patronymic was “Abu'l `Abbas”. He died on Thursday, the middle of the month of Jumada II, and was a hundred and six years old. He was buried in the cemeteries of Bab al-Kufa, on the western side. He was regarded as a notable authority on Hadith.

3328. In that year too, there was panic in Basra, caused by fear that Abu Sa`id al-Jannabi* and his followers in Bahrain might attack the city. Al-Wathiqi, i.e. Ahmad ibn Muhammad, who was in charge of Basra's military affairs, wrote to al-Mu`tadid about this, and the caliph released fourteen thousand dinars earmarked for the city's walls. These were then constructed and fortified.

3329. In that year, Abu'l Agharr Khalifa ibn al-Mubarak al-Sulami captured Salih ibn Mudrik al-Ta'i near Fayd, tricking him on his way to Mecca. The nomads had gathered together against Abu'l Agharr, to try to

save Salih from captivity, so he fought them, killed their leader, Jahnash ibn Dhayyal and a group of fighters with him, and cut off his head. When Salih ibn Mudrik learnt of the death of Jahnash, he despaired of escaping from the clutches of Abu'l Agharr. Arriving at a way station known as Manzil al-Qurashi, a page brought them food, so he snatched a knife from the page and killed himself. Abu'l Agharr then took his head and displayed it in Medinah and the pilgrims were overjoyed. On his way back, Abu'l Agharr fought a major engagement against the nomads, where he was aided by Nahrir and other commanders of the pilgrimage caravans.

3330. The nomads from Tai' and their confederates had mobilized for war. They had about three thousand foot soldiers and around the same number of cavalry. The battle lasted for three days, taking place between Ma`dan al-Qurashi and al-Hajir. The nomads were defeated and the pilgrims passed on in safety. The man who had tricked Salih ibn Mudrik for the benefit of Abu'l Agharr was Sa`id ibn `Abd al-A`la. Abu'l Agharr then entered Baghdad, preceded by the severed heads of Salih, Jahnash, and a black page of Salih, and four prisoners, who were cousins of Salih. Al-Mu`tadid that day bestowed a robe of honor on Abu'l Agharr and tied a golden collar around his neck. The heads were then displayed on the bridge, on the western side, and the prisoners were thrown into a dungeon.

3331. In that year [287/909-10] Ishaq ibn Ayyub al-`Ubaidi died. He was in charge of military affairs in the province of Diyar Rabi`a. In that year too, al-`Abbas ibn `Amr al-Ghanawi headed to Basra to fight the Qarmatians in Bahrain. In that year also, war broke out in the vicinity of Balkh between Isma`il ibn Ahmad and `Amr ibn al-Layth, and `Amr was taken prisoner. We narrated how this happened in our book *al-Awsat*.

3332. In the month of Rajab of the year 287 [July, 900], al-`Abbas ibn `Amr left Basra at the head of a large army, was joined by numerous volunteers, and headed towards the town of Hajar. Several battles ensued between al-`Abbas and Abu Sa`id al-Jannabi as a result of which some seven hundred of al-`Abbas's followers were taken prisoner or killed, not to mention those who died from thirst and sand, and the sun that burnt their bodies. Later, Abu Sa`id showed favor to al-`Abbas ibn `Amr by releasing him, and the latter headed back to al-Mu`tadid who gave him a robe of honor. Following these battles, Abu Sa`id conquered the town of Hajar after a lengthy siege. We narrated these wars in detail, as also the reason why Abu Sa`id released al-`Abbas ibn `Amr al-Ghanawi, in our book *al-Awsat*. In that work, we also recounted the history of al-`Abbas ibn `Amr, his relations with his people in Bahrain and their feelings of solidarity with him.

3333. In this year, namely 287, the Alid missionary* headed to Jurjan from Tabaristan at the head of a large army of the Dailam and others. They were met by black-bannered troops sent by Isma`il ibn Ahmad and led by Muhammad ibn Harun, and a battle took place such as had never been seen in that age. The two sides held their ground until the "whites" defeated the "blacks". But when Muhammad ibn Harun saw how valiantly the Dailam had held their line, he devised a trick whereby he fled but without breaking up his lines. The Dailam then quickly broke rank, at which point the "blacks" surrounded them and put them to the sword, killing many and wounding the missionary himself. This was because, when the missionary's troops broke rank in pursuit of booty and took no notice of him, he stood fast with a small group who defended him. The "black" troops charged him and he was heavily wounded, while his son, Zaid ibn Muhammad ibn Zaid, was taken prisoner. Muhammad, the missionary, lived on for a few days then died of his wounds and was

buried at the gate of Jurjan, where his tomb is still revered to the present day.

3334. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we gave a full account of the history and conduct of that man in Tabaristan and elsewhere, together with the story of Bakr ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Abi Dulaf, when he went to him seeking sanctuary. We also recounted in that book the history of Yahya ibn al-Husain al-Hasani al-Rassi in the Yemen and how he made common cause with Abu Sa`d ibn Ya`fur when they waged war against the Qaramita in Yemen; their relations with `Ali ibn al-Fadl, ruler of al-Mudhaikhira, his story and his death; the story of the chieftain of the La`a and master of the fortress of Nahl; the history of his [Yahya's] descendants until the present day, i.e. the year 332; how Yahya ibn al-Husain al-Rassi took up residence in the Yemeni town of Sa`da; and the history of his son Abu'l Qasim, and of his grandsons until the present day. In this book we merely mention events in brief, drawing attention to the fuller accounts of the above-mentioned events, histories and biographies to be found in our earlier works.

3335. In this year, i.e. 288 [900], al-Mu`tadid marched towards the frontiers of al-Sham in pursuit of Wasif, the royal servant, then corresponded with him, using Rashiq, known as Khuzama, as messenger. As a result, Wasif al-Baktamuri and other commanders and followers sought safe-conduct from al-Mu`tadid. When most of his followers were made prisoners, Wasif had intended to escape to Byzantine territory and to fortify himself in some mountain passes. Al-Mu`tadid had marched very rapidly from Baghdad, keeping his movements a secret, and Wasif, despite his extreme caution and close attention to his state of affairs, did not learn of the advance of al-Mu`tadid until the latter had crossed the Euphrates and was heading towards al-Sham. The bodily strength of al-

Mu`tadid did not help him after having exhausted himself in these rapid marches.

3336. Once in the midst of the frontiers of al-Sham, he left the bulk of his army behind at the Black Church*, and dispatched his commanders in pursuit of Wasif. They rode after him for fifteen miles until the cavalry vanguard caught up with him. That vanguard included Khaqan al-Muflihi, Wasif Mushkir and al-Hasan ibn `Ali Kura, with some other commanders. Wasif fought them at a place called Darb al-Jubb. When al-Mu`tadid himself came up, Wasif had been let down by his followers and his troops had dispersed, so he was taken prisoner and brought before al-Mu`tadid. The latter handed him over to Mu`nis, the royal servant, and granted safe-conduct to all Wasif's followers except for a few who had joined him from the frontier posts of al-Sham and elsewhere. Al-Mu`tadid then had the military boats torched, and carried with him from Tarsus Abu Ishaq, the mosque imam, Abu `Umayr `Adiyy ibn Ahmad ibn `Abd al-Baqi, governor of Adana, a Shami frontier town, and other naval officers like al-Nughayl and his son.

3337. Al-Mu`tadid entered Baghdad, travelling on the river, on the seventh day of Safar, in the year 288 [January 31, 901]. Ja`far ibn al-Mu`tadid, later the caliph al-Muqtadir, Badr the Elder and the rest of the army arrived by land. The roads were decorated and in their midst was Wasif the royal servant, mounted on a Bactrian camel, wearing a shirt of embroidered silk and a hooded cloak, with al-Nughayl behind him on another camel, Nughayl's son on another, and behind him on another camel a man from the al-Sham frontier known as Ibn al-Muhandis. All were dressed in red and yellow shirts, and wore hoods. Meanwhile, Khaqan al-Muflihi and other commanders were decked with necklaces and collars as a reward for their valor on the day when Wasif the royal servant was captured.

3338. Al-Mu`dadid had wanted to spare the life of Wasif, and regretted that a man of such valor, courage, subterfuge and resolution should be executed. He then said: "It is not in the character of this servant to have any master. Rather it is in his nature to be his own master." After having arrested him and put him in irons, he sent him a message, asking him if he desired anything. "Yes," he replied, "A bouquet of sweet basil which I can smell, and some books about the history of ancient kings which I can examine." When the messenger returned and informed al-Mu`dadid what he had requested, the latter ordered his requests to be granted and commanded someone to observe him as he read these books and which chapters in particular he was interested in. He was told that Wasif was reading with great attention the biographies of ancient kings, their wars and their calamities, to the exclusion of all other books that had been sent to him. Al-Mu`dadid was amazed and said: "He is making it easier for himself to bear the thought of death."

3339. In that year, Abu `Ubaidullah Muhammad ibn Abi'l Saj died in Adharbaijan. His followers and clients quarrelled. Some inclined towards his brother Yusuf ibn Abi'l Saj* while others favored his son Diyudad. In that year too, i.e. the year 288, Abu `Ali Bishr ibn Musa ibn Salih ibn Shaykh ibn `Umayra, the Hadith master, died, aged seventy-eight, and was buried on the western side, in the cemeteries of Bab al-Tibn.

3340. In this year, `Amr ibn al-Layth was led into Baghdad in the month of Jumada I, brought in by the caliph's messenger, `Abdullah ibn al-Fath. `Amr was paraded around on a Bactrian camel, and made to wear a shirt of embroidered silk. Behind him rode Badr and the vizier al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah and the rest of the army. They led him into the palace of al-Thurayya, where al-Mu`dadid looked him over, then he was thrown into the dungeons.

3341. It was then that the mercenary troops belonging to Tahir ibn Muhammad ibn `Amr ibn al-Layth rose in rebellion, in fury at what had happened to his grandfather, `Amr. The mercenaries in the territory of al-Ahwaz joined Tahir and left the frontiers of Faris, causing much turmoil. Al-Mu`tadid then sent `Abdullah ibn al-Fath and Ashnas to Isma`il* [ibn Ahmad ibn Saman] carrying gifts which included a full length robe of embroidered silk woven with gold thread and studded with precious stones, a golden belt studded with precious stones, other jewelry and three hundred thousand dinars to be distributed to his troops, which he was asked to send to Sijistan to fight Tahir ibn Muhammad ibn `Amr ibn al-Layth. Al-Mu`tadid also ordered `Abdullah ibn al-Fath to carry with him as he marched the land tax of the Jibal province, which he was passing through, amounting to ten million dirhams, and to add these to the three hundred thousand dinars. Meanwhile, Badr, the caliph's royal servant, headed that year to the land of Faris with the caliphal army, reached Shiraz and expelled the mercenary troops.

3342. On the first day of Muharram, a Tuesday, of the year 289 [December 16, 901], Wasif, the royal servant, died. His body without its head was taken out and crucified on the bridge. The royal servants had asked al-Mu`tadid if they could cover his private parts and he agreed. So the body was clothed with a new garment and sewn from the navel to the knees while the body itself was smeared with aloes and other fixative unguents to stiffen his body parts. The body remained thus exhibited on the bridge and without deteriorating until the year 300 or so, during the caliphate of al-Muqtadir. The army and commoners then became restive, and the commoners, as a prank, proceeded to take him down from the cross and would say: "It is our duty, now that the royal servant Abu `Ali Wasif has been our patient neighbor for so long, to make sure he does not decay and rot on this cross." So they wrapped him in someone's clothes

and carried him on their shoulders. There were about a hundred thousand of them, and they walked around dancing and singing and shouting: “Al-Ustadh! Al-Ustadh!”* Tiring of this, they then threw him into the Tigris and many of them drowned that day, for as they swam out to bid him farewell many were carried away by the current and drowned.

3343. In that year, a number of Qarmatians in the Kufa district were brought in as prisoners, among them a man called Ibn Abi al-Fawaris. They were led in on camels and al-Mu`tadid ordered Ibn Abi al-Fawaris executed, after his arms and legs had been cut off. He was put on a cross next to Wasif but was later transferred to the quarter called Kana`is, next to al-Yasiriyya, on the western side. There, he was crucified along with other Qarmatians.

3344. Among the people of Baghdad many false and disturbing rumors circulated about Ibn Abi`l Fawaris. Thus, the commoners alleged that when he was brought forward to have his head cut off, he said to one of the commoners who was there: “Here is my turban for you to keep. I shall return in forty days.” Each day a number of commoners would gather below his cross, counting the days, quarreling and arguing with one another in the streets. When forty days had passed, and their tumult had increased, they gathered together and one person would say: “Here’s his body!” while another would say: “He has passed by, because the caliph killed and crucified another man in his stead so as to avoid civil strife!” The disputes grew among the people to the point where it became necessary to disperse them, at which point the arguments about him subsided.

3345. A sum of money had arrived from Muhammad ibn Zaid in Tabaristan to be distributed in secret among the descendants of `Ali ibn Abi Talib. This was revealed to al-Mu`tadid who ordered the messenger carrying that money to be brought into his presence, and berated him for

doing so in secret. He ordered him to distribute the money openly and showed favor to the Talibids.

3346. The reason he did so stemmed from nearness in kinship. The following was told to me in Antioch by Abu'l Hasan Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Warraq al-Antaki, the jurist known as Ibn al-Ghanawi: "Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Abi `Abbad, the caliph's companion, told me the following story: 'While al-Mu`tadid was still in his father's prison, he had a vision in which he saw an old man sitting on the bank of the Tigris and stretching his hand forward to the waters of the river. Each time he scooped the water with his hand, the Tigris would dry up, and each time he let the water run out through his fingers the Tigris would resume its course. When I asked who that old man was, I was told it was `Ali ibn Abi Talib. So I got up and greeted him and he said to me: 'O Ahmad, you shall gain supreme power so do not harass or harm my descendants.' I replied: 'I hear and obey, O Commander of the Believers.'"

3347. The people were overjoyed when their land-tax was postponed, a gesture of goodwill by al-Mu`tadid. The poets composed many verses about this and extolled that act. Among poets who described that action well was Yahya ibn `Ali al-Munajjim who recited:

*O you who have revived nobility in its purest form
And renewed a decaying kingship,
You who restored the foundation of religion amongst us,
Following times of trouble,
You have outstripped all other kings, surpassing them all,
As the fast horse surpasses all others in a race.
May you be joyous on this feast day of Nawruz,
Where you gained thanks in addition to a deed of virtue,
For you rightly ordered to be postponed,
What they had brought forward.*

He also recited:

*The day of your Nawruz is a single day,
Which cannot be delayed,
Starting in June,
It is always completed in eleven months.*

3348. Qatr al-Nada, daughter of Khumarawayh, arrived in Baghdad with Ibn al-Jassas in the month of Dhu'l Hijja of the year 281. About that event, `Ali ibn al-`Abbas al-Rumi recited:

*O Lord of the Arabs to whom was wedded,
In good fortune and blessings, the Lady of non-Arabs,
Be happy with her, and she with you,
For she has attained far above what anyone can desire or aspire to.
She has won what fills her eyes with joy,
Her heart with nobility, and her hands with liberality.
The sun of the morning is wed to the full moon of night,
And with them all darkness has vanished from this world.*

3349. When `Amr ibn al-Layth entered Baghdad from the direction of the old mosque, raising his hands in prayer and mounted on a Bactrian, i.e. double-humped camel, he had once presented that same breed of camels, along with other presents, to al-Mu`tadid before he was captured.

Regarding this, al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Fahm composed the following verses:

*Have you not observed the vagaries of Time,
And how at times they are hard, at others easy?
None was more noble or powerful than al-Saffar,
As he marched back and forth, leading his armies.
He gave them a gift of camels but knew not,
That he himself would, one day, be mounted on one as a prisoner.*

On the same subject, `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Bassam recited:

*You who are deluded by this world,
 Have you not observed `Amr?
 He was made to wear a hood of disgrace,
 To humiliate and dishonor him.
 There he was, raising his hands and praying to God,
 In silence and aloud,
 In order to save him from death,
 And praying to go back to being a coppersmith.*

3350. When al-Mu`tadid learnt that Muhammad ibn Harun had killed Muhammad ibn Zaid, the Alid, he expressed disapproval and sorrow at his death. Nasr ibn Ahmad*, ruler of lands beyond the Oxus, died in the year 279 [892-3], during the caliphate of al-Mu`tadid, and was succeeded by his brother Isma`il ibn Ahmad. In the year 280, Ahmad ibn Abi Tahir, the state secretary and author of the *History of Baghdad*, died. In that year too Ahmad ibn Muhammad, the judge and Hadith scholar, died.

3351. In the year 281 [894-5], Abu Bakr `Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Abi'l Dunya al-Qurashi, died in the month of Muharram. He was the tutor of the future caliph al-Muktafi, and author of several works devoted to the ascetical life and similar topics. In the year 282, Abu Sahl Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Razi, the judge and Hadith scholar died. We mention the death of these figures because they are historical personalities from whom people acquired sound knowledge of the legacy and traditions of the Prophet.

3352. In the year 285 [898], the following personalities died in Baghdad: `Ubaidullah ibn Sharik, the Hadith scholar, Bakr ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Abi Dulaf in Tabaristan, and Muhammad ibn al-Husain ibn al-Junaid. In the year 288 [900], Abu `Ali Bishr ibn Musa ibn Salih ibn Shaikh ibn `Umaira died in Baghdad. His father, Abu Muhammad Musa ibn Salih ibn Shaikh ibn `Umaira al-Asadi, had died in the year 257, in the

caliphate of al-Mu`tamid, aged ninety and some years, and the son died aged ninety-nine. In that same year, Abu'l Muthanna Mu`adh ibn al-Muthanna ibn Mu`adh al-`Anbari died, in the caliphate of al-Mu`tadid.

3353. Al-Mas`udi said: In our two works *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, we recorded the deaths of jurists, Hadith scholars and other famous thinkers and men of letters. In this work, we merely mention them in passing and draw attention to what we have written before.

3354. Al-Mu`tadid died, four hours having passed from the night of Monday, eight days remaining from the month of Rabi` II, in the year 289 [March 5, 902]. He died in his palace, known as al-Hasani, in Baghdad. It is claimed that he died through a poison given to him by Isma`il ibn Bulbul, before al-Mu`tadid had him executed, and that the poison spread slowly through his body. Others say that his body was utterly exhausted when he marched out against Wasif the royal servant, as described above. Still others allege that one of his female servants poisoned him in a towel she gave him to dry himself, and yet other accounts are found of his death which we have decided to ignore. In his will, he had stipulated that he wanted to be buried in the house of Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir on the western side, in a residence called the House of Marble.

3355. When he became unconscious and near death, they were uncertain that he had actually died. A physician then came near and took the pulse of some parts of his body as he lay in the throes of death. Al-Mu`tadid, in disgust, kicked the physician who rolled away to a distance of several *dhira`*s and it is said that that physician died as a result of that kick. Then al-Mu`tadid died instantly. As he was dying, he heard a hubbub, opened his eyes and indicated with his hand as if inquiring about the cause of it. Mu`nis the royal servant said to him: "My Lord, the troops created a disturbance in the house of al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah so we paid them their salaries." He glowered and growled even while dying and the people

standing around almost died from awe of him. His body was then carried to the house of Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Tahir for burial.

3356. Al-Mas`udi said: Historical reports exist about al-Mu`tadid, his conduct, wars and expeditions other than what we mentioned above.

These we mentioned at length, selecting their choicest parts, in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*.

Chapter 124

An account of the caliphate of al-Muktafi Billah

3357. Al-Muktafi Billah, `Ali ibn Ahmad al-Mu`tadid, received the oath of homage on the day his father, al-Mu`tadid, died. This was on Monday, eight days remaining from the month of Rabi` II, in the year 289. The oath of homage was taken on his behalf by al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah, al-Muktafi being at that time in al-Raqqa. He was then twenty and some years old. His patronymic was "Abu Muhammad." He arrived in Baghdad from al-Raqqa on Monday, the seventh of Jumada II, in the year 289 [May 19, 902]. He arrived by river and resided at the Hasani palace on the Tigris. He died on Sunday, on the thirteenth day of Dhu'l Qa`da, in the year 295 [August 14, 908], aged thirty-one years and three months. His caliphate lasted six years, seven months and twenty-two days, or else, in another version, six years, six months and sixteen days, because of differences in dating among people. God knows best.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

3358. Until the present time, i.e. the year 332, which is during the caliphate of al-Muttaqi, no caliph called `Ali had assumed the caliphate except `Ali ibn Abi Talib and al-Muktafi. Arriving at the Hasani palace the day he reached Baghdad, al-Muktafi bestowed a robe of honor on al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah but not on any military commander. He ordered the dungeons constructed by al-Mu`tadid as torture chambers to be

demolished and all prisoners held in them to be released. He further ordered that all houses sequestered by al-Mu`tadid in order to install his dungeons to be restored to their owners, and gave the owners money. As a result, the hearts of his subjects were drawn to him and many prayed for his wellbeing. Al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah and Fatik, his client, gained great influence over him. When al-Qasim died, his new vizier, al-`Abbas ibn al-Hasan and Fatik, were the most influential figures in the court.

3359. Al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah had caused the downfall of Muhammad ibn Ghalib al-Isbahani, who was in charge of the Bureau of Correspondence, and a man of wide knowledge. He further caused the downfall of Muhammad ibn Bashshar and of Ibn Manara, having heard something they'd said or did. He put them in chains and sent them down to Basra, and nothing has been heard of them since. Regarding this incident, `Ali ibn Bassam recited:

We excused you for killing Muslims and said:

This is due to enmity among religions.

But this Manari [Ibn Manara]: what's his crime?

*The two of you have always had the same religion.**

3360. The tension between al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah and Badr had eased before this date but when al-Muktafi became caliph al-Qasim incited him against Badr, and some military commanders were dissatisfied with Badr. These then went to see the caliph, and Badr headed to Wasit. Al-Qasim brought al-Muktafi out to the Diala river where they camped. Al-Qasim then proceeded to inflame the heart of al-Muktafi in every possible manner of evil that he could by inciting his enmity towards Badr. Al-Qasim then summoned Abu Khazim, the judge, a man of learning and piety, and ordered him on behalf of the caliph to go and see Badr, offer him safe-conduct, bring him back with him and assure him that the caliph was willing to grant him all he wished. Abu Khazim said: "I would not

carry such a message from the Commander of the Believers unless I hear it from him personally.”

3361. When Abu Khazim refused to carry the message, al-Qasim summoned Abu `Umar Muhammad ibn Yusuf, the judge, and sent him off to Badr in a small boat. Abu `Umar gave him the safe-conduct and all necessary assurances and solemn covenants on behalf of al-Muktafi, and guaranteed that he would not release his hand from his until they see the Commander of the Believers. So Badr left his troops and went on board with the judge and they went upriver. Nearing al-Mada'in and al-Sib, a number of royal servants met them and surrounded the boat, while Abu `Umar left him alone and went on board another fast boat. As Badr approached the river bank, he asked the royal servants to allow him to pray two *rak`as*. This took place on Friday, the sixth of Ramadan in the year 289 [August 14, 902], in mid afternoon. They allowed him to pray, and as he was performing his second *rak`a*, they cut off his head and carried it to al-Muktafi. When the head was placed before the caliph, he bowed in prayer and said: “Now I can taste the sweetness of life and of the caliphate!” Al-Muktafi then entered Baghdad on Monday, the eighth day of Ramadan.

3362. Regarding that judge Muhammad ibn Yusuf and his solemn assurances to Badr on behalf of al-Muktafi, a poet recited:

Tell that judge of Baghdad:

How did you find it licit to allow the Emir's head to be cut off,

After having given him all solemn assurances,

And a safe conduct, penned in an edict?

What happened to your grave oath,

An oath that God declares to be brazenly false?

What about the oath you took that you'd divorce your wife thrice,

And renounce any other option?

*And what about your telling him that your hands will not leave his,
 Until you see the king on his throne?
 You shameless one! You biggest liar in this community!
 You perjurer!
 This is not the deed of a judge,
 And even bridge toll keepers cannot match your misdeed!
 He whom you killed passed away in Ramadan,
 While prostrate in prayer after pronouncing "God is great."
 What crime have you committed on that sacred Friday
 In the best, the very best of months!
 Save your answer for that Fairest Judge,
 After your interrogation by the two angels in the tomb.
 O clan of Yusuf ibn Ya`qub, the people of Baghdad
 Have all been deceived by you.
 May God scatter your union, and may He permit me to live to witness
 Your humiliation, after having humiliated the vizier!
 You are, one and all, worthy to be held as ransom,
 For Abu Khazim, that honest man in all his affairs.*

3363. Badr was born free. His full name is Badr ibn Khurr, a client of al-Mutawakkil. He began his career in the service of Nashi', servant of al-Muwaffaq and in charge of his mounts. He then entered the service of al-Mu`tadid and became close to his heart, and served him actively and efficiently in the days of al-Muwaffaq. Al-Mu`tadid had another royal servant called Fatik, who was the most senior among his servants. Fatik, however, lost the caliph's affection and dropped in rank. This was because al-Mu`tadid was once incensed with one of his female slaves and ordered her to be sold, so Fatik secretly arranged for someone to buy her for him. This act lost him the caliph's favor when he learnt of it. Meanwhile, Badr increased in influence and rank to the point where

anyone who wanted something from al-Mu`tadid would need to go through him, and poets would join the eulogies of the caliph with those of Badr. So too was the case with people who wished to speak to the caliph, except in a formal speech.

3364. Al-Mas`udi said: I was told the following story in Baghdad by Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Yahya al-Suli, the chess player: "I had once been promised something by al-Mu`tadid but only obtained what I wanted when I composed a poem in which I mentioned Badr. The poem began:

You who have abandoned me in jest, but not seriously:

Is the reward of the lover to be met with a rebuff?

The Commander of the Believers, al-Mu`tadid,

Is an ocean of liberality, unmatched by anyone,

While "Father of the Star" [Badr], to him who seeks him,

Is a stream by which one comes to the ocean.

The feast of al-Fitr is past and now it is the feast of al-Adha,

And time it is that this promise, now distant, should draw near.

I only claim that the promise to me be kept because

I am not sure it was given by the placing of hands,

But the spirit of man loves haste,

Whether a noble man gives or promises.

The caliph laughed and ordered that what he promised me should be fulfilled."

3365. Muhammad ibn al-Nadim told us the following in Baghdad: "I once heard al-Mu`tadid saying: 'I disdain to offer meager gifts. Were the riches of the entire world to be mine, they would not suffice to satisfy my liberality. Yet people claim I am miserly. Do they not know that I interposed "Father of the Star" between me and them? I know exactly how much he spends every single day. Had I been a miser, I would not have given him the freedom to do so.'"

3366. Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn Muhammad al-Antaki, the jurist and paper seller, told me the following story in the city of Antioch: "Ibrahim ibn Muhammad the state secretary>Yahya ibn `Ali al-Munajjim, the boon companion, who said: 'I was one day in the presence of al-Mu`tadid, who was frowning. When he glimpsed Badr from afar, he smiled and said: 'O Yahya, which poet composed the following line:

*His face is an intercessor who wipes away his misdeeds from the hearts,
A noble man, whenever he intercedes?*

I replied: 'The poet is al-Hakam ibn Qanbar al-Mazini al-Basri.' He said: 'Bravo! Recite that poem to me.' I recited:

*Woe to him who caused my slumber to fly away, and rebuffed me,
Causing my heart to be heaped with torment upon torment.*

It is as if the sun shone in beauty from the sides of his body,

Or as if the full moon appeared through the buttonholes of his garment.

He confronts him who loves him even when his sins

Have multiplied, for he is forgiven all his misdeeds.

His face is an intercessor who wipes away his misdeeds from the hearts,

A noble man, whenever he intercedes.

3367. He added: "The phrase 'Or as if the full moon appeared from the buttonholes of his garment' was taken over by Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn al-Farran al-Kufi who composed the following lines:

He came into view, as if the full moon,

Had appeared from the buttonholes of his garment.

His fingers wipe the musk from the sweat of his forehead,

Out of affectation."

3368. In the year 289 [902] the leader of the Qarmatians appeared in al-Sham, and his wars against Tughj and the Egyptian armies are well known and have been recorded in our earlier works. We also dealt with the expedition of al-Muktafi to al-Raqqa and his capturing the Qarmatian

in the year 291[903-4]. We further reported the activities of Zikrawayh ibn Mihrawayh and his attack on the pilgrimage caravan in the year 294 [906-7] until he was killed and his body brought to Baghdad.

3369. Al-Mas`udi said: The exchange of prisoners between Muslims and Byzantines, known as the “Exchange of Treachery,” took place in the month of Dhu`l Qa`da, in the year 292 [September 905]. The Byzantines then treacherously broke the terms of that exchange. The “Completed Exchange” took place in Al-Lamis between the two sides and was finally concluded in Shawwal of the year 295 [July, 908]. The officer in charge on both occasions was Rustam, who commanded the Sham frontiers. The total number of Muslims recovered in the exchange organized by Ibn Tughan in the year 283, reported above, came to 2495, both male and female. The total number of Muslims in the “Exchange of Treachery” came to 2154, while their number in the “Completed Exchange” was 2842.

3370. When al-Muktafi died, he left behind in his treasuries eight million gold dinars and twenty-five million silver dirhams, and nine thousand horses, mules, fast camels and other mounts, and was withal a miserly and tightfisted person.

3371. Abu`l Hasan Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Munajjim, known as Ibn al-Nadim, was a most skillful polemicist and theologian, and a prominent Mu`tazilite, about whose brother, `Ali ibn Yahya, Abu Haffan recited:

Springtime comes around each year at a specific time,

But Ibn Yahya is in all seasons like the spring.

He is one for whom acts of liberality are like a market,

Where he buys at all times, and we sell.

Abu`l Hasan Ahmad said: “The food presented to al-Muktafi each day was of ten varieties, with a roasted young goat each Friday and three trays of sweetmeats, which would be presented to him continuously. He

appointed a servant to oversee his food and to count what remains over from the bread. If broken, the bread would be reused for broth while if still whole it would be presented to him again the following day. He did the same with cold meats and sweets.”

3372. Al-Muktafi ordered that a palace be built for him in the quarter called al-Shammasiyya, near Qutrull. To build that palace many estates and farms in that area were seized without any compensation to their owners, and many were those who cursed him. That act resembled what his father al-Mu`tadid had done when he built his dungeons.

3373. His vizier, al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah, was a man of awe-inspiring appearance, courageous and a blood-shedder. Both the high and the low went in fear of him, and none could be sure that he would receive any favors from him. He died on the night of Wednesday, the tenth of Rabi` II, in the year 291 [March 1, 904]. He was thirty and some years old. At his death, a literary man, who I believe was `Abdullah ibn al-Husain ibn Sa`d, composed the following verses:

We drank the night the vizier died,

And, my friends, we'll drink on the third day that follows his death.

May God not sanctify his bones,

And may God not bless his heir.

3374. Among those whom al-Qasim murdered was `Abd al-Wahid ibn al-Muwaffaq. He had been in prison under the supervision of Mu`nis al-Fahl. Al-Qasim sent word to Mu`nis ordering him to cut off his head. This took place in the days of al-Muktafi. Al-Mu`tadid had been very fond of `Abd al-Wahid and was very partial towards him. `Abd al-Wahid had no caliphal ambitions and was not interested in any position of power. His sole interest was to cavort with young men. Al-Muktafi was told that he had been corresponding with some pages in the royal household so he delegated someone to spy on him and report his words

when drunk. He was heard, when intoxicated, reciting the verses of al-`Attabi:

*A woman of the tribe of Bahila blames me for disdainning riches,
A woman whom Time has deprived of both her freshness and her
maturity.*

She saw women around her walking and seductive,

Their necks [reading a`naqiha] covered with precious collars.

Will it please you if I gain what Ja`far gained from supreme power,

Or what Yahya ibn Khalid gained?*

Or that the Commander of the Believers should choke the life out of me,

As he did to them, using sharp swords?

Leave me to die a peaceful death,

Without suffering such a fate.

Great officers of state are always in danger

Of ending up in the stomachs of lions.

So he who aspires to reach the heights

Will meet with all kinds of death or calamity.

One of his boon companions, inebriated, said to him: "My lord, where do you stand as regards the verse quoted by Yazid ibn al-Muhallab:

I held back, seeking my life to continue as it was,

But found no life better for me than to go forward?"

`Abd al-Wahid replied: "Rubbish! You miss my point, and Ibn al-

Muhallab missed the point and the poet who composed that line also

missed it. But Abu Fir`awn al-Taimi was right when he recited..." The

boon companion asked: "When he recited what?" He replied:

There's nothing wrong with me in the thick of battle

Except that I fear my crock [skull] will be shattered.

Had I been able to buy its like from the market,

When fighting in battle, I would not care if I went forward.

3375. When al-Muktafi heard about that exchange, he laughed and said: “I told al-Qasim my uncle `Abd al-Wahid has no designs on the caliphate. This kind of talk comes from someone whose sole interest resides in his penis and stomach and some hairless youth to hug, and in dog fights, ram fights and cock fights. Send my uncle such and such a sum of money.” Al-Qasim, however, kept inciting the caliph against `Abd al-Wahid until he had him killed. When al-Qasim died and it became clear that he was behind the killing of `Abd al-Wahid, al-Muktafi wanted to dig up the grave of al-Qasim and have his body whipped and burnt. But other versions of this incident are also found, and God knows best.

3375. Among those whom al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah murdered was the poet `Ali ibn al-`Abbas ibn Juraij al-Rumi*, who was born in Baghdad and died there. It is alleged that he died from a poisoned barley cake. Ibn al-Rumi was a most accomplished and original poet, equally talented in both long and short poems, and very well grounded in religious doctrines. In fact, poetry was the least of his skills. Among his superior and perspicacious verses are the following:

I see Time wounding, then dressing the wound:

It compensates, diverts and causes forgetfulness.

My soul refuses to feel anguish for any loss:

Sufficient to me is the sorrow of losing my soul [reading nafsi]

3377. Among his most unusual verses, in which he evokes the doctrines of Greek philosophers and distinguished poets of earlier times are the verses which occur in his eulogy of Sa`id ibn Makhlad:

It is because the world gives notice of its end,

That a baby cries at birth.

Otherwise, why should he cry in it,

When it is far wider and more expansive than where he had been before?

3378. Among his subtle and well-crafted verses where he calls to mind an ingenious idea, arranged as if by a polemicist or a skillful theologian, are the following:

*When you defend in argument an obscure point,
This diminishes the counter-argument of your diligent adversary.
The minds of those who are listening are too limited to grasp the point,
So the glib man is judged by them to have overcome the real scholar.*

3379. Among his excellent verses are those where he describes contentment:

*If one day you wish to discover how deceptive base appetites can be,
Eat all you want of sour and sweet food until you turn away,
And copulate all you want with some beautiful woman in private, until
you abstain,
Yet how quickly has the attainment of your desire made you forget what
you no longer desire!*

Or else:

*May my father be ransom for the Joseph-like beauty of your face!
You who are a match for passion, and more than a match.
In your face are found roses and narcissus:
How unusual is the conjoining of winter and summer!*

Or his verses on *raziqi* grapes:

*The raziqi is slim in the waist,
Like repositories of crystal.
Softer to the touch than silk,
And its aroma is like the rose called juri.
Had it been something that lasts through time,
They would have used it as earrings for girls with beautiful eyes.*

3380. There are charming stories of Ibn al-Rumi with the vizier al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah, with Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn Sulaiman al-Akhfash, the

grammarians, and with Abu Ishaq al-Zajaj, the grammarian. His dominant humor was melancholy. He was a glutton with a ravenous appetite, and stories are reported about him with Abu Sahl Isma`il ibn `Ali al-Nawbakhti and others of the Nawbakht family* which illustrate the qualities of character mentioned in brief, above.

3381. In the year 290, `Abdullah ibn Ahmad ibn Hanbal died. This occurred on Saturday, ten days remaining from the month of Jumada II [May 20, 903]. In the year 291, and on Saturday, thirteen nights remaining from the month of Jumada II [May 5, 904], Abu'l `Abbas Ahmad ibn Yahya, known as Tha`lab*, died, and was buried in the cemeteries near al-Sham Gate, in a chamber bought for him. He left behind twenty-one thousand dirhams, two thousand dinars, and merchandize in the street of al-Sham Gate worth three thousand dinars. While yet a mere youth, Ahmad ibn Yahya was much esteemed by scholars, and as he grew older he became the foremost scholar in his specialty. His only surviving relative was a daughter of his son, so his wealth devolved upon her. He and Muhammad al-Mubarrad were the two most outstanding literary scholars of their own and all previous ages. The two of them were described as follows by a modernist poet:

*O you student of knowledge, do not be ignorant,
And seek shelter with al-Mubarrad or with Tha`lab.
With these two you will find all the knowledge of mankind,
So do not act like a mangy camel.
The sciences of man are associated with these two men,
In both east and west.*

3382. Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Mubarrad enjoyed debating Ahmad ibn Yahya Tha`lab as often as possible, whereas Tha`lab was reluctant to do so. Abu'l Qasim Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn Hamdan al-Mawsili, the jurist, a friend of both men, recounted the following: "I once asked Abu

ʿAbdullah al-Dinawari, son in law of Thaʿlab: ‘Why does Thaʿlab refuse to debate al-Mubarrad?’ He replied: ‘Al-Mubarrad is a man who has a good turn of phrase, a subtle way of expressing his ideas, an eloquent tongue and is very articulate, whereas the style of Thaʿlab is that of a scholastic teacher. If they meet in an assembly, al-Mubarrad will be judged the winner on appearances until the hidden truth is known.’” Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Bashshar al-Anbari, the grammarian, told me that Abu ʿAbdullah al-Dinawari used to visit al-Mubarrad in order to read to him the book of Sibawayh.* Thaʿlab would blame him for doing so but that did not stop him. It is said that Thaʿlab died in the year 292.

3383. In this year, i.e. 291, Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Jadhuʿi, the judge, died. Strange stories are told about his sectarian views which we described, along with the anecdotes told about him and his arrogance, in our book *al-Awsat*. In the year 292, Abu Khazim ʿAbd al-ʿAziz ibn ʿAbd al-Hamid, the judge, died in Baghdad. This took place on Thursday, the seventh of Jumada II [April 16, 905], and he was ninety and some years old.

3384. In this year al-Khaliji came to dominate Egypt. In it too, the great fire broke out, and some three hundred shops and more were burnt in the Bab al-Taq quarter. Ibn al-Khaliji was captured in the year 293 [906], and was taken to Baghdad and publicly humiliated. Before him were led twenty-four of his followers, among whom was Sandal al-Muzahimi, the black royal servant. This took place in the middle of Ramadan, of that year [July 10, 906]. In the year 294, Musa ibn Harun ibn ʿAbdullah ibn Marwan, the cloth merchant and Hadith scholar known as al-Hammal, died in Baghdad. This occurred on Thursday, eleven days remaining from the month of Shaʿban [June 3, 907]. His patronymic was “Abu ʿImran.”

He was eighty and some years old and was buried in the cemeteries of the Harb Gate, next to Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

3385. Earlier on in this work, we apologized for including the deaths of these venerable scholars, since people differ widely in what they seek by way of useful information. Thus, it may happen that this book might fall into the hands of one who has no interest in its contents, and who is solely interested in knowing the death dates of these distinguished scholars.

3386. Abu Muslim Ibrahim ibn `Abdullah al-Kajji al-Basri, the Hadith scholar, died in Muharram of the year 292, aged ninety-two. He was born in Ramadan in the year 200. As mentioned above regarding the dispute as to his date of death, Abu'l `Abbas Ahmad ibn Yahya Tha`lab died in this year at the same age as Abu Muslim. Tha`lab had grown deaf and his deafness grew worse before he died, to the point where any person conversing with him had to write what he wished to say to him on a slip of paper.

3387. Muhammad ibn Yahya al-Suli, the chess player, recounted the following story: "One day we were eating in the presence of al-Muktafi. Placed before us were fried doughnuts that had previously been set before him. They were exceedingly delicate, the dough was wonderfully thin and crisp, and they were cooked with consummate skill. Al-Muktafi asked: 'Have these been described by poets?' Yahya ibn `Ali said: 'Yes, my uncle Ahmad ibn Yahya composed the following:

*Doughnuts stuffed with almonds,
And with cane sugar, packed tight like a banana,
They swim in the heat of walnut oil.
I was delighted when they fell into my hands,
As delighted as `Abbas when victory was near.*

I too recited to him the line of Ibn al-Rumi:

Thereafter came doughnuts, exceedingly fine.

3388. The caliph said: ‘But this line must have a beginning, so recite that whole poem to me.’ So I recited that entire poem by Ibn al-Rumi:

*A roasted sheep, yellow like a dinar,
In both value and color, conducted to you like a bride by a youth.
It grew in size till it appeared like a goose,
Then settled down until its skin almost cracked open.
Bread in gravy then began to rain down in plenty upon us,
And the core of its almonds was found to be of sugar.
Wonderful was that sky, and how it kept pouring down,
And wonderful was that earth, and how it kept being soaked with rain!
What a beauty it was above that table,
With its oil to the front, gurgling while it melted!
We kept scraping its skin from its flesh,
As gold is scraped from silver.
Before it had arrived there were some dishes of meat broth,
Like gardens in bloom, and such as meals should start with,
And pastries, all embroidered, like white maidens,
Both partly clothed and veiled.
Thereafter came doughnuts, exceedingly fine,
Pleasing to those who sported with them, and pleasing to the gullet,
With faces laughing at the sugar candy on top,
And tears pouring down from eyes alongside its dripping oil.*

Al-Muktafi liked the poem and asked me to write it down for him which I did.”

3389. Muhammad ibn Yahya al-Suli said: “One day, about a month later, we were having a meal in his presence when a doughnut stuffed with almonds [*luzinaj*] was served to us. Al-Muktafi asked: “Did Ibn al-Rumi

describe the *luzinaj*?" I replied: "Yes." He said: "Recite that poem to me." I recited:

*Let not a luzinaj call me mistaken in your estimation,
For whenever it appears, it causes admiration or wonder.
Desire for it has not been able to shut the gates that lead to it,
Nor does its distinction refuse to be hidden.
Had it wished to penetrate a rock,
Its aroma would make easy its passage.
It rotates in its bowl, exhaling its fragrance,
Rotations for which its oil acts as pivot.
Its sight complements the experience of tasting it,
Just as something beautiful complements something sweet-tasting,
Or else like a beautiful person singing a beautiful song, a perfect
combination,
Thus becoming both seductive and enchanting to hear.
Its stuffing is compact,
Yet its skin is more delicate than the eastern breeze.
It is as if its garment has been sewn,
From drops of treacle arrayed like domes upon it.
You would imagine, from the thinness of its skin,
That it has the same wings as the grasshopper.
If, from its pastry, a mouth had been fashioned,
It would be the brightest and coolest of mouths
Of every white maiden that a young man
Wishes to hold in the palm of his hand.
Dipped in oil, transparent, hidden,
It is gray-colored, resembling bluish gray.
The almonds had been tasted before making it,
But no bitter almond ever passed by the taster without his rejecting it.*

*Its sugar was reviewed by experts in sugar,
And in their review they attained to perfection in their craft.
Neither, when an eye falls upon it, will the eye turn away,
Nor, when a molar tooth mounts upon it, will that tooth move away.
Al-Muktafi learnt that poem by heart and used to recite it.”*

3390. Among the verses composed by al-Muktafi himself, the following have been admired:

*I've fallen in love, so hold your tongue, with a slave woman,
Who resembles the sun, or even more than the sun.
Her beauty is of the highest kind, so seeing her
Is my lucky day, and not seeing her is my day of evil omen.*

Or else:

*Let your soul attain all its desires,
And it will soon be cured.
This life lasts but an hour,
An hour in which you find yourself, but which quickly passes.
Whoever blames a lover, seeking to guide him aright,
Will fall silent.*

Or else:

*Whom can I find to understand what I suffer?
One who knows the meaning of ardent love and passion?
He is my slave but my love for him,
Has indeed made me his slave.
I can free him from his enslavement,
But cannot free myself from loving him.*

3391. Abu `Abdullah Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn `Arafa, the grammarian known as Niftawayh>Abu Muhammad `Abdullah ibn Hamdun, who said: “One day we were discussing the various kinds of wines in the presence of al-Muktafi and ended up by discussing the wine

called *Dushab* when its seeds and molasses are of the best quality. Before us was a large bowl or melting pot, so I remembered the verse of Ibn al-Rumi. When about to recite it, al-Muktafi broke in and asked: ‘Do any of you remember any verse composed about *Dushab* wine?’ So I recited to him the verses of Ibn al-Rumi:

*If you choose its best seeds and molasses,
And you do a good job of beating and soaking it,
Then keep it long in its vessel,
And you will drink something as good as babili wine.*

Al-Muktafi said: ‘God curse him, how greedy he is! He made me long to drink *dushab* today!’

3392. “Food was then served, and before us was placed a very large tray containing a wheat and meat porridge, in the middle of which was something resembling a huge vessel full of chicken fat. I smiled as I remembered the story of Harun al-Rashid and Aban, the Qur’an reciter. Al-Muktafi noticed me and said: ‘O Abu `Abdullah, why are you smiling?’ I replied: ‘A story I just remembered about porridge, O Commander of the Believers, and about chicken fat, that happened to your ancestor al-Rashid.’ ‘What’s the story?’ he asked. ‘Yes, O Commander of the Believers. Al-`Utbi and al-Mada’ini state that Aban was once lunching with al-Rashid. They served a remarkable porridge in the middle of which was a huge vessel full of chicken fat, like this one. Aban said: ‘I longed to taste that mound of chicken fat, but was too embarrassed before al-Rashid to stretch my hand forth and plunge it into that mound. So I merely opened my fingers a little, and the fat trickled towards me. Al-Rashid said: ‘O Aban {Do you scuttle it to drown its passengers?}’ Aban replied: ‘No, O Commander of the Believers, but rather {We drive them forth to a parched land}’ Al-Rashid laughed so much his chest could laugh no more.”

3393. In the year 295 [907-8], a gift arrived in Baghdad, sent by Ziyadatullah ibn `Abdullah*, whose patronymic was “Abu Mudar”. The gift consisted of two hundred black and white male slaves, one hundred and fifty female slaves, a hundred Arabian horses and other exotic [reading *lata`if*] presents. In the year 184, al-Rashid, then in al-Raqqah, had appointed Ibrahim ibn al-Aghlab governor of the province of Ifriqiya in the Maghrib. So the Aghlab dynasty continued to rule Ifriqiya until that Ziyadatullah ibn `Abdullah was driven out of it in the year 296 [909], or 295 in another version. He was driven out of the Maghrib by Abu `Abdullah al-Muhtasib [market-inspector], the missionary who appeared among the Kutama Berber tribes, and called for the overlordship of `Ubaidullah, ruler of the Maghrib. In an earlier section of this book, we mentioned how the caliph al-Mansur had appointed al-Aghlab ibn Salim al-Sa`di as governor of the Maghrib.

3394. The illness of al-Muktafi grew worse in al-Darb, so he summoned Muhammad ibn Yusuf the judge and `Abdullah ibn `Ali ibn Abi al-Shawarib, and made them witness his will which passed the caliphate to his brother Ja`far. His death has already been reported in an earlier section of this work, making it unnecessary to repeat it here.

3395. Al-Mas`udi said: Charming stories are told about al-Muktafi and about the major events of his age, such as the story of Ibn al-Balkhi in Egypt, of the Qarmatian in al-Sham, and about Zikrawayh and his attack on the pilgrimage, as well as other events. We recorded all these events in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, making it unnecessary to repeat them here.

Chapter 125

An account of the caliphate of al-Muqtadir Billah

3396. Al-Muqtadir Billah, Ja`far ibn Ahmad, received the oath of homage on the day his brother al-Muktafi died. This occurred on Sunday the

thirteenth of Dhu'l Qa'da, in the year 295 [August 14, 908]. His patronymic was "Abu'l Fadl." His mother was a freed slave called Shaghab, and the mother of al-Muktafi was also a freed slave called Zalum, but other names are also given. When he received homage, he was thirteen years old. He was murdered in Baghdad after the afternoon prayer on Wednesday, three nights remaining from the month of Shawwal, in the year 320 [October 30, 932]. His caliphate thus lasted twenty-four years, eleven months and sixteen days, and he was thirty-eight years and fifteen days old. But his age at death is given differently in other histories. God knows best.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

3397. When al-Muqtadir received homage, the vizier was al-'Abbas ibn al-Hasan, who lasted in his post until al-Husain ibn Hamdan, Wasif ibn Suwartakin and other clients led a coup against al-'Abbas ibn al-Hasan, and killed him along with Fatik. This took place on Saturday, eleven nights remaining from the month of Rabi' I, in the year 296 [December 16, 908]. The story of what happened to 'Abdullah ibn al-Mu'tazz*, Muhammad ibn Dawud and others is well known among people and is mentioned in our book *al-Awsat* and elsewhere, under the history of al-Muqtadir.

3398. Some have composed the history of al-Muqtadir either jointly with other caliphs or separately by himself. This was done as part of the history of the state and under the history of Baghdad. Thus, Abu 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdus al-Jahshiyari* wrote the history of al-Muqtadir in thousands of pages, a few sections of which I was able to consult. Several scholars told me that Ibn 'Abdus wrote the history of al-Muqtadir in a thousand pages. In this work we merely record a summary account of each caliph, the intention being to treat their history as a whole in order to

encourage the study of that history and to urge memorizing and copying its contents.

3399. `Abdullah ibn al-Mu`azz was a brilliant man of letters, and a poet of great originality, excellence and mastery, easy to understand, simple in diction, well inspired and creative in his ideas. Among his verses are the following:

*Women who blame me say: find consolation among other women,
And quench the flame of your heart with solace.*

*But how can I do so when a kiss from her, gained furtively,
Is more delicious than gloating over an enemy's misfortune?*

Or else:

*His eyelids are weak,
And his heart is a stone,
As if his glances,
Apologize for his acts.*

Or else:

*Heedlessness has departed and people's reprimands are at an end,
Gray hairs have appeared and dyed hair is shown to be false.
I hate my gray hairs,*

So how can tender young girls with swelling breasts love me?

Or else:

*How strange is time in both its aspects!
How odd is a calamity from which I am driven only to fall back into it!
How many a day there was in which I had wept,
Then wept for it when another day arrived.*

3400. Or else the verses he addressed to the vizier `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Furat:

*O Abu'l Hasan, you made me tread more firmly,
And helped me overcome these troublesome crises.*

*You made me wear an invincible armor,
So now I call out to adversities: Anyone for combat?*

Or else:

*Among the worst of occasions for a noble youth is to humiliate himself,
Before one who does not find it easy to grant favors.
But he whose soul does not impel him to ask for favors:
When will he ever attain his desires?*

Or else:

*If I so wish, cupbearers will once more serve me a cup,
When morning opens its mouth following a night.
I would then imagine that dusk, when dawn had spread its thread,
Was a robe embroidered and studded with stars.*

Or else:

*I cry whenever a star disappears,
As though I've lost a friend or am bereaved of a lover.
If the lid of night can be ripped open to reveal the planets,
I would rip open my eyes to reveal the stars.*

3401. Among his admirable verses are those he composed about
`Ubaidullah ibn Sulaiman:

*The family of Sulaiman ibn Wahb has done me many favors,
And many a good deed in the past.
They taught the days how to be kind to me,
And washed away the blood from my father's robes.*

Or else the verses he composed at the death of al-Mu`tadid:

*They discharged their duties to him then brought forth,
An Imam who led the prayers in his presence.
They prayed over him in pious submission,
Lined in ranks, as though standing up to greet him.*

3402. Or else his verses when al-Mu`tadid underwent a bloodletting:

*O blood that flowed from the arm of the Imam,
You are more fragrant than amber or wine.
As you poured into the vessel we imagined you were,
Tears pouring from the eyes of a person passionately in love.
Indeed, the physician had inserted the tip of his scalpel,
Into the very heart of Islam.*

Or else:

*Be patient when faced with the envy of the envious person,
For your patience will surely mortify him.
Fire will consume itself,
If it finds nothing else to consume.*

3403. Or else:

*Passing amongst us with the wine is a young gazelle,
Appointed ruler of our hearts and eyes.
When he appears, the glances that follow him around,
Could almost shed the blood of shyness from his cheeks.*

Or else:

*A gazelle that swaggers with the beauty of his form,
But his glances are tepid and listless,
As if the curls on his temples stand on edge,
When they draw close to the fire of his cheeks.*

Or else:

*Whenever his mouth plucks a rose from her cheeks,
Another rose, from shyness, is formed beneath it.*

3404. In the year 296 [909], Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Dawud ibn `Ali ibn Khalaf al-Isbahani*, the jurist, died. He was a very distinguished man of letters, a consummate linguist, and an accomplished scholar in all subjects and all sciences. His knowledge of jurisprudence was unique and unparalleled. When still in the prime of youth and before he had attained

maturity, he composed a work known as *al-Zahra*. Then his mind and mental powers reached their greatest extent, so he wrote works on jurisprudence such as his books entitled *al-Wusul ila Ma`rifat al-Usul*, *Kitab al-Indhar*, *Kitab al-I`dhar* and *Kitab al-Ijaz*. There is also his book known *al-Intisar*, where he refuted the views of Ibn Jarir, `Abdullah ibn Shirshir and `Isa ibn Ibrahim al-Darir.

3405. Among his admirable verses, composed when still in the prime of youth and inscribed in his book called *al-Zahra*, verses which he ascribed to some other figure of his age, though all his verse and prose is indeed admirable, are the following:

*In my heart is an agony, a fear of parting,
From which my heart is almost bursting with sorrow.
He fears leave-taking even when they are together,
And cries with an eye whose tears are too quick to flow.
Had he been as happy in his present condition,
As he was sorrowful about what was to come,
His cure and his sickness would have been the same,
But the imminence of parting is more calamitous and painful.*

Or else:

*Relish the farewell you say to your beloved,
While waiting for the happy moment of reunion.
How many attachments and break-ups have I experienced!
How many ups and downs!
How many cups have I tasted, more bitter than death,
Yet I was able to bear!
But in all that I have experienced, I never met with anything
More bitter than parting without a farewell.
Glory be to God! All attachments, no matter how long they last,
Will eventually be severed.*

Or else:

*No good can come from a lover who hides his passion
While speaking, though his longing is obvious in his sighs.
He hides his love, though hidden from none,
Even from camels, caravans and camel chanter.*

3406. In the year 303 [915-16], in the caliphate of al-Muqtadir, `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Nasr ibn Mansur ibn Bassam died. He was an eloquent poet, naturally disposed to satire and defamation. No vizier or Emir, no minor or major figure escaped his tongue. He even defamed his own father, brothers and family, as in the following verses addressed to his father Muhammad ibn Nasr:

*Abu Ja`far [his father] built a house and raised it high,
And men like him are worthy of building the best of houses.
Hunger is on the inside of it, and humiliation lies outside it,
And in its interior is found misery and distress.
What good is it if a house has high walls,
When inside it one finds neither bread nor water?*

3407. About his father too he composed the following verses:

Let us say you live as long as twenty eagles:
Do you suppose I will die before you?
If I live for only one day after you die,
I will tear to shreds the sack where you keep your wealth.*

Also on his father:

*He thinks hunger is a kind of medicine, so he diets and puts others on a diet,
And in his house you will encounter none but the hungry.
He claims that poverty comes from generosity and liberality,
And that no good comes from acquiring a craft.
He trusts the world and does not fear its vicissitudes,*

And does not realize that man is a prey to calamity.

3408. Abu'l Hasan Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Antaki, the jurist and paper seller, recited to me in Antioch a poem of `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Bassam in which he satirizes the Emir al-Muwaffaq, the vizier Abu Saqr Isma`il ibn Bulbul, al-Ta'i, governor of Baghdad, `Abdun the Christian and brother of Sa'id, Abu'l `Abbas ibn Bistam, Hamid ibn `Abbas, later the vizier of al-Muqtadir, and Ishaq ibn `Imran, then governor of Kufa:

Does al-Muwaffaq hope for victory from God,

When the subjects are ruled by a villain?

And before that, these subjects, I swear by your father, were ruled by an adulterer.

If you accept this, you will need to accept

That he is like a trellis, above which is another trellis.

Ibn Bulbul continued to be called a vizier,

Though he was not so called in previous times.

The miller from Tai' is now in charge of bridges,

And the irrigated lands of the Euphrates and Zurfamia.

Meanwhile `Abdun is appointed judge over Muslims,

Though the poll-tax is collected from people like him.

Cross-eyed Bistam is now the shadow of the Counselor,

Though once he used to be a weaver of borderless cloth.

As for Hamid, O you people, if it were up to me,

I would force him to be confined to a poor house.

Oh yes, and I would compel him to go back, humbly submitting,

To selling Khusrawi pomegranates.

And Ishaq `Imran is now called "Emir":

What a catastrophe of all catastrophes!

This, then, is the caliphate, bidding you adieu,

Its throne now fallen into ruin.

*Leave the present time to its scoundrels,
And may they be pursued by God's curses to the pit of hell.
O God, the scum of the earth now occupy the seat of power,
But my status is superior to theirs.
If you are bearing with us people such as these, so be it,
But otherwise kick out those sons of a whore !*

In this poem he managed to satirize all the major political figures of that era.

3409. Abu Ishaq al-Zajjaj, the grammarian and companion of al-Mubarrad, recited the following verses composed by Ibn Bassam when al-Mu`tadid had his son Ja`far al-Muqtadir circumcised:

*Guests left that ceremony of circumcision,
Calling for a belt to tie around their waist from hunger.
I said: Do not be surprised,
For orphans are circumcised thus.*

He also recited the following verses about al-Mu`tadid:

*Until when do we fail to behold what we hope for?
Until when do we fail to abandon a false hope?
Though they call you "al-Mu`tadid" [supported by God],
Yet I think you will soon be strangled [tu`dad].*

3410. He recited the following verses about the vizier al-`Abbas ibn al-Hasan and Ibn `Amrawayh al-Khurasani, then governor of Baghdad:

*May God curse the fellow
Who appointed `Abbas as vizier,
And curse him who appointed `Amrawayh
Governor of Baghdad.
Here's a vizier with a wrinkled face,
And a paunch like a sack of grain,
A backside in which are two camel humps,*

*And a head like a cucumber.
For a long time he's been known as a cheat,
And as a rogue.
And here's a Persian governor,
Like an ass, son of a she-ass.
Islam took leave of us,
When he took charge of affairs.*

3411. Abu Ishaq recited to me Ibn Bassam's verses about Abu'l Hasan Jahza al-Barmaki, the singer:

*Jahza, that do-gooder, did me a great favor,
And one I'll thank him for until the Day of Judgment.
This was when he showed me the backside of his mule,
So sparing me from seeing his horrid face.*

The following verses were composed about his father Muhammad ibn Nasr ibn Mansur ibn Bassam:

*A khabisa [sweet pudding] made thick with sugar,
And a cooking pot in which a lark is being cooked,
At the house of a youth more generous than Hatim,*
Who has two cauldrons boiling on a single pit of live coals.
However, this feast doesn't happen every day,
But only at an unexpected invitation,
On a day of entertainment, a day truly extraordinary,
Bringing together joys and laughter.*

Meanwhile, the host tells those who are eating his food:

"Damn that belly of yours how large it is!"

Also about his father are the following verses:

*The bread of Abu Ja'far is made of chalk,
In which are found spices and medicines.
In it is a cure for every disease,*

*Of stomach, chest or hemorrhoids.
A bowl there is as small as a cream jar,
Surrounded by screaming watchmen.
Getting what you hope for from his hand,
Is not something that fate decrees.*

Also about his father are the following:

*I sent him a message, asking him to gift me a camel,
Not knowing that the camel has become our in-law.
He replied that we should ride it together,
Thus, he rides its stomach and I ride its back.*

3412. These verses he composed about some officers of state:

*Tell these officers of state, and others whose favor one hopes to gain,
Or those from whom one hopes to obtain a gift or a job:
If you keep me busy by giving me a job, I will keep busy at it;
Otherwise I will busy myself with your reputations.*

Or else:

*Why do I always see you tirelessly grumpy about your income?
Why don't you revert back to what you deserve?
For your income far surpasses what you deserve!*

3413. On the vizier `Ubaidullah ibn Sulaiman he recited the following:

*`Ubaidullah will not rise again from the dead,
He has no brains and no perspicacity.
You were brought back to life but you turned away from it,
Thus confirming the words of God {And were they to be returned to life,
they would revert to what they had been forbidden}.*

On al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah ibn Sulaiman, he recited:

*Tell that fellow who's in charge of the caliphal state:
It is when things reach perfection that decline sets in.
How many a vizier I saw in his full glory,*

Who ended up in the abode of humiliation and disgrace.

On `Ubaidullah he recited:

*O my soul, there can be no escape, in this age of the monkey,
From prostrating before monkeys.*

*O son of Wahb [`Ubaidullah], a favorable wind is blowing in your
direction,*

So beware when it grows calm.

3414. The following verses he composed about the vizier Isma`il ibn Bulbul:

*Abu`l Saqr [Isma`il] rules a state,
As decadent as he,
Like a cloud which gave hope of rain,
But was soon scattered.*

The following verses are about the vizier al-`Abbas ibn al-Hasan:

*A vizier who carries the burdens of all the sins of mankind,
And who doesn't hide his injustice to people.
Have you not seen how earlier viziers have fared,
And how the vicissitudes of time brought them calamity?*

Regarding the vizier Sa`id ibn Makhlad, he recited:

*We prostrated ourselves before monkeys, hoping for worldly gain,
A gain that the hands of monkeys snatched, leaving us out in the cold.
By that action, our fingers were unable to grasp anything
Except the disgrace of prostration.*

3415. On the vizier al-`Abbas ibn al-Hasan he recited:

*On the Tigris you built a meeting hall,
Vying with the deeds of men of the past.
Don't be happy! How many similar structures have we seen,
No sooner finished than falling into ruin.*

About the vizier `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Furat he recited:

*For months, and counting, I stood outside the door of the vizier,
But what he once owed me didn't incline him to receive me.
Hence, he neither reciprocates my favors to him,
Nor am I ashamed or too proud to stand by his door.*

3416. Regarding Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn Ja`far al-Gharbali, he recited:

I asked Abu Ja`far a favor and he said:

"My hand cannot reach that far."

I replied: "Soon it shall be

As you mentioned."

About the same man he recited:

A bushy beard, made worse by plucking,

And a face accursed and misshapen.

As he began to mumble incoherently,

And rave like a lunatic, I said:

"God spoke the truth! You are the person mentioned in God's words:

{A pitiful person, who can barely make himself understood}

3417. He recited the following about Ibn al-Marzuban whom he had asked for a mount but refused to give it to him:

You were too mean to give me a loathsome and sickly beast,

And as long as I live, I will not ask again for it.

If you were keeping him for yourself, then may God never create

Any beast of burden you ride that you keep for yourself.

Among his splendid verses are the following:

He assured me that he would live up to his promise to grant me what I wished,

But when I asked him to fulfill his promise, he frowned and became haughty,

Proffering as excuse his busy and unending work,

But were it not for his unending work, I would not have busied myself with him.

ʿAli ibn Muhammad ibn Bassam has many poems in this vein. We found it sufficient to mention some of his verse rather than more in this work, after having quoted it in our earlier works.

3418. Ibn Bassam's father, Muhammad ibn Nasr ibn Mansur, was a man of great nobility and chivalry, who lived a life of luxury, was well-dressed, undoubtedly gallant, and fond of building. Abu ʿAbdullah al-Qummi reported the following: "Once, in Baghdad, I went to see him on an excessively cold winter's day. I found him seated under a wide dome coated with glittering red Armenian clay. I estimated the dome to be about twenty by twenty *dhira*'s in extent. In the center was a stove with two legs shaped like giraffes which, if held up high, would measure ten by ten *dhira*'s. It was filled with live embers of *ghada* firewood. He sat in the center of that dome, dressed in a Tustari gown. The area above the stove was covered with red embroidered silk rugs. He made me sit next to him and I was almost scorched by the heat, so he handed me a bowl of rosewater mixed with camphor and I wiped my face with it. I then saw him ordering some water and they brought him water in which I saw ice. I had no desire other than to bring my visit to an end, so I left to encounter humid and cold weather outside. He had said to me earlier: 'It will not be healthy for someone who now wishes to leave this house.'

3419. "I went to see him on another occasion and found him seated in another part of his house, a platform raised onto a pond, and in the middle was a couch from which he surveyed his gardens, a gazelle enclosure and enclosures for turtle-doves and suchlike. I said to him: 'Abu Ja'far, by God you are sitting in paradise!' He answered: 'It is not fit for you to leave paradise before breakfasting in it!' Seated comfortably, we were brought a table made of onyx, and I'd never seen anything as beautiful. In

its center was a basin made of multi-colored onyx, with its edges enfolded in red gold, and filled with rosewater. Then there was a layer upon layer, like a minaret, of breasts of chicken, while on the table were small jars of onyx holding spices and various kinds of salts. We were then served boiling hot crusty meat pies, followed by trays of almond-stuffed doughnuts [*luzinaj*]. The food was then removed and we proceeded at once to where a curtain was drawn where we were presented with a white china bowl heaped with violets and gillyflower, and a similar bowl filled to the brim with apples from al-Sham, which we estimated at a thousand apples. I never partook of a cleaner meal or more exquisite odors. He then said to me: ‘This is the breakfast that is by right due to guests.’ I can never forget the charms of that day.”

3420. Al-Mas`udi said: We mentioned the above report about Muhammad ibn Nasr in order to make it known that his son, `Ali ibn Muhammad, reported a totally different image of him, and that none were spared from his tongue. Many stories and much defamation of many people are reported of him, all of which we mentioned in detail in our earlier works. For instance, there was the time when al-Mu`tadid, while playing chess, quoted the verse of Ibn Bassam addressed to al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah:

*The life of this fellow is like his death,
So you'll never be free from calamity.*

He was reciting this verse as al-Qasim was coming in, so when al-Mu`tadid raised his head and saw al-Qasim, he was embarrassed and said: “O Qasim, cut Ibn Bassam’s tongue to stop him defaming you.” As al-Qasim was departing to cut his tongue, al-Mu`tadid said: “Cut him off from any subsidy or employment, but don’t do him any harm.” So al-Qasim appointed him post master and in charge of bridge tolls in the province of Qinnasrin and al-`Awasim in al-Sham.

3421. There are also Ibn Bassam's verses regarding Asad ibn Jahwar the state secretary, and his story with him, and how he included in his satire both Asad and other state secretaries:

*These wretched times have produced wonders,
Effacing all traces of wit and refinement.
They've brought forth some people whom,
Had I any power over them, I would send them back to kindergarten.
Do you not see how Asad ibn Jahwar is now aping
The most distinguished of secretaries?*

3422. When al-`Abbas ibn al-Hasan was murdered, al-Muqtadir appointed `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Musa ibn al-Furat as his vizier, an appointment that lasted three years and nine months before he was incensed against him. The same day he was incensed with Ibn al-Furat, he appointed Muhammad ibn `Ubaidullah ibn Yahya ibn Khaqan. This was on Wednesday, the fourth of Dhu'l Hijja, in the year 299 [July 22, 912]. He bestowed a robe of honor upon him but upon no one else. Ibn Khaqan's possessions were seized on Monday, the tenth of Muharram in 301 [August 16, 913], and a robe of honor was bestowed on the new vizier `Ali ibn `Isa ibn Dawud ibn al-Jarrah. This took place on Tuesday, the eleventh of Muharram in the year 301. His wealth, in turn, was seized on Monday the eighth of Dhu'l Hijja in the year 304 [June 2, 917], and Ibn al-Furat was reappointed vizier and given a robe of honor on Monday, the eighth of Dhu'l Hijja, in the year 304. His wealth was once more seized on Thursday, four days remaining from the month of Jumada I, in the year 306 [November 4, 918].

3423. The vizier Hamid ibn al-`Abbas was given a robe of honor on Tuesday, two nights remaining from Jumada II, in the year 306 [December 3, 918], and `Ali ibn `Isa was dismissed from the vizierate on the following day, a Wednesday, and all authority was handed over to

him. Hamid ibn al-`Abbas's possessions were seized and Ibn al-Furat was reappointed vizier for the third time. Muhassin ibn `Ali, his son, was the effective ruler during that third term. He then caused the downfall of a number of state secretaries, but then the wealth of Ibn al-Furat and his son was seized as recorded at the beginning of this present chapter. Al-Muqtadir then appointed `Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn `Ubaidullah al-Khaqani as vizier.

3424. He then appointed Ahmad ibn `Ubaidullah al-Khasibi as vizier, then `Ali ibn `Isa a second time, then Abu `Ali Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Muqla, then Sulaiman ibn al-Hasan ibn Makhlad, then `Ubaidullah ibn Muhammad al-Kalwadhani, then al-Husain ibn al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah ibn Sulaiman ibn Wahb, who was murdered in al-Raqqa. He then appointed al-Fadl ibn Ja`far ibn Musa ibn al-Furat as vizier.

3425. We have already mentioned that al-Muqtadir was killed in Baghdad around the time of the afternoon prayer on Wednesday, three nights remaining from the month of Shawwal, in the year 320. He died during a battle between him and Mu'nis the royal servant in the quarter of Bab al-Shammasiyya on the eastern side, and the common people then undertook to bury him.

3426. That day, his vizier was Abu'l Fath al-Fadl ibn Ja`far ibn Musa ibn al-Furat, as mentioned above. It is claimed that al-Fadl consulted the stars as to the best time the caliph should set off to the battle during which he was killed, and when al-Muqtadir asked him what time it should be, he answered: "At noon." Al-Muqtadir frowned and insisted on leaving, but soon the cavalry of Mu'nis surrounded him, and he was last seen at that time.

3427. Every sixth caliph of the Abbasid line is deposed and murdered. The sixth was Muhammad ibn Harun, the "deposed", the twelfth was al-Musta`in and the eighteenth was al-Muqtadir.

3428. Interesting stories are related of al-Muqtadir and the wars and major events of his days. These include the stories of Ibn Abi'l Saj, of Mu'nis and of Sulaiman ibn al-Hasan al-Jannabi, and his activities in Mecca in the year 317 [929-30] and on other occasions, as well as events in east and west. We gave a full and detailed account of all these events in our work *Akhbar al-Zaman* and in less detail in our work *al-Awsat*. In this work, we simply allude briefly to these events. I pray that God might grant me a further length of time and extend my span of life and grant us joy in order that we might follow up this present work by another. In this future work, we intend to include a medley of historical accounts and of charming anecdotes, but not strictly arranged or organized according to subject matter. Rather, it would include whatever occurs to our mind by way of narratives that are of value and profit to readers or else unique and charming deeds of the past. We plan to call this work *Wasl al-Majalis bi Jawami` al-Akhbar wa Mukhtalat al-Adab*, which would be a follow-up and a supplement to our earlier books.

3429. Musa ibn Ishaq al-Ansari, the judge, died in the year 297 [909-10], in the caliphate of al-Muqtadir. That year also witnessed the death of Muhammad ibn `Uthman ibn Abi Shayba, the Kufan jurist, who was buried on the eastern side of the city. These two were distinguished Hadith scholars and major transmitters of traditions. News arrived in Baghdad that the four corners of the Holy House were flooded, that the circumambulatory was also flooded and that the well of Zamzam had overflowed, and that this had never happened before to the people of Mecca.

3430. In that same year, [i.e. 297] Yusuf ibn Ya`qub ibn Isma`il ibn Hammad, the judge, died in Baghdad in the month of Ramadan. He was ninety-five years old. In that year too, Muhammad ibn Dawud ibn `Ali ibn Khalaf al-Isbahani, the jurist, mentioned above, died. It is claimed

that he died in 296 and we already alluded to the dispute concerning his date of death. In the year 297, Ibn Abi `Awf al-Buzwari, the examiner of witnesses, died in Baghdad, in the month of Shawwal. He was eighty and some years old and was buried on the western side. We mention the death dates of these figures because they were celebrated transmitters of pious traditions and because scholars and historians need to know these dates. In that year too, Abu'l `Abbas Ahmad ibn Masruq, the Hadith scholar, died, aged eighty-four years, and was buried near the Harb Gate on the western side.

3431. In earlier sections of this book and in our other works we made mention of those among the Talibids who rose in rebellion in Umayyad and Abbasid times, and how they were killed or imprisoned or made to flee. In the Sa`id of Egypt, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Ibrahim ibn Isma`il ibn Ibrahim ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib rose in rebellion but was killed by Ahmad ibn Tulun following certain incidents that we narrated in our books. In this book we merely mention in brief Talibid rebels and their histories because we bound ourselves to mention them, their deaths and their histories from the time of the murder of the Commander of the Believers [`Ali] to the time where we conclude the writing of this book.

3432. Yahya ibn al-Husain al-Hasani al-Rassi died in Sa`da, in the Yemen, where he had settled, in the year 298 [910-11]. He was succeeded by his son al-Hasan ibn Yahya. Ibn al-Rida, whose name was Muhassin ibn Ja`far ibn `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad, rose in rebellion in the countryside of Damascus in the year 300 [912-13]. A battle ensued between him and Abu'l `Abbas Ahmad ibn Kayghalagh, and Muhassin was killed in cold blood though some say he died in battle. His head was then carried to Baghdad and set up on the new bridge on the western side.

3433. In the land of Tabaristan and Dailam, Al-Utrush, whose name was al-Hasan ibn `Ali, rose in rebellion and expelled the Abbasid black banners. This took place in the year 301 [913-14]. He was a man of understanding, scholarship and knowledge of religious tenets. He had lived among the Dailam for many years while they were still Magians and some were pagan, as also the people of Jil, and he called them to the worship of God. They responded to him and embraced Islam. The Muslims had some frontier posts facing them in places like Qazwin and elsewhere. Among the Dailam, he built mosques. According to many genealogists, the Dailam are descended from Basil ibn Dubba ibn Udd, while the Jil are descended from the Tamim tribe. It is said that al-Utrush first entered Tabaristan on the first day of Muharram in the year 301 [August 7, 913], and on that same day the ruler of Bahrain entered Basra and killed its governor Tamsak al-Muflihi. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we narrated the history of al-Utrush the Alid and of his son, as well as the history of Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn al-Qasim al-Hasani, the missionary, his conquest of Tabaristan and his violent death.

3434. Abu'l `Abbas Ahmad ibn `Umar ibn Surayj, the judge, died in 306. Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, the jurist, died in Baghdad in 310 [923]. Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Jabir, the judge, died in Aleppo. In the year 297, al-Layth ibn `Ali ibn al-Layth, nephew of al-Saffar, was led into Baghdad on an elephant, preceded and surrounded by the army, and paraded in disgrace. It is also claimed that this event took place in 298.

3435. In that year, i.e. 297, Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Sulaiman al-Marwazi, Hadith scholar and friend of al-Jahiz, died in Baghdad, though some say he died in 298. In that year too, Faris, commander of the Byzantine navy and warships, landed on the coast of al-Sham, captured the fortress of al-Qubba following prolonged hostilities when no Muslim reinforcements arrived, then captured the city of

Latakiya, and enslaved many people. In Kufa, that year, a hailstorm occurred where each hailstone weighed one Baghdadi *ratl*, accompanied by a dark wind. This took place in the month of Ramadan, and many houses and structures collapsed. There was also a major earthquake in which many perished. This all took place in Kufa in the year 297 [909-10]. In Egypt, in that same year, there was a major earthquake, and a comet appeared.

3436. In that year, Damyana, commander of the Muslim war fleet in the Mediterranean, raided the island of Cyprus. The people of that island had violated a solemn agreement concluded in early Islamic times stipulating that they would neither aid the Byzantines against the Muslims nor the Muslims against the Byzantines, and that their land-tax would be paid in equal halves to the two sides. Damyana remained on the island for four months, taking captives and burning and capturing Cypriot strongholds. We have already mentioned this island when discussing the various seas of the world, and the sources and mouths of rivers, making it unnecessary to repeat its description here.

3437. In the year 301, `Abdullah ibn Najiya, the Hadith scholar, died in Baghdad. He was born in the year 212. The possessions of Ibn al-Jassas, the jeweler, were seized in Baghdad in the year 302. The most accurate estimate of his wealth that was seized, including gold, silver, jewels, furnishings, garments and agricultural produce, came to five million and five hundred thousand dinars. In that year too, al-Qasim ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Ashyab, whose patronymic was “Abu Muhammad”, died on Monday, two nights remaining from the month of Jumada I [December 30, 913]. He was a leading scholar and Hadith master, and was buried on the western side in the street known as al-Hammalin. His funeral was attended by Muhammad ibn Yusuf, the judge, Abu Ja`far Ahmad ibn Ishaq ibn al-Bahlul, the judge, and other jurists, legal witnesses, state

secretaries and government officials. He is the father of Abu `Imran Musa ibn al-Qasim ibn al-Hasan, known as Ibn al-Ashyab, and is at present a leading jurist of the Shafi`ite rite.

3438. In the year 302 [914-15], an army advanced upon Egypt from the west*, and major battles ensued with the Egyptians who were loyal to the caliphate in Baghdad during which many were killed. A leading Berber figure, called Abu Jarra, sought the protection of the caliph, and marched to Baghdad where he received robes of honor.

3439. In the year 307 [919-20], Yusuf ibn Abi'l Saj was led into Baghdad and paraded in disgrace upon a Bactrian camel. He was made to wear the same embroidered silk waistcoat worn by `Amr ibn al-Layth and Wasif the royal servant. On his head was a long cap with trestles and bells, and he was surrounded by troops, with Mu'nis the royal servant and other military officers of state riding behind him. We have already mentioned the battle in which Mu'nis captured Ibn Abi'l Saj, near the town of Ardabil, as well as the names of the military commanders present there such as Abu'l Hayja' `Abdullah ibn Hamdan, `Ali ibn Hassan, Abu'l Fadl al-Marawi, Ahmad ibn `Ali, brother of Su`luk, and other military commanders and emirs. We also mentioned how al-Muqtadir had set Ibn Abi'l Saj free and how the latter headed from Diyar Rabi`a and Mudar towards his provinces in Adharbaijan and Armenia, and how his servant Sabak captured his master's province and broke away from al-Fariqi.

3440. We further narrated the history of Ibn Abi'l Saj, how he marched to Wasit then to Kufa, and his war against Abu Tahir Sulaiman ibn al-Hasan al-Jannabi, how the latter captured and killed him near al-Anbar and Hit, when Yalbaq and Nazif, the servant of Ibn Abi'l Saj, came within sight of al-Jannabi's army, how al-Jannabi defeated Yalbaq and Nazif, and how the Qarmatian [al-Jannabi] marched on to Hit, together with other events of the time. This took place in the year 315 [927-8]. All these events we

recorded in our earlier works, where we also mentioned the later history of Mu'nis and those who followed him from among the clients of the caliph, and how he fought against the army of the ruler of the Maghrib in Egypt. This took place in the year 309 [921-2].

Chapter 126

An account of the caliphate of al-Qahir

3441. Al-Qahir, Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Mu`tadid, received homage on Thursday, two nights remaining from the month of Shawwal in the year 320 [October 31, 932]. He was deposed on Wednesday, the fifth of Jumada I, 322 [April 23, 934], and was blinded. His caliphate lasted one year, six months and six days. His patronymic was "Abu Mansur" and his mother was a former slave.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

3442. Al-Qahir first appointed Abu `Ali Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Muqla* as vizier in the year 321, then dismissed him and appointed Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah ibn Sulaiman, then dismissed him and appointed Abu'l `Abbas Ahmad ibn `Ubaidullah al-Khasibi. His moral character could hardly be determined, so changeable and unpredictable was he in mood and temperament. He was bold and energetic and very violent towards his enemies, and did away with a large group of state officials, among them Mu'nis the royal servant, Yalbaq and `Ali ibn Yalbaq. People came to fear him and his arbitrary violence. In his hand he used to hold a long spear whenever he walked around his residence but would lay it down near him when he sat. He would use the spear to strike anyone he wanted to kill. Thus, the indiscipline and rebelliousness shown to earlier caliphs came to an end.

3443. Since his violent temper caused fear, he himself took few precautions where his personal security was concerned. This behavior led

him to be the subject of a snare set for him in his own residence. He was arrested and blinded in both eyes, and is alive at this time and living in the house of Ibn Tahir on the western side, according to reports that have reached us regarding his whereabouts. This is because the caliph al-Radi, who succeeded him, suppressed all news and all mention of him. When Ibrahim al-Muttaqi [who succeeded al-Radi] received homage, al-Qahir was found imprisoned in some chamber, so he ordered him to be conveyed to the house of Ibn Tahir, and he remains under house arrest until the present, as mentioned above.

Mas`udi 5.1

3444. The historian Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Misri al-Khurasani, a man with whom al-Qahir felt at ease, said: "One day, while closeted with al-Qahir, he said to me: 'You shall speak the truth or else this,' pointing to his spear. I swear to God the specter of death loomed between me and him, so I replied: 'I shall speak the truth to you, O Commander of the Believers.' He said: 'Take great care'---and repeated that phrase three times--- adding: 'Regarding what I am to ask you, and do not hide anything from me. Do not embellish any tale, do not use rhymed prose and do not drop a single item from any story.' I answered: 'Yes, O Commander of the Believers.' He said: 'You are an expert on the history, moral character and habits of Abbasid caliphs, from Abu'l `Abbas, the "Blood-shedder," until the present day.' I said: 'Do you promise that I will be safe from punishment?' 'Yes,' he replied.

3445. "I said: 'As for `Abu'l `Abbas the Blood-shedder, he was quick to shed blood and his governors in both east and west followed his example and imitated his conduct, like Muhammad ibn al-Ash`ath in the Maghrib, Salih ibn `Ali in Egypt, Khazim ibn Khuzaima and Humaid ibn Qahtaba. Yet he was also chivalrous, tolerant, liberal and generous with money. His above mentioned governors and officials of his age also followed his example in that respect.'

3446. "He said: 'Tell me about al-Mansur.' I answered: 'He was, by God, the first to sow the seeds of conflict between the progeny of al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib and the family of the Talibids. Before that time they had been a single party. He was the first caliph to bring in astrologers and act according to their forecasts. He had by his side Nawbakht, the Magian astrologer, who embraced Islam at his hands and is the ancestor of the Nawbakht family of today, along with Ibrahim al-Fazari, the astrologer,

who composed the poem about the stars and other aspects of astrology and the structure of the heavens, as well as `Ali ibn `Isa al-Asturlabi, the astrologer. He was the first caliph for whom books in foreign languages were translated into Arabic. Among them was *Kitab Kalila wa Dimna**, *Kitab al-Sind Hind*,* along with the logical works of Aristotle, the *Almagest* of Ptolemy, the Book of Euclid, the *Arithmatiqi*, and all the other ancient works from Greek, Byzantine Greek, Pahlevi, Farsi and Syriac. These were then made available to the public who examined them and became attached to them. In his days also, Muhammad ibn Ishaq composed his book on the Prophet's expeditions and biography as well as the history of the world's beginning. These histories had not hitherto been collected, well known or properly systematized. He was the first caliph to use his clients and royal servants as state officials whom he entrusted with various missions, preferring them to the Arabs. This policy was followed by the caliphs that came after him from among his progeny. Thus, the Arabs lost their leadership posts and their high rank. When he acceded to the caliphate, he studied the sciences, the various schools of law and theology, and examined religious views and the books of Hadith. Accordingly, the arts and sciences flourished in his days.'

3447. Al-Qahir said: 'You have spoken well and explained things clearly. Tell me about al-Mahdi and what his character was like.' I replied: 'He was magnanimous, generous and liberal, and the people of his days emulated his example and conducted their affairs accordingly, expanding their livelihoods. When riding, he would place sacks of dinars and dirhams before him, and none who asked would be turned away. If he fell silent, the person in charge of handing out the bounty would resume the distribution of money, after having obtained his permission. He vigorously pursued and executed atheists and others who had abandoned religion when they made their appearance during his caliphate and openly

expressed their views. The books of Mani, Ibn Daisan and Marcion had been translated into Arabic by `Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa` and others, having been translated from Farsi and Pahlevi, and were widely disseminated. In addition, Ibn Abi'l `Awja, Hammad `Ajrada, Yahya ibn Ziyad and Muti` ibn Iyas had composed works defending Manicheanism, Daisanism and Marcionism. As a result, the number of heretics increased and their views spread among people. Al-Mahdi was the first caliph to order skillful polemicists among the theologians to compose works that refuted the views of atheists and heretics. These proceeded to establish clear proofs against their opponents and to refute the dubious arguments of atheists, making the truth clear to those who were in doubt. He then rebuilt the Sacred Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque as they are found today, and rebuilt Jerusalem's mosque which had collapsed in an earthquake.'

3448. He said: 'Tell me about al-Hadi, even though his reign was short. What was he like in character and behavior?' I replied: 'He was a real tyrant, and the first caliph before whom troops paraded with drawn swords and raised spears and with bowstrings drawn back. His governors imitated his example and emulated his policies, and weapons increased in number in his age.' Al-Qahir said: 'You have described it all well and fully. Now tell me about al-Rashid and his policies.'

3449. I said: 'He performed the pilgrimage regularly, was constantly raiding, and built mansions, wells, ponds and fortresses on the road to Mecca, doing the same at Mecca, Mina, `Arafat and Medinah. These acts of charity were of benefit to all his subjects, in addition to his justice. He further rebuilt frontier posts and towns, and reinforced frontier fortress towns like Tarsus and Adana, built up al-Massisa and Mar`ash, and made all the necessary military arrangements, including half-way stations and military posts for frontier defenders. His officials emulated his example

and policies, as also his subjects, who imitated his conduct and his leadership of the community. He thus extirpated falsehood and reestablished the truth, glorifying Islam and surpassing all other nations. The most benevolent figure in his days was Umm Ja`far Zubaida bint Ja`far ibn al-Mansur [wife of al-Rashid] who built inns in Mecca and dug ponds and wells and constructed mansions in Mecca and along the road to it, a road which is still known to the present day as “Zubaida’s Highway”. In addition, she built specially endowed hostels on the al-Sham frontiers and in Tarsus, and created religious endowments for them. His days also witnessed the rise of the Barmakid family, their generosity and their celebrated acts of benevolence. Al-Rashid was the first caliph to play polo on the parade ground, to practice archery as a contest, to play with balls and rackets, and to encourage good players of these games, which now became common among people. He was also the first Abbasid caliph to play chess and backgammon, and he sponsored skillful players and paid them regular subsidies. So radiant, prosperous and bountiful were his days that people called them “Bridal Days” and much else that no adjective can adequately describe or portray.’

3450. “Al-Qahir said: ‘I see you have not done justice to the achievements of Umm Ja`far. Why is that?’ I replied: ‘It was for the sake of conciseness and brevity, O Commander of the Believers.’ He picked up his spear and shook it and I saw red death lurking in its tip. His eyes flashed and I gave up myself for dead, saying to myself: ‘This is the Angel of Death.’ I had no doubt that he was about to seize my soul. He then tossed the spear at me and I ducked. Having missed me, he pronounced the formula “We belong to God and to Him we shall return” then said: ‘Woe to you! Do you hate that which your eyes can see and are bored with life?’ I replied: ‘What’s that, O Commander of the Believers?’ He replied: ‘The history of Umm Ja`far! Let me hear some more.’ I said:

‘Yes, O Commander of the Believers. Her actions and her benevolence, in both important and not so important accomplishments, were such as to surpass all other women. Her important and splendid accomplishments, unparalleled in the history of Islam up to that time, include her digging the water source known as al-Mushash in the Hijaz. She first had it dug, then had its water-course conveyed through lowlands and highlands, through plains and mountains and rugged terrain, until, from a distance of twelve miles, it reached Mecca. The total amount she spent on that scheme was reported to have been a million and seven hundred thousand dinars. This was of course in addition to what I’ve already mentioned such as mansions, hostels, ponds and wells in the Hijaz and on the frontiers, spending thousands on these projects, not to mention her lavish spending on the poor by way of grants and subsidies. As for the other aspect of her achievement, this had to do with what kings usually vie with one another in their actions, the luxury they enjoy in their days, the manner in which they uphold and maintain their states, and how all this is recorded in their histories and biographies. Thus, she was the first to adopt elaborate ornaments of gold and silver, studded with precious stones. Embroidered fabrics of the finest quality were woven at her request to the point where a single embroidered robe that was made for her cost fifty thousand dinars. She was the first to employ mercenaries, servants and female servants whom she used to dispatch on mounts on her errands, carrying her orders and letters. She was the first to have constructed domed tents of silver, ebony and sandalwood, with their hooks made of gold and silver, and covered with embroidery, fur, brocade and silk of diverse colors such as red, yellow, green and blue. She was the first to fashion slippers studded with precious stones and amber wax. People would then imitate Umm Ja`far in what she did.

3451. “So when her son [al-Amin] acceded to power, O Commander of the Believers, he in turn assigned a privileged rank to royal servants, preferring them above all others such as his servant Kawthar and others. When Umm Ja`far saw how fond he was of royal servants and how attentive he was to them, she made use of slave women with slim waists and beautiful faces, put turbans on their heads, had their hair arranged in forelocks, lovelocks and nape locks, had them dressed in collared garments, with pendants and cummerbunds, thus tightening their waists and bringing out their backsides, then sent them off to him, and they went back and forth in his presence. He found them attractive and his heart was drawn to them, and he showed them off to both elite and commoners. In turn, his subjects employed heavily bedecked slave girls, dressing them in collared garments and cummerbunds, and called them *ghulamiiyyat* [girls dressed as boys].

3452. “When al-Qahir heard that description, he was overcome with joy and merriment and called out in a loud voice: ‘Hey you page! Bring me a goblet to drink at this description of the *ghulamiiyyat*!’ At which point a large number of female slaves came forward, having similar waists, whom at first I imagined to be male pages. They were wearing pendants, collared garments, with forelocks and nape locks, and cummerbunds of gold and silver. As he held the goblet in his hand, I began to gaze at the purity of that goblet, the shining liquid and the beauty of these slave women. The spear was lying in his lap so he drank the goblet quickly and said: ‘What then, eh?’

3453. “I said: ‘Yes, O Commander of the Believers. Then the caliphate passed to al-Ma`mun. At first, when al-Fadl ibn Sahl and others held most influence over him, he occupied himself with astrology and its various branches, obeyed its dictates, and followed the example of ancient Sasanid kings like Ardashir son of Babik and others. He studied

ancient books in depth and read them at all times, becoming an expert in them and understood their theories. When al-Fadl ibn Sahl was assassinated, as is well known, and al-Ma'mun was on his way to Iraq, he abandoned all these intellectual pursuits and declared himself to be a believer in God's unity and in the Promise of Paradise and Threat of Hell [i.e. Mu'tazilism]. He kept the company of theologians and took as close companions several distinguished polemicists and debaters like Abu'l Hudhail, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Sayyar al-Nazzam and others who agreed or disagreed with them. He made jurists and literary men attend his gatherings, summoned them from various cities and gave them regular salaries. So people became interested in intellectual speculation and learnt about scientific research and argument. Each group then wrote books defending and supporting their points of view. He was the most forgiving and tolerant of men, the most intellectually able and the most generous in dispensing money and gifts, and the furthest from envy. His viziers and companions emulated his actions and conduct and followed him in his views.

3454. "Then came al-Mu'tasim, O Commander of the Believers. In intellectual matters, he followed the views of his brother al-Ma'mun. He was most interested however in chivalry and in emulating foreign kings in equipment and in wearing caps and shawls, so people came to wear them in imitation of him and these came to be called *mu'tasimiyyat*. His good deeds spread among all his subjects, the roads were safe in his days and his liberality was shown to all.

3455. "Then came Harun ibn Muhammad, al-Wathiq. He followed the religious views of his father and uncle, punished people of different religious views and continued the Inquisition*. His good deeds were plentiful. He instructed the judges in all provinces not to accept the testimony of those who held theological views contrary to his own. He

was a big eater, generous in his grants, easily influenced, and compassionate towards his subjects.

3456. “Then came al-Mutawakkil, O Commander of the Believers. He proceeded to break with the doctrines of al-Ma’mun, al-Mu`tasim and al-Wathiq. He forbade all discussions and debates of religious doctrines and punished those who did, and instead commanded emulation of religious orthodoxy and privileging the transmission of Hadith. His days were pleasant, his state was orderly and his reign lasted long. Otherwise, his conduct and character, O Commander of the Believers, were widely known.

3457. “Al-Qahir said: ‘I’ve heard what you had to say and feel as if I could picture and experience at first hand the figures you’ve described. What I heard from you has pleased me for you have thrown open the gates of political life and informed me of various modes of leadership.’ He then ordered a present which he was quick to grant to me and said: ‘[You may go] if you wish.’ I rose to leave and he followed me with his spear. By God, I imagined he would stab me from behind, but then he turned towards the quarters of his women folk. A few days later there occurred that famous incident [i.e. his deposition and blinding].”

3458. Al-Mas`udi said: This man from whom I narrated the above story is also the source of other interesting tales. He is still alive at this present time, which is the year 333 [944-5], writes eulogies of kings, and consorts with senior officials. He is a man of good understanding and sound views.

3459. During the caliphate of al-Qahir, and in the year 321, Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Duraid died in Baghdad. He was an outstanding figure of our time, excelling in poetry and in philology, in the latter of which he was as distinguished as al-Khalil ibn Ahmad. He discovered certain theories in philology not to be found in the books of

earlier authorities, while as a poet he excelled in all its modes. At times his verse was grandiose, at others delicate and tender, but his poetical opus is too large to give a satisfactory account of in this book of ours, or do it full justice.

3460. Among his widely admired verses is a poem ending in *alif maqsura* [final *ya* ' pronounced as *alif*] which eulogizes al-Shah ibn Mikal. It is said that in that poem he included most words with such an ending. The poem begins:

*Do you [female] not see that the color of my head
Resembles the edge of dawn beneath the shadows of night?
The white hairs among the black,
Have caught fire, like flames in a heap of ghada.*

That same poem includes the following line:

*When night and day seize upon a noble man,
They bring him closer to death.*

It also includes the following two lines:

*I am not the sort of person who, when hard times exhaust,
Declares: "The flood has reached its crest,"
Even when a deep sigh settles between my ribs,
Filling them from side to side.*

3461. A group of poets then wrote poems contesting his poem ending in *alif maqsura*, among whom was Abu'l Qasim `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Dawud ibn Fahm al-Tanukhi al-Antaki, who is at present, i.e, the year 332, in Basra with the Baridis.* His poem ending in *alif maqsura* where he praises his tribe of Tanukh and Quda`a, begins as follows:

*Had I not restrained myself, I would not have obeyed those who
restrained me,
For what can be demanded of one who crossed the furthest barrier?*

If I failed in my duty, my heart did not, a heart that glances of beautiful maidens causes to bleed,

And eyes which, when they regard the people of ghada,

Turn away, with live coals of ghada in their eyelids.

In that same poem he says:

How many a gazelle that eyes have followed

Faster to kill the spirit than the edge of the sword,

Faster than fear that strikes a heart,

And than love that fills to the brim the very core of a heart.

O tribe of Quda`a ibn Mulk ibn Himyar:

For those who climb mountains, nothing can be higher than they.

3462. Abu'l Muqatil Nasr ibn Nusair al-Hulwani was the first to write a poem in *alif maqsura* in which he lauds Muhammad ibn Zaid al-Hasani, the missionary in Tabaristan, which includes the verses:

Let us stop, my two friends, upon those heights,

And ask them: Where are those beautiful maidens?

Where are those maidens whose residences are now within sight?

By interrogating them, you might cure your passionate love.

3463. Ibn Warqa' also wrote a poem in *alif maqsura* which includes the verse:

Say what you will: she's an oryx, she's the most valuable of possessions:

Jewels that cry for the flanks of lovely maidens.

3464. Among those who died after Ibn Duraid al-`Umani was Abu `Abdullah al-Mufajja`, who was a state secretary, poet and expert on obscure language. He was the companion of al-Bahili al-Basri, who used to refute Ibn Duraid. Among the widely admired verses of al-Mufajja` are the following:

My heart was overjoyed at seeing Rudaina,

But the two sides of a valley came between me and visiting her.

*At night, a vision of her visited me as I travelled,
But observing the two stars in Aries diverted my eye.*

3465. We narrated the events of the days of al-Qahir, though brief, in our book *al-Awsat*, making it unnecessary to repeat that account in this book. Success comes from God.

Chapter 127

An account of the caliphate of al-Radi Billah

3466. Al-Radi Billah, Muhammad ibn Ja`far al-Muqtadir, whose patronymic was “Abu`l `Abbas”, received the oath of homage on Thursday, the sixth of Jumada I, in the year 322 [April 24, 934]. He remained in office until the tenth of Rabi` I, in the year 329 [December 13, 940] and died a natural death in Baghdad. His caliphate thus lasted six years, eleven months and eight days. His mother was a manumitted slave called Zalum.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

3467. Al-Radi first appointed as vizier Abu `Ali Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Muqla, then Abu `Ali `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Isa ibn Dawud ibn al-Jarrah, then Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn al-Qasim al-Karkhi, then Abu`l Qasim Sulaiman ibn al-Hasan ibn Makhlad, then Abu`l Fath al-Fadl ibn Ja`far ibn al-Furat, then Abu `Abdullah Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Baridi.

3468. Al-Radi was a man of culture and a charming poet, and composed fine verses on several different themes which were, if not the equal of the poetry of Ibn al-Mu`tazz, not much inferior to this latter’s verse. Among these are the verses he composed to describe his feelings and those of his beloved when they meet:

*My face grows pale when my eyes regard him,
While his cheeks redden with shyness.
It is as if what appears on his cheeks,*

Is the blood of my face carried over to his.

Among his other fine verses are the following:

Many a night when the time to visit him drew near

Hid me, but comforted me with visiting him,

A cup-bearer, with comely waist: when his lantern

Gave him no light, his face was his illumination.

He testifies to me that he's willing to untie his belt,

And swaggers with a reddened cheek,

The color of pomegranate flower matching his redness.

What shoulders does his shawl enclose!

What soft twig do his buttons enfold!

*At the beck and call of goblets, his cheeks betray him.**

3469. Abu Bakr al-Suli transmitted many verses of al-Radi, and often mentioned his virtuous character, good literary taste, deep acquaintance with the sciences and with literature, familiarity with the sciences of the ancients, and his profound involvement [reading *bihar*] with the polemical activity of scholars and philosophers.

3470. It is said that one day, as al-Radi was walking about his gardens in the Thurayya Palace, he saw a delightful orchard in full bloom, and said to his intimates who were with him: "Have you seen anything more beautiful than this?" Each of them then began to praise that orchard and to describe its beauties, asserting that no worldly beauty was its equal. Al-Radi said: "By God, Al-Suli's chess playing is more beautiful than all these blooms and all that you have described."

3471. It is reported that al-Suli first came to the notice of al-Muktafi when he was mentioned to him as a skillful chess player. The chess player called al-Mawardi had been until that time a favorite of his and close to his heart, and he was an admirer of his skill. The two men then played a game of chess in the presence of al-Muktafi. The caliph's high

regard for al-Mawardi and his long-standing intimacy and affection for him led him to express open support and encouragement to the point where, at first, al-Suli was dismayed. But as the game proceeded and al-Suli arranged his pieces and laid out his plans, he managed to beat al-Mawardi decisively, and al-Suli's clear superiority was now apparent to al-Muktafi. So he abandoned his earlier partiality and support for al-Mawardi ["Rose water"] and said to him: "The water of your rose has turned into urine."

3472. Al-Mas`udi said: The drift of our narrative has now led us to say a few things about chess and what has been said about that game, though in an earlier portion of this work we have already mentioned that topic when discussing Indian history and the origins of chess and backgammon, and how these games are linked to heavenly bodies. We will now mention in brief certain aspects that we failed to mention earlier on in this work.

People both ancient and modern state that chess pieces, though divergent in shape, have six basic forms, and no other have ever been added. To begin with, there is the famous square shaped board, with eight squares by eight, attributed to the ancient Indians. There is also the oblong board with four squares by sixteen. The pieces on the oblong board are arranged at the start in four ranks on each side, with the pawns in two rows in front of the two rows of the main pieces. The moves are the same on the oblong board as they are on the square board. There is also the square board with ten by ten squares. This includes two additional pieces called the two battering rams [*dabbabatain*] which move like the king but can capture and be captured. There is also the round board attributed to the Byzantines, then the round star board called the celestial board [*falakiyya*], with twelve squares equal to the number of the constellations, and divided in two halves. Seven pieces of diverse colors are in play here, equal to the number of the five planets together with the sun and moon,

and having the same colors. In our earlier account of Indian history we described how these games are linked to the heavenly bodies and what has been said about their love for heavenly spirits; how the celestial sphere moves out of love for what lies above it; what they said about the soul and its descent from the world of the intellect to the world of sense; how the soul forgot after it had remembered and how it grew ignorant after it had been knowledgeable, and other such confused opinions which according to them are associated with the chess pieces.

3473. There is also another board called “body members” [*jawarihiyya*] invented in our own times, with seven by eight squares, with twelve pieces and six on each side. Each one of the six pieces is called after a body member with which a human being discriminates, speaks, hears, sees, strikes and strives. These are the various senses along with the sense common to them all which proceeds from the heart.

3474. The Indians, Persians, Byzantines and other nations who played that game have described the appearance of the pieces; the manner of setting them up; the way the game starts; the various moves; the amazing aspects of the game; the classification of pieces that can move several squares [*qawa'im*] and others that can move only one square at a time [*mufradat*]; and the diverse and singular kinds of pieces, which chess players have used to produce all kinds of games and astonishing and rare anecdotes. Many chess players claim that it is for these reasons that they play the game, for it requires total concentration and sound thinking.

They further say that it resembles the chants in the *rajaz* meter which fighters use when they meet the enemy or which cameleers use when the camels grow tired or the person who pulls up the big bucket when water is drawn, and that this is the equipment of the chess player, just as poetry and *rajaz* is the equipment of the fighter.

3475. Much verse has been written about what we described above, including verses composed by some players such as:

*The extraordinary phenomena of chess are, in their time,
Hotter than the hottest of live coals.*

*How many a weak player used these rare occurrences
To defeat a skillful champion!*

Among verses composed about the game where the poet did a fine job of describing the game in admirable terms are the following:

*A square board, red in color and made of leather,
Spread between two friends known for their nobility.*

*They talked about war and contrived to find something that resembled it,
But a war where they did not wish to shed any blood.*

*One player raids another and the other raids the first,
And the eye of war is never asleep.*

*Behold the horses and how they charge according to prior devising,
In two war camps, but without war drums or pennants.*

3476. Among other admirable verses that describe the game by one who had thoroughly investigated all its aspects are those composed by Abu'l Hasan ibn Abi'l Baghl, the state secretary. He was among the most distinguished of state secretaries and governors, and was well known for his knowledge of chess and his skill in playing the game:

*A noble youth who set up a chess-board in order to observe
Consequences which the eye of a fool cannot aspire to see.*

He soon grasped the significance of events,

*Through the eyes of a serious person, but with the imagination of a
player.*

So he did the ruler a favor through this game

By showing him how calamities can be avoided.

For if you carefully consider the disposition of the game,

It will appear to resemble the disposition of lances and cavalry.

3477. Al-Mas`udi said: As for backgammon, and what has been stated about its characteristics, we have described in an earlier section of this work how it is set up and played, though divergent accounts are found about this subject when we discussed Indian history. According to experts, this game has several strategies of play, arrangements and ways of setting it up, but the number of squares is constant and admits no increase or decrease, as has been asserted before regarding its details and principles. Thus, the pair of dice is clear-cut and fixed, and although the player is not free to move but is bound by the verdict of the dice, he nevertheless needs to move his pieces correctly, calculate well and deploy his pieces properly.

3478. Much verse has been composed about this game, how it is played, the verdict of the pair of dice and the judgment the dice pronounces upon the players. These verses have described the game fully and explored its significance. Thus, one poet recited:

No good comes from the dice if the player is very skillful,

But is denied good fortune.

The game shows you the verdict of the pair of dice,

Which can bring two opposite results at once: omens both good and evil.

You will barely see a man of subtle judgment defeated,

Except unjustly.

3479. Abu'l Fath Mahmud ibn al-Husain ibn al-Sindi ibn Shahak, the state secretary known as Kushajim*, recited the following verses to me. He was a man of wide culture and knowledge, and the verses he recited had been addressed to a friend of his where he censures backgammon, a game his friend was famous for:

O you who are so fond of backgammon, and so proud of your skill,

In order to boast of your victory before your friends:

*I did my best, I swear, to defeat you, and would have done so,
Had not the dice favored you.*

*But the intelligent person is let down by guessing,
And weeps for being so harshly denied good fortune.*

*When judges pass a verdict,
The two rivals cannot circumvent their judgment.*

*I swear I am not the first human being to hope for something,
But was let down by his hopes.*

3480. Kushajim also recited to me the verses of Abu Nuwas:

*Here is a slave [dice] ordered to do one thing but does its opposite,
Doing so neither out of sin nor out of virtue.*

*When I say she did not do it, and she is not obedient,
And yet I do what she says, I've become her slave.*

3481. While narrating the history of Indian kings in an earlier chapter of this work, we mentioned what some have said about backgammon and the pair of dice, and how this game had been made into an exemplar of livelihoods, and that it is not won by shrewdness or cunning. We further mentioned the view of those who maintain that the first to play this game was Ardashir son of Babik when he saw how the world is constantly changing the fortunes of its inhabitants. He made its points to be twelve in number, corresponding to the twelve months of the year, with thirty checkers corresponding to the months, while the pair of dice is an exemplar of fate and how it toys with mankind. All this is in addition to what we have already described regarding the dispositions of that game in this and in our previous works. Some Muslim thinkers assert that the person who invented chess was a believer in justice and free-will whereas the inventor of backgammon was a believer in predestination, thus showing that a player of that game has no effect upon it but simply carries out what fate decrees upon him.

3482. Al-`Arudi, a man who had tutored al-Radi and other caliphs and their sons, said: “I once related to al-Radi a saying of Qutaiba ibn Muslim al-Bahili* regarding haughtiness and other traits of character, both laudable and otherwise, to be found among chiefs and rulers. He was then in the prime of youth and wrote down that saying just as he’d heard it from me. I later noticed that he studied it thoroughly until he had mastered it in his assemblies, at which point he was gripped by such a feeling of joy and liberality that I was not accustomed to see in him. Turning to me, he said: ‘Perhaps in time I shall acquire these moral characteristics and thus be a person who naturally practices such behavior.’”

3483. The story about Qutaiba goes as follows. While governor of Khurasan for al-Hajjaj and warring against the Turks, he was asked: “Why don’t you send so-and-so--- a companion of his---to fight a king at the head of the army?” Qutaiba replied: “He is a very haughty man. A haughty man has an inflated opinion of himself. Such a person will not consult another person equal to him in wisdom nor take counsel from a counselor. Whoso prides himself on his acting solely according to his own view [reading *bi’l infirad*] and in accordance with his autocratic and high-handed behavior is most unlikely to win victory [reading *zafra*] and most likely to meet with failure. To err in company is better than to succeed by turning one’s back on company. Whoso is arrogant as regards his enemy will despise him, and when he despises him he will underestimate him. Whoso underestimates his enemy and is too confident of his superior power and of his own war preparations will be less cautious. Whoso is less cautious is likely to make mistakes. Never have I known a great leader who behaved with arrogance towards an opponent in war but was himself defeated and routed. No by God! I will not appoint him unless he has better hearing than a horse; better eyesight than

a vulture; finds his way better than a sand grouse; is more cautious than a magpie; is bolder than a lion; leaps better than a panther; is more spiteful than a camel; is more sly than a fox; is more generous than a rooster; is meaner than a small child; is more wary than a crane; more loyal than a dog; more patient than a lizard; and gathers more than an ant. For the human spirit is as careful as the need requires it to be, is as mindful as fear forces it to be, and as covetous as circumstances allow it to be. A perennial piece of wisdom goes as follows: ‘A person who thinks highly of himself is not one whose views can be trusted, a haughty man has no friends, and whoso wishes to be liked must make himself likeable.’”

3484. Al-`Arudi also narrated the following incident: “Once, when al-Radi was still young, we were having a discussion, attended by a number of scholars and historians of ancient times. That discussion ended up with our recalling the story of Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan when he received a letter from the Byzantine king asking him to send him the trousers of the largest person in his realm. Mu`awiya said: ‘I know no one who fits this description better than Qais ibn Sa`d.’ So he turned to Qais and said: ‘When you reach your house, send me your trousers.’ Qais at once pulled them off and threw them down. Mu`awiya said: ‘Had you not better have sent them from your house?’ Qais recited the following verses:

*I wished to do so in order that people might know,
That they are the trousers of Qais, and with all these delegations
witnessing the fact.*

*I did not want them to say: Qais has departed and these must be
Trousers belonging to some man from `Ad, brought up by Thamud. ’**

3485. “A man who attended that assembly said: ‘Jabala ibn al-Ayham, a king of Ghassan, was twelve *shibrs* tall. When riding, his feet scraped the ground.’ Al-Radi said to him: ‘That fellow, Qais ibn Sa`d, when riding, would sweep the ground with his feet. When walking among people, they

imagined that he was riding. My ancestor, `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas, was a tall and handsome man, and people marveled at how tall he was. He used to say: ‘In height I came up to the shoulders of my father `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas, and he in turn came up to the shoulders of my grandfather al-`Abbas. When al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib used to circumambulate the Holy House, he appeared like a white marquee.’ I swear that those in attendance marveled at how he narrated that story, given his young age.

3486. “We then discussed the wonders of the lands and how each land had its own flora, fauna and minerals like precious stones and so forth. A man who attended that gathering said: ‘The strangest creature on this earth is a bird in Tabaristan found on river banks which resembles the sparrow hawk. The people of Tabaristan call it *kikam*, a name that resembles its cry. It cries only once a year during the spring season. When it does so, all the other smaller birds found in the water or elsewhere gather around it and at daybreak it feeds upon them. At the end of the day, it picks up the nearest bird to it and eats it. This happens every day until the end of the spring season. Once the spring has passed, the birds turn against it in force, driving it away and beating it. It then runs away and no longer cries until the following spring. It is an attractive bird, multicolored, and with pretty eyes.’ The man added: ‘`Ali ibn Rabban al-Tabari,* author of the work entitled *Firdaws al-Hikma*, states that this bird is barely visible and its two legs have never been seen touching the ground together. Instead, it steps on the ground with one foot then the other in turn, but never both together. Al-Jahiz states that this bird is one of the wonders of the world since it never places both feet on the ground at once but only with one, for fear that the ground might sink beneath it.’ He added: ‘The other wonder is a worm weighing one to three *mithqals* which glows at night like a candle and flies by day when it

is seen to have smooth green wings but not two wings. It feeds on the soil and never has enough of it for fear the soil of the world might run out and it would die of hunger. It has several peculiar attributes and wide benefits. The third wonder, even more astonishing than that bird and that worm, is a man who hires himself out to be killed, that is to say, like mercenary soldiers.’

3487. “Those attending liked that account. Al-Radi, commenting on the man who related the first report, said: ‘Al-Jahiz mentioned that the most marvelous things in this world are three in number: the owl that does not appear by day fearing the evil eye because of its beauty and its own view of itself as the prettiest of creatures. Hence, it only comes out at night. The second marvel is the crane which does not place both its feet at once on the ground but only one. If it does place both feet together, it does not trust them much but walks with great care for fear that the ground might collapse beneath it because of its weight. The third marvel is a bird that settles near where rivers overflow when they bend. It is known as the heron [*malik al-hazin*] which resembles the crane. It does so for fear that water might drain away from the face of the earth and so it would die of thirst.’ Al-`Arudi added: ‘The gathering broke up with everyone amazed at al-Radi and how he, still a mere youth, could produce such information, given the presence of the wise, knowledgeable and older people who attended that gathering.’”

3488. Al-Mas`udi said: In our earlier works, we presented an account of the wonders of the earth and the seas, and what they contain by way of marvels of construction and curiosities of animals, minerals, and waters both calm and agitated, making it unnecessary to repeat that information here. Here, we simply record the history of al-Radi as a young man, what his tutor reported, and any other information that we happen to set forth in an orderly fashion in this work.

3489. Al-'Arudi said: "I was spending a night of pleasant conversation with al-Radi. It was a hard winter's night, and I saw that he was anxious and fidgety, so I said to him: 'O Commander of the Believers, I note in you a certain mood that I am not used to see in you, and an edginess that is unfamiliar to me.' He replied: 'Never mind this, and tell me a story. If this story of yours manages to relieve me of my anxiety you can have all that I am wearing and all that is beneath me, but on condition that my anxiety is relieved by laughter.' I said: 'O Commander of the Believers, a man from the Hashim clan set out to see a cousin of his in Medinah, and stayed with him for a whole year without ever visiting the toilet. The year having passed, he wanted to return to Kufa, but his cousin swore that he would stay a few more days, and he did so. The cousin had two singing girls to whom he said: 'Have you not seen how refined my cousin is? He stayed with us for a whole year without ever visiting the toilet.' The two singers answered: 'We must devise something whereby he cannot but go to the toilet.' 'Do so,' said the cousin.

3490. "They took the wood of a certain gum-tree [*ushar*], known to be a laxative, pounded it and added it to his drink. When drinking time arrived, they presented that drink to the man but another drink to their master. As the drink began to take effect, the master of the house pretended to sleep while the man began to suffer from stomach cramps. Turning to the singing girl closest to him, he asked: 'Madam, where is the privy [*khala*]'?' The other singer asked her: 'What is he saying?' She answered: 'He is asking you to sing to him the verses:

*The encampment is forsaken [khala] by Fatima's clan,
And where her family used to camp is now desolate.*

So she sang him that song. The youth said to himself: 'I guess they must be from Kufa because they did not understand me.' Turning to the other singer he asked: 'Madam, where is the latrine [*hushsh*]?' The other singer

asked her: ‘What is he saying?’ She answered: ‘He is asking you to sing to him the verses:

*Al-Duqran and al-Dayr are desolate [awhasha] without her,
So he encountered her in a fortified palace.*

So she sang him that song.

3491. “The youth said to himself: ‘I guess they must be from Iraq because they did not understand me.’ Turning to the first singer he asked: ‘Madam, where is the ablution place [*mutawadda*]?’ The other singer asked her: ‘What is he saying?’ She answered: ‘He is asking you to sing to him the verses:

*Perform your ablutions [tawadda’] for prayer and pray five times,
And call out blessings upon the Prophet.*

So she sang him that song. The youth said to himself: ‘I guess they must be from the Hijaz because they did not understand me.’ Turning to the other singer he asked: ‘Madam, where is the closet [*kanif*]?’ The other singer asked her: ‘What is he saying?’ She answered: ‘He is asking you to sing to him the verses:

*Rumor mongers have closeted [takannafani] me on all sides,
Though one would have been more than enough.’*

So she sang him that song.

3492. The youth said to himself: ‘I guess they must be from the Yemen because they did not understand me.’ Turning to the first singer he asked: ‘Madam, where is the restroom [*mustarah*]?’ The other singer asked her: ‘What is he saying?’ She answered: ‘He is asking you to sing to him the verses:

*He abandoned merriment and playfulness,
And forsook dalliance, and rested [istaraha].*

So she sang him that song. The master had heard all that conversation but pretended to be asleep. As his stomach condition became severe, the man recited:

Shit is causing me to burst; meanwhile they bore me

By repeating their songs.

When I could bear it no longer,

I pitched it in the face of these whores.

He then untied his trousers and shat on the two singing girls, leaving them a marvel to behold. The master woke up at this point and when he saw what had happened to his slave girls he asked him: ‘Brother, what made you do this?’ The man answered: ‘Son of a bitch! You have slave girls who think that the shitting-place is like the ‘straight path to paradise’ and refuse to tell me where it is. So this was the only punishment I could think of. He then departed.’ Al-Radi laughed uproariously and handed over to me all that he was wearing and all the fabrics and furnishings he was sitting upon, the total value of which came to about a thousand dinars.”

3493. Al-Suli said: “Al-Radi once asked me why al-Ma’mun had decreed the wearing of green, stopped the wearing of black, then reverted afterwards to black. I replied: ‘I was informed by Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Ghallabi who had it from Ya`qub ibn Ja`far ibn Sulaiman, who said: ‘When al-Ma’mun arrived in Baghdad, the Hashim clan went as a group to see Zainab bint Sulaiman ibn `Ali. Of the Abbasid family of that time she was the closest in lineage to their ancestor and the oldest. They asked her to speak to al-Ma’mun about his changing the official color to green, and she promised them to do so. She then went to see al-Ma’mun and said: ‘Commander of the Believers, you are more capable of showing kindness to your relatives, the descendants of `Ali ibn Abi Talib, than they are to you, but without changing the custom of your forefathers.

So abandon the color green, and let no one be tempted to rebel against you for what you have done’.

3494. “‘Aunt’, he replied, ‘No one has spoken to me about this topic more eloquently than you have, nor more pointedly to what I truly intended. But the Prophet of God died, and Abu Bakr took over power, and you know how he treated us, the Family of the Prophet. Then came `Umar, and he did not change the policy of his predecessor. Then came `Uthman, who advanced the fortunes of the Umayyads and neglected everyone else. Then came `Ali, in circumstances that were not as calm as the rest of his predecessors, and in fact full of sorrows. Yet he managed to appoint `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas as governor of Basra, `Ubaidullah ibn al-`Abbas as governor of the Yemen and Qutham as governor of Bahrain, leaving none of them without an appointment of one kind or another. We owed him all these favors until I myself repaid him by the way I treated his progeny. But nothing will happen hereafter except what will be to your liking.’ He then reverted to the black color.

3495. “Al-Ma’mun, O Commander of the Believers, composed some verses which bear a resemblance to the point of the story above:

I am blamed for being grateful to the Trustee, Abu’l Hasan,

And a wonder of the age is such a blame!

He was the successor of the best of humanity,

And the first who supported God’s Prophet openly and in secret.

Were it not for him, the clan of Hashim would not have been considered worthy of power,

And would, across the years, have been disgraced and humiliated.

So he appointed the Abbasid clan and did not single out any others,

And who is more worthy than he to bestow honors and benefactions?

In Basra, `Abdullah made clear the path of virtue,

While `Ubaidullah poured out his bounty upon the Yemen.

*He divided the offices of the caliphate among them,
And I am still bound and beholden to thank him for it.”*

3496. When al-Qahir killed Mu'nis, Yalbaq and his son `Ali, he secreted away a lot of the wealth seized from them. So when al-Qahir was apprehended and his eyes were blinded, and the caliphate passed to al-Radi, al-Qahir was asked about that wealth, but denied any knowledge of it. He was severely tortured but this merely intensified his denials. So al-Radi brought him close to him, making him his intimate companion and sat for a long time conversing with him, showed him kindness and generosity, and treated him with the honors due to an uncle, to age and to being his predecessor as caliph, and was generally most pleasant and considerate towards him.

3497. Al-Qahir had owned an orchard in some plain where he had planted *narinj* [bitter orange] trees which had been brought to him from Basra and Oman, imported from India. The trees had grown tall, their branches intertwined, and the fruit sparkled like the stars, red and yellow. In between grew all sorts of foliage and flowers and aromatic plants. That estate also included all sorts of birds such as turtledoves, collared doves, blackbirds and parakeets, brought to him from various kingdoms and lands. It all looked exceedingly beautiful, and al-Qahir would often go there to drink and sit for long hours enjoying the ambiance.

3498. When the caliphate passed to al-Radi, al-Qahir grew even more fond of that orchard, and would sit and drink there at all times. Al-Radi, treating him with gentleness, informed him that he was very hard up on money, what with his troops demanding pay and his dire need for funds, and that he had no money at all. He asked him to help him out if he had any wealth since the government had now passed to him, but that he would carry out all his instructions and in all matters would follow his advice. He swore a solemn oath to him that he would not kill him or harm

him or his children. Al-Qahir was grateful to him for this avowal and said: "I have no wealth except in this orchard of bitter oranges." So al-Radi accompanied him to the orchard and asked him where the treasure was hidden. Al-Qahir replied: "My sight has been taken from me so I cannot identify the exact spot but order a trench to be dug and you will find it, since it cannot be hidden from you."

3499. The orchard was then ploughed up and all these trees and flowers were uprooted, and there was no place in it which was not thoroughly dug up, but nothing was found. Al-Radi then said to him: "There is nothing here of what you mentioned. What made you do this?" Al-Qahir replied: "Do I have any wealth? My deepest regret was to see you seated happily upon that throne, a throne that I once considered my true delight in this world. So I lamented the fact that anyone should enjoy the caliphate after me." Al-Radi was deeply disappointed by the trick played upon him regarding that orchard, and regretted the fact that he had believed him. He then distanced himself from him and would not let him come anywhere near him, fearing for himself or that he might harm those dear to him.

3500. Al-Radi frequently used perfume, had a handsome appearance, was liberal and generous, was well acquainted with historical events, drew close to him men of scholarship, literature and knowledge, was very intimate and generous to them, and no close companion ever left his presence on any day without receiving a sum of money, a robe of honor, or a gift of perfume. He had several intimates including Muhammad ibn Yahya al-Suli, Ibn Hamdun al-Nadim and others. He was once chided for his liberality to his boon companions and replied: "I find laudable what the Commander of the Believers Abu'l `Abbas al-Saffah used to do. He was a man whose numerous virtues could hardly be found all together in a single person. No companion or entertaining singer would ever leave his assembly without carrying away a present or a robe, be it small or

large. He never postponed rewarding someone who deserved reward until the following day and would say: ‘It is truly astonishing that a person who is brought joy by another should postpone rewarding him as a means of putting him off.’ Thus, whenever Abu’l `Abbas sat in formal assembly by day or night, all who attended would leave in a happy state. As for us, and even though our circumstances differ from those who came before us, we nevertheless compensate our companions, nay, our brothers, with whatever is at hand.”

3501. Al-Radi was generous in all matters and never considered that any boon companion had received too many presents as time passed, to the point where some companions would fail to attend his gatherings after having received so much of his bounty. Among royal servants, those with most influence over him were Raghīb and Zirak, while among his pages it was Dhakī and others.

3502. Abu’l Hasan al-`Arudī, al-Radi’s tutor, related the following story: “On the Festival of Mahrajan, I was passing by the residence of Bajkam* the Turk on the Tigris, and saw festivities, entertainment, amusements and enjoyment such as I’d never seen their like before. I then entered to see al-Radi, and found him all alone, gripped by anxiety. I stood before him and he told me to draw near. When I did so, I saw him holding a dinar and a dirham in his hand. The dinar weighed about ten *mithqals* as did the dirham. Inscribed on both was the image of Bajkam in full armor with the following words inscribed around it:

Power, you must know, belongs

To the glorious Emir

Lord of mankind: Bajkam

The obverse of the coins had exactly the same image and inscription. Al-Radi sat in deep thought.

3503. “He then turned to me and said: ‘Do you see what this fellow has done, to what he aspires, and what his soul is whispering to him?’ I had no answer to give him. So I began to relate to him the history of earlier caliphs and how they acted with their underlings, then went on to tell him about the history and conduct of Persian kings and how they suffered from their servants, their patience in the face of this, and their good management of affairs until matters were put aright and normalcy was restored. He found in these tales a diversion from that bout of anxiety. I then said: ‘What prevents the Commander of the Believers from being today like al-Ma’mun when he composed the following verses:

*Offer your companions on the Day of Mahrajan,
A cup of pure wine, aged in a wine jug,
In an ancient khusruwani goblet,
Since this is a khusruwani festival.
Drive away all raisin drinks from me,
For their concern is far different from mine.
So I shall drink it, and consider it forbidden,
And hope for God’s forgiveness, who is the lord of kindness,
While he drinks it and considers it licit,
And two sins are inscribed against that wretch.*

He grew elated, his spirits rose, and he said to me: ‘How right you are! To abandon joy on such a day is a mark of impotence.’

3504. “He then summoned his companions, sat on the royal throne near the Tigris, and I never witnessed such a day of joy and pleasures. All his boon companions, singers and entertainers who attended him were liberally rewarded with dinars, dirhams, robes of honor and kinds of perfume, and presents and gifts from foreign parts arrived from Bajkam. He and all who attended him that day were full of joy.”

3505. Al-Mas`udi said: In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we dealt in detail and at length with the events that took place during the reign of al-Radi, how he left for the land of Mosul and Diyar Rabi`a in the company of Bajkam, and what transpired between Bajkam and Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn `Abdullah ibn Hamdan, who afterwards gained the title of “Champion of the State” [*Nasir al-Dawlah*]. In everything that we have mentioned in this present work, our intention has been to give succinct rather than lengthy and detailed accounts, since relating history at great length is burdensome to the spirit and boring to those who listen to it. Hence, shortened accounts will serve the purpose even though it is possible to relate them at length.

Chapter 128

An account of the caliphate of al-Muttaqi Li`llah

3506. Al-Muttaqi, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn al-Muqtadir, received the oath of homage on the tenth of Rabi` I, in the year 329 [December 13, 940]. He was deposed and blinded on Saturday, the third of Safar, in the year 333 [September 25, 944]. His caliphate thus lasted three years, eleven months and twenty-three days. His mother was a former slave.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

3507. When the caliphate passed to al-Muttaqi, he confirmed Sulaiman ibn al-Hasan ibn Makhlad as vizier. Later, he appointed Abu`l Husain Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Maimun, who was his secretary before he became caliph. He then appointed Abu Ishaq Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Qarariti, followed by Abu`l `Abbas Ahmad ibn `Abdullah al-Isbahani, followed by Abu`l Husain `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Muqla. The most influential figure of this reign was Abu`l Wafa` Tuzun, the Turk.

3508. The Baridis of Basra grew greatly in power, and prevented ships from ascending up river. Their troops and followers increased greatly in

number and they possessed two kinds of armies: a navy consisting of ships large and small such as are called *shadhawat*, *tayyarat*, *samiriyyat*, and *zabazib*, equipped for war, and a very large land army. They were able to attract followers through financial inducements, to the point where many of the caliph's bodyguards and slave soldiers joined their ranks. The caliph's army on the other hand consisted of Turks, Dailam, Jil and some Qarmatians but all under the command of Tuzun. Tuzun had been an intimate companion of Bajkam. He then descended to Wasit to fight the Baridis who had occupied Wasit, and the fighting between them had its ups and downs.

3509. Meanwhile, al-Muttaqi was totally helpless, so he wrote to Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn `Abdullah ibn Hamdan, the "Champion of the State", and to his brother Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn Hamdan, the "Sword of the State,"*pleading with them to come to his aid and save him from his dire straits in return for turning all power and authority over to them. He had before that date gone out to them, in the company of Tuzun and other Turks and Dailam. This was when the Hamdanids killed Ibn Ra'iq in 330 [941-2] and then descended to Baghdad, seized supreme power and fought the Baridis. The wars between them were described in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman* until their defeat, together with how Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn `Abdullah left Baghdad for Mosul, followed by his brother Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn `Abdullah, and how he managed to escape the plots devised against him by Tuzun and Khajkhaj, the Turk.

3510. So al-Muttaqi left for Mosul. When Tuzun heard of it, he returned to Baghdad and attacked the Hamdanids. The two sides met at `Ukbara and the fighting went back and forth until finally Tuzun defeated them and returned to Baghdad. Massing their troops again, the Hamdanids returned to the fight. He left them until they were near Baghdad then

went out and, following several engagements, defeated them, followed them to Mosul and then to Balad, where the Hamdanids sued for peace and paid him a sum of money. So he returned to Baghdad in triumph, accompanied by the Turks, Jil, and Dailam, his arms and mounts in perfect order.

3511. Meanwhile, al-Muttaqi travelled to Nasibin and thence to al-Raqqa where he resided. This took place a few days remaining from the month of Ramadan, in the year 332 [ca. May 21, 944]. He then wrote to al-Ikhshid Muhammad ibn Tughj, ruler of Egypt, who headed towards al-Raqqa, bearing with him much wealth and many gifts of slaves and furnishings. He also attached to al-Muttaqi one of his own military commanders, greatly improved his state of affairs, and bestowed generous gifts on all who were in the caliph's entourage like his vizier Abu'l Husain `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Muqla, the chief judge Ahmad ibn `Abdullah ibn Ishaq al-Khiraqi, his chamberlain Salama, known as Brother of Nujh al-Tuluni, and other notables and royal servants. But al-Ikhshid himself did not cross over to al-Raqqa nor to any other territory in the Jazira and Diyar Mudar. It was al-Muttaqi who travelled to al-Ikhshid's camp on the Sham side, where they held lengthy talks and exchanged oaths and covenants. Meanwhile Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn Hamdan stayed in Harran throughout al-Muttaqi's residence in al-Raqqa.

3512. When al-Ikhshid marched towards Qinnasrin and al-`Awasim, Abu `Abdullah al-Husain ibn Sa`id ibn Hamdan left Aleppo and the territory of Homs, at which point his troops dispersed and joined Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn `Abdullah.

3513. Tuzun then kept sending letters and messengers to al-Muttaqi asking him to return to the capital. He summoned as witnesses the judges, jurists and notaries in the city, and gave his solemn oaths and covenants

that he would hear and obey al-Muttaqi, be loyal to him, submit to all his commands and prohibitions, and abandon any opposition to him. He then sent him the letters carrying his solemn oaths as witnessed by the judges and notaries. The Hamdanids advised al-Muttaqi not to go down to Baghdad and warned him against Tuzun, telling him he could not be trusted not to kill him. Al-Muttaqi however rejected their advice and chose instead to believe Tuzun. The Hamdanids had spent large sums of money on al-Muttaqi throughout his stay with them and his travels in their territory. It would take too long to describe or estimate these sums, for many people have reported them to us.

3514. Al-Ikhshid then left the Euphrates region and headed back to Egypt, and al-Muttaqi went by river down to Baghdad. He was first met by Abu Ja`far ibn Shirzad, Tuzun's secretary, and received a most fitting welcome. The Turks provided a guard of honor. He continued on his journey downwards until he reached the canal known as Nahr `Isa. He then walked to an estate known al-Sindiyya on the bank of that canal where Tuzun met him, dismounted and walked before him. The caliph swore that Tuzun should remount and he did so. Tuzun then led the caliph to the encampment which he had set up for him on the bank of Nahr `Isa, a journey of one stage from Baghdad. He resided there, then Tuzun sent messengers to Tahir's residence to bring al-Mustakfi.

3515. When al-Mustakfi arrived at that encampment, al-Muttaqi was arrested, all his belongings were seized, his vizier Ibn Muqla and his judge Ibn Ishaq were detained, and his entire camp was plundered. The military commander whom al-Ikhshid had assigned to al-Muttaqi departed with his followers, and headed back to his master in Egypt. Al-Mustakfi was then brought forward and homage was paid to him, and al-Muttaqi was blinded. As he screamed, his women folk and servants also screamed when they heard him, so Tuzun ordered drums to be beaten

around the encampment to stifle his screams. He was then led, blinded, into the presence of Tuzun, and the emblems of the caliphate, the cloak, scepter and ring, were taken from him and handed to al-Mustakfi. When the former caliph al-Qahir heard about al-Muttaqi's blinding, he said: "There are now two of us, and we need a third," alluding to al-Mustakfi.

3516. Muhammad ibn `Abdullah al-Dimashqi said: "When al-Muttaqi was residing in al-Raqqa, I used to run errands for him and was close to him in service because of our long association. One day, as he sat in his residence overlooking the Euphrates in al-Raqqa, he said to me: 'Find me a man with a good knowledge of history who can entertain me when I am alone and comfort me from time to time.' So I asked around in al-Raqqa about such a person, and an old man was mentioned to me who was confined to his house. I went to see him and encouraged him to go and meet al-Muttaqi.

3517. "The man got up, reluctantly, and went with me to al-Muttaqi, and I informed him that I had brought the person he had requested. When he was alone, he summoned him, brought him near, and found him to be what he'd wanted. The man remained with him while he resided in al-Raqqa, and was with him when he travelled to Baghdad by river.

Reaching the mouth of the Sa`id canal, between al-Raqqa and al-Rahba, al-Muttaqi could not sleep so he asked the man: 'Do you memorize the poetry of the Whites [Talibids]?' The man recounted the history of the family of the Talibids until he reached the history of al-Hasan ibn Zaid and his brother Muhammad and their times in Tabaristan. He spoke at length about their virtues and how men of culture and learning used to frequent them, together with the poetry written about them. Al-Muttaqi asked him: 'Do you recall the ode composed by Abu'l Muqatil Nasr ibn Nusair al-Hulwani about Muhammad ibn Zaid al-Hasani, the missionary?' He replied: 'No, O Commander of the Believers, but I do

have a page here with me who, because of his youth, his sharp intellect and his eagerness in seeking knowledge and learning, has memorized of history and poetry what I could not.’ Al-Muttaqi said: ‘Summon him. Why have you kept this fact hidden from me so that his presence with us can increase our pleasure?’

3518. “The young page was then brought from another boat and stood before his master who said to him: ‘Do you recall the ode composed by Abu’l Muqatil about Muhammad ibn Zaid?’ He answered: ‘Yes.’ Al-Muttaqi said: ‘Recite it to me’ and he did so:

Say not ‘one glad tiding’ but rather ‘two’:

The beautiful face of the missionary, and the Festival of Mahrajan.

*The Mahrajan is merely a season that comes around at a particular time,
But the whole of time is the slave of Ibn Zaid.*

The palms of his hands deal out both death and life,

And his moral character embraces the essence of paradise.

He is unique in all his attributes:

In his gifts, in dealing out death, and in providing security.

He is one of a kind, who built structures

Which he endowed with all sorts of shapes.

Excessive in his liberality, without apologizing,

Excessive in benevolence, without asking people to be beholden to him.

He is the one in whom the Prophet of God found a solid anchor,

In addition to glorious `Ali and Hasan and Husain.

A lord among men, the progeny of two Lords [Hasan and Husain],

Too glorious to mention are his chaste female ancestors.

His thinking penetrates into all matters:

Thus, he is in every place and in every locality.

He always knows what is invisible,

And sees what is hidden in any visible object.

*Our words fall short of describing him,
But, in describing him, he comes close to fantasy.
His own words reveal what is hidden,
And Time has made it unnecessary for him to require any interpreter.
Whoever asserts that he has his equal among creatures,
Is blatantly a blasphemer against God and the Qur'an.
When he wears his armor,
And his right hand holds a Yemeni sword,
His assault causes death itself to be terrified,
And death grows certain that it shall die.
He stares at heroes
Till he leaves the bravest of them like a coward.
The Angel of Death calls out to him: "Give me safe conduct!
How much do you wage war by striking and stabbing!
Do not burden me with more than I can bear,
For God has given you my bridle!"
O you who are the twin of inescapable fate,
How many a refractory [reading hiran] chief have you tamed with your
sword!
Your hands have carried out both promise and threat,
And all hands in this world have submitted to you.
When his right hand has sated men with liberality,
His left hand sates them with his lances.
Equally capable are his hands of benevolence and of harm,
And they are at all times like two co-wives.
Your hands have spread benevolence everywhere,
To the point where lips mention none but you.
Your accomplishments cannot be confined to the bounds of a book,
For your prominence exceeds all that may be counted as prominent.*

*Your hands have carried such burdens
 As heaven and earth are unable to carry.
 Your praise is a divine inspiration, like the Psalms,
 Or the words of God enclosed in their two covers.
 O Imam of religion, receive this poem from another Imam,
 One whose poems have outstripped all others.
 Listen to the first line of this meter called raml,
 Composed by one who ended the ordeal, without being tested.
 Fa`ilatun, Fa`ilatun, Fa`ilatun,*
 It has six parts when measured.
 Sphere of the sun in the heavens, which rises only when the wind
 Acts as its scepter,
 It is made clear in the form of words in one who is sought,
 By all who seek pardon or who have committed a crime.
 Your moral character resembles eternal paradise,
 And verses composed about you resemble beautiful heavenly maidens.
 May you live as subject of poetry as long as poetry itself shall last,
 And as long as thanks may last---how excellent are these two lasting
 things!
 May you last as long as Mount Radwa, or even Thabir and al-Sham,
 And Aram, and the date clusters of Aban!**

*God is a witness as to what is in my heart,
 So listen to my words, as if to repeat the call to prayer.
 All are words of goodness, none of evil,
 Praises of a well-wisher—so write them down you two scribes!*

Al-Muttaqi, whenever a line of verse was recited to him, would ask the young page to repeat it. He then commanded the page to sit down.

3519. “Thus, on the day when Tuzun’s secretary Ibn Shirzad met him, he heard al-Muttaqi reciting:

Say not 'one glad tidings' but rather 'two'

The young page who was present and whom al-Muttaqi had now befriended said: 'O Commander of the Believers, please recite the first line as follows:

May one glad tidings last, so say to me 'two glad tidings'

He had first recited that opening line as: *Say not 'one glad tidings'* but then recited it a second time as: *May one glad tidings last, so say to me 'two glad tidings.'* He had then related to him the story of Abu'l Muqatil and the missionary. But, by God, al-Muttaqi kept reciting it as *Say not one glad tidings'* and refused to recite it in any other way. The old man from al-Raqqa and the youthful page said to the man who transmitted this tale: 'We changed the opening line of that poem because we felt that it was ill-omened for the Commander of the Believers to choose to recite it except in that form.'" His subsequent fate has been described above.

3520. Muhammad ibn `Abdullah al-Dimashqi said: "When we descended with al-Muttaqi from al-Rahba and reached the town of `Ana, he summoned the man from al-Raqqa and his youthful page. These two then conversed with him and eventually came to discuss horses. Al-Muttaqi asked: 'Which one of you remembers the story of Salman ibn Rabi`a al-Bahili and `Umar ibn al-Khattab?' The youth replied: 'O Commander of the Believers, Abu `Amr ibn al-`Ala'* stated that, in the days of `Umar ibn al-Khattab, Salman ibn Rabi`a al-Bahili used to find fault with horses and rank them according to merit. One day, `Amr ibn Ma`di Karib brought Salman a chestnut horse which Salman recorded as being defective and low-born. `Amr considered this an unfriendly act and complained about this to `Umar. Salman said: 'Get me a flat water trough with low rims.' When this was produced, he poured some water into it. He then brought forward a noble horse whose nobility none could dispute. The horse moved forward quickly, knelt down and drank. `Amr's

horse was then brought forward, the one judged to be low-born. The horse moved quickly, put his hoof forward, stretched his neck, as the noble horse had done, then bent one of his hooves a little and drank. When `Umar ibn al-Khattab saw this, that incident having taken place in his presence, he said: 'You are the Salman of Horses!'

3521. "Al-Muttaqi said: 'What do you recall by way of the characteristics of horses as transmitted by al-Asma`i?' The man from al-Raqqah replied: 'Al-Riyashi, transmitting from al-Asma`i, said: If a horse has long front legs from elbow to knees, short hind legs from stifle to hock, has long front legs but short between pastern and knee, has long stifles, long gaskins and broad shoulders, he can hardly be surpassed. If a horse is free of two defects, no other defect would matter much: if his crest is implanted in the upper part of his back or if his croup is implanted in his loin. If his hooves are spaced out, he is what he is. Al-Mubarrad recited to us:

*I have known a horse to carry me and my armor,
Ready to charge, like a fast running wolf in a prairie,
A horse which, if you see from the front,
Appears to the eye like a frontrunner, reddish-white in color,
And if you see him sideways, his various body parts appear even,
As if he's turning his back upon you and plunging down.*

3522. "O Commander of the Believers, Mu`awiya once asked Matir ibn Darraj: 'Which horse is best, and be brief in your answer?' He answered: 'He is the kind of horse which, if you confront, you'd say he's a runaway; if you see him from behind, you'd say he's high and noble; if you see him from the side, you'd say he has a large and full barrel. His whip is his bridle and his passion is his rider.' Mu`awiya asked: 'Which work horse is the worst?' He replied: 'He is thick in the crest and loud in clamor, the

sort of horse which, if you let go of his reins will say ‘Rein me in’ and if you rein him in will say ‘Let me go.’

3523. “The young page added: ‘The best description of a horse is in the following verses:

The best mount for a hero when one day it is said:

‘Mount for a raid’!

Is a great and noble horse, slim of barrel, even-tempered,

Free from knots in his legs, noble in pedigree,

Long in the chin, wide chested, sharp-eared,

Intelligent and hairless of face.

Heat did not scorch him, his back grew strong,

But afflicted with cold, he was bent double in the fighting.

Short in the flank, heavy in the pastern, easy to ride,

Long in the eyelids and eyelashes.

Lofty when he approaches, he moves slowly, crawling when he turns around,

Turning his back like one charging downhill.

From behind he appears tall and broad and large, taking short steps.

Tall as his rider, his legs and ribs like a mountain in a plain.

Long and thick his stifles, so he’s suitable for leaping and of firm resolve.

His legs are wide apart, he has great endurance, and his eyelids

Are above a nose like a hyena’s cave.

Broad in his cannon, sides and tendons,

While his eye is sharp but dignified.

Clear in skin, eye and hoof,

Fast running and covering long distances.

Short in the heel, back and pastern,

Short and hairless in the tail, and his body thick fleshed.

Slow walking has not bent his back,

*And riding him has not made him slow.
 Bent in the pastern, with a band carrying armor,
 Coming near, like a bird's beak.
 He crosses his legs when walking, like one
 Moving his tendons, or pierces like a nail.
 If he moves forward, without any obstacle
 Preventing him from moving forward,
 He gives way and jolts to and fro when approaching,
 But as he turns away, he swoops and continues his rearward flight,
 In leap after leap, like shadows or like the jinn, or like gazelles or like a
 young camel.
 If in running he covers a long distance,
 Eagles are eager to attack predatory birds in difficulty.**

3524. "The following night, al-Muttaqi summoned both the young page and the man from Raqqa and said: 'Go back to yesterday's subject and start by recounting the description of race tracks and the classification of horses in these races.' The young page said: 'O Commander of the Believers, what comes to mind is an all-embracing saying related to me by Abu'l Hindam Kilab ibn Hamza al-'Uqaili who told me the following: 'The Arabs used to race their horses ten at a time or less, and those who reach the winning post are nine [reading *tis`a*]. Only eight horses are allowed into the walled paddock. The names of the horses are as follows: the first is called the forerunner or winner [*mujalli*]. He is called thus because he wiped away [*jala*] all anxiety and nervousness from his master. Al-Farra' argues that he is called thus because he makes the face of his master radiant. The second is called the crouper [*musalli*] because his muzzle came up to the croup of the winner, this being the dock of the tail. The third is the comforter [*musalli*] because he has a share in winning. The Arabs used to pick out the first three as their choice of

winners. But he is also called comforter because he comforts his master and relieves some of his anxiety.

3525. “The fourth is called the follower [*tali*] because he followed the third, with no other horse besides him. The fifth is called *murtah*, [of a palm of the hand] from the passive stem of *al-raha* [palm of hand]. There are five fingers in the palm of a hand, and none others are counted. When the ancient Arabs alluded to any number from one to five, whoever is giving the signal opens his palm and spreads wide his five fingers. This is also what they used to believe as regards reckoning by knots.* Thereafter, and up to ten, the person signaling would open both hands and use all his fingers, contrasting one set of five fingers with the other. Since the horse that comes fifth is like the fifth finger, that is, the little finger, he is called *murtah*. The sixth is called *haziyy* [lucky] because he met with some luck. In another version, he is called thus because the Prophet once gave the horse who came sixth his own staff. The sixth is the last horse to win some prize or honor but is nevertheless considered lucky.

3526. “The seventh is called *al-`atif* [the attainer] because he entered the walled paddock and attained something, though paltry, but did well by merely being admitted to the paddock. The eighth is *al-mu`ammal* [the hopeful prospect] which has to do with feelings and a good omen, just as they called the desert [*falat*] a place of safety [*mafaza*], the person who is bitten by a snake is called the healthy one [*salim*], the Ethiopian is called “Abu’l Bayda” [father of whiteness] and other such examples. Likewise, they called the losing horse the ‘hopeful prospect’, which is to say that something might still be hoped from him even though he lost, since he came near horses that had better luck than he.

3527. “The ninth they called *al-latim* [the slapped one] because had he wished to enter the paddock he would have been slapped, but is bigger in body while running than the seventh and eighth. The tenth they called *al-*

sukkayt [the silencer] because his master is downcast and humiliated, and remains silent out of sorrow and distress. They would tie a rope on the neck of this horse and get a monkey to ride it, whip the horse and the horse would be hard ridden by the monkey, all of this being done to humiliate the horse's master. Al-Walid ibn Hisn al-Kalbi recited the following verses in this regard:

*If you did not win the race and fell behind,
You would still be a winner if only you are not stigmatized by the monkey
and the rope.*

*But if you are truly associated with the silencer [al-sukkayt]
You will make your master inherit humiliation and arrows.*

The reference to arrows is that some of them used to do the following: they would set up their horse as a target then shoot him with arrows until he is wasted. Al-Nu`man did this to a mare of his called al-Nahb.

3528. "Kilab ibn Hamza said: 'I know of no Arab, either in the Jahiliyya or in Islam, who described all ten horses in a race, mentioning their names, characteristics and ranks, except for Muhammad ibn Yazid ibn Maslama ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. He lived in al-Jazira, in a town known as Hisn Maslama, in the province of Balikh, in the countryside of al-Raqqa, in Diyar Mudar. He composed the following poem:

*We were present at the race, in the early morning,
Along with a company of friends, brought together by the festive
occasion,
Leading our mounts to the race, like everyone else,
Though we are more experienced in horsemanship.
We began the morning with mounts we led to the race,
Like a divining arrow*, for which stars had predicted victory,
Equivalent to a verdict of "pure bred,"*
And descended from the noblest of noble stock.*

Among them was one reddish black, tightly reined in, a white mark on his forehead,

Another with a white spot between the eyes, and whiteness at the tip of his muzzle.

Reddish-black he is, and if ridden slowly, will be beaten,

But if given full rein, will be first at all finishing lines.

So the mounts were led in, for their potential,

To those who expected that they will rise like a star.

Upon them rode black men, small in stature,

Whose forefather linked them in lineage to Ham.

They appeared, when riding upon the distant figures of these horses,

Like a swarm of starlings under some roofs.

The horses were then lined up on a rope,

In the presence of one in charge of it, trustworthy and blameless.

They had all agreed that he should act as arbiter,

So he judges the race with fairness.

But your God is more knowledgeable than this group of competitors

As to who shall be the winner.

While standing on a piece of ground where the sun was dark,

I said:

“God has already decided what will happen,

And whatever the outcome, it cannot be hidden long.”

Approaching us was a horse in the lead, galloping

Like a sudden downpour of rain.

Following him was a mass, scattered and confused,

Like pearls scattered from a string,

Or else like a flock of sand grouse,

Terrified from on high by a black hawk.

The horses were like specks of shimmering dust,

*The hair on their necks like dragon's blood.
To someone watching, their hooves stirred up
What seemed like a raging fire.
The one with the white star on his forehead came first,
And the reddish black was the 'crouper' [second],
While the black horse was the 'comforter' [third] and could not be
reproached.
Next came the 'follower' [fourth],
But how can the highlander be compared to the plainsman?
Nor was the 'open palm' [fifth] censured,
Having outrun those whom he had outrun.
The sixth was 'lucky',
For he had a share in luck.
The seventh was the 'attainer', the bewildered one,
So bewildered that he could have been denied his place.
Next came the eighth, the 'hopeful prospect', disappointing hopes,
For the ill-omened bird had appeared to him.
Then came the ninth, the 'slapped one',
Who is slapped from all sides.
Ambling behind him was the tenth, the 'silencer',
The bones of his ears larger than a dome,
While his sides were like a string of pearls attached to a bulging, long-
necked bottle.
If someone asks: Who's the owner of this horse? The owner is too
ashamed to answer,
And takes refuge in silence.
He who does not train good horses for the race in the proper time,
Will not, I swear, regret it.
He who improvises with some horse of unknown breeding,*

*Is unlike one who breeds horses from a noble pedigree.
So we departed having won the race, and achieved fame,
Gaining both honor and riches.
Our horses carried the day, winning rich prizes,
So heavy as to be divided among them:
Garments of brocade, embroidered,
And raiments of silk and woven fabrics.
These were spread over them,
Their hems blood-red.
Then also a moneybag of solid silver coins,
Too heavy a load for the mightiest and most excellent beast of burden.
The seals of that moneybag were then broken,
Though our own moneybags are never sealed.
We distribute the money among the horses' grooms,
Though we ourselves attend to these horses more than they do.
We take great care with our pure-bred horses in years of hardship,
So that they do not neigh.
They are given pure milk to drink, immediately after milking,
Just like an infant about to be weaned.
These horses mingle with our own families,
With those whose love is sacred.
They are given the purest of waters to drink,
And fed the best of foods.
They are to be found in the immediate vicinity of our homes,
Lined up and neighing, or else swarming around us.**

3529. "In this ode of his, Muhammad ibn Yazid inclines to the view that the eighth has no share in the honors of the race but that the seventh does share in these honors. The term *handasa* means to race horses and examine their performance but not in an actual race. The racecourse is

called *halba* because Arabs bring [*tahlib*] to it their horses from all regions.”

3530. Al-Muttaqi said: “You two are to write down accurately what has taken place at this time.” The two remained in his company, and he continued to treat them generously until the well-known end of his caliphate.

3531. Now that our narrative has led us to this juncture in the caliphate of al-Muttaqi, let us mention some poets whose verse was celebrated at this point in time and was widely known among people. Among them was Abu’l Qasim Nasr ibn Ahmad al-Khubzaruzzi*, a poet by nature, a spontaneous versifier, and well known for his amatory poems. Examples of his admirable verses include the following:

*Passionate love has drained my body, exchanging that body for another,
Made up of love incarnate.*

*Passion renewed is ever my destruction,
To the point where, if I am free of it, I no longer exist.*

3532. Among his excellent verses are those he addressed to Ibn Lankak, another poet, in gentle reprimand:

*Why is it you do not trust my friendship,
And do not call a friend one who is truly your friend?
A reasonable man will not accept the term ‘friendship’
Until he is satisfied that its demands are fully met.
He who intends to be just is rightly called a brother,
And a companion must truly be a companion.
If he is absent, he is constant in his affections,
And when he returns, he abides by the rules of friendship,
And when he speaks, he speaks the truth.*

In that same poem occurs the following verse:

He whose heart is invaded by passion

Is sunk so much in thought that he almost seems like a heretic.

In another poem, the following verses might be cited:

Should I blame you, or blame the stream of days?

When those days began, you were assuredly a friend.

Our nearness severed our intimacy when we drifted apart,

And you severed the intimacy that comes from letter writing.

If only, when time disperses, you could resume our intimacy,

For such intimacy is an attribute of the soul, not the body.

In that same poem, the following verses occur:

Forgive me, Abu `Isa, but have you any excuse for disliking me,

When you, a man of knowledge, gives no indication of this?

He who receives no news, and whose creed is that of the Imamate,

Will resort to false imaginings.

Take some of those precious gems that you once gave me,

For the pearls belong to you though their string is mine:

Words of wisdom, whose inner thoughts are yours,

Which once you explained to me, though their verbal expression was

mine.

3533. His amatory verse is larger in volume than what can be cited here.

Most popular songs today are derived from his poetry. He was widely thought to have died and that al-Baridi had him drowned because he satirized him in verse, but it is also reported that he fled to Basra and thence to Hajar and al-Ahsa' where he joined Abu Tahir Sulaiman ibn al-Hasan, ruler of Bahrain.

3534. Al-Mas`udi said: In our work *al-Awsat*, which this work follows in sequence, we gave a full and detailed account of the history of al-Muttaqi and the major events of his days. In this work, we mention only a précis of that history because we bound ourselves in it to give only abbreviated and succinct accounts. We also provided an account of the killing of

Bajkam the Turk, which occurred in the month of Rajab in the year 329, together with his activities against the Kurds in the region of Wasit; the affair of Kurankij the Dailamite and his capturing Bajkam's army; the arrival of Muhammad ibn Ra'iq from al-Sham and his battle against Kurankij at `Ukbara; how Ibn Ra'iq tricked him and entered the capital; the battles that took place between them in the capital; the defeat of Kurankij and the victory of Ibn Ra'iq; the reaction of the Baridis and their arrival at the capital; and the departure of al-Muttaqi from the capital in the company of Muhammad ibn Ra'iq al-Mawsili. All these events are recorded in our book entitled *Akhbar al-Zaman*, making it unnecessary to repeat that information in this work. God guides to the true path.

Chapter 129

An account of the caliphate of al-Mustakfi Billah

3535. Al-Mustakfi Billah, Abu'l Qasim `Abdullah ibn `Ali al-Muktafi, received the oath of homage on Saturday, the third of Safar, in the year 333, and was deposed in the month of Sha`ban, seven days remaining from that month, in the year 334 [March 29, 946]. His caliphate thus lasted one year and four months, less a few days. His mother was a manumitted slave.

A brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days

3536. When we recounted the deposition of al-Muttaqi, we mentioned that al-Mustakfi received homage at the floodgate of the `Isa canal, in the countryside of Baduraya, near the village known al-Sindiyya, at the time when al-Muttaqi was blinded. Homage was paid to al-Mustakfi by Abu'l Wafa' Tuzun and other commanders, state officials and judges of that time, among whom was the judge Abu'l Husain Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Abi'l Shawarib together with some Hashimites. That day, al-Mustakfi

led them in afternoon and evening prayers, then journeyed until he reached al-Shammasiyya on Sunday.

3537. On Monday, he went aboard a fast boat called *al-Ghazal*, travelling downriver. He was wearing a long pointed cap which was said to have belonged to his father al-Muktafi. At his head sat Tuzun the Turk and Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Shirzad, along with his pages. The blind al-Muttaqi was handed over to him as well as the judge Ahmad ibn `Abdullah, who was under arrest. Later on, the other judges and Hashimites arrived and paid him homage.

3538. He at first appointed Abu'l Faraj Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Samiri as vizier for some time but then became incensed with him, dismissed him, relied in his rule on Muhammad ibn Shirzad, and sat in public audience. He inspected the records of judges, and examined the condition of the notaries in the capital, ordering some to be dropped from the list of notaries, and others to swear repentance from lying and for having accepted bribes, all of which information he had gathered about them before he assumed the caliphate. The judges obeyed his commands. For the eastern side of the city he appointed as judge Muhammad ibn `Isa, known as Ibn Abi Musa al-Hanafi, while for the western he appointed Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Abi'l Shawarib al-Umawi al-Hanafi. The commoners said: "That's as far as his authority will reach and as far as his commands and prohibitions as a caliph will go."

3539. He and al-Fadl ibn al-Muqtadir, the later caliph al-Muti`, had been neighbors in the residence of Ibn Tahir but they were bitter rivals in amusements such as keeping pigeons, and in ram, cock and quail fights. This last is called *qabj* in al-Sham. When al-Mustakfi was taken away to the `Isa canal to be paid homage, al-Muti` fled from his house, having realized that he would be killed by the new caliph. When al-Mustakfi was firmly entrenched in his post, he sought out al-Muti` but there was no

trace of him. So he destroyed his house and seized all he could put his hands on, such as his orchards and other properties.

3540. Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn Ahmad, the Baghdad state secretary, reported the following: "When al-Mustakfi acceded to the caliphate, Tuzun attached to him one of his Turkish pages to be always in his company. Meanwhile, al-Mustakfi had a page whose moral character he knew well and who had been brought up in his service, and he was naturally more disposed towards him. However, Tuzun wanted al-Mustakfi to give preference to the page he had assigned to him as against al-Mustakfi's own page. So al-Mustakfi would send the Turkish page on some of his errands in order to please Tuzun but he was not as efficient as his own page.

3541. "One day, al-Mustakfi turned to Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Shirzad, the state secretary, and asked him: 'Do you know the story of al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf with the people of al-Sham?' 'No, O Commander of the Believers,' he answered. He said: 'It is said that al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf had preferred a number of Iraqis because he found them to be more capable than his own intimates from al-Sham. The Shamis found this hard to bear and began to complain. When he learnt this, al-Hajjaj rode out into the desert along with a group of both Shamis and Iraqis. From afar, a caravan was seen, so he summoned a man from al-Sham and ordered him to ride ahead and find out exactly what that shadowy caravan was all about. Soon thereafter, the man returned and reported that they were camels. Al-Hajjaj asked him: 'Are they carrying loads or not?' 'I don't know,' said the man, 'but I shall return and find out.' Al-Hajjaj had meanwhile sent an Iraqi after him and gave him the same instructions that he had given the Shami. When the Iraqi came back, al-Hajjaj turned to him and asked, within the hearing of the Shamis, 'What are they?' 'Camels,' answered the Iraqi. 'How many?' 'Thirty.'

‘What are they carrying?’ ‘Oil.’ ‘Where did they start their journey?’
‘From such and such a place.’ ‘Where are they heading?’ ‘To such and
such a place.’ ‘Who is their owner?’ ‘So-and-so.’ Al-Hajjaj turned to the
Shamis and recited:

*Am I to be blamed for loving `Amr? If he dies or goes away,
Few are those who can replace you, O `Amr.”*

3542. “Ibn Shirzad said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, some men of
culture have recited some admirable verses in this regard:

*The worse of two messengers is the one whose sender
Needs him to come back, when the two instructions are the same.*

This is expressed in a proverb quoted by men of learning:

For an ignorant man, every road becomes two roads.

Al-Mustakfi said: ‘How wonderful is that line of verse by al-Buhturi
where he describes the intelligence of a messenger as follows:

*It is as though, when things turn dark,
His intelligence sparks out of him, like a flame of fire.*

Ibn Shirzad realized that al-Mustakfi had found Tuzun’s page heavy to
bear, so he reported this to Tuzun who then pulled him out of the caliph’s
service.”

3543. Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Ishaq, better known as Ibn al-Wakil al-
Baghdadi, said: “My father was formerly in the service of al-Muktafi, and
in charge of the royal wardrobe and the drinks cabinet. When al-Muktafi
met his end, as is well known, I joined the service of his son `Abdullah
ibn al-Muktafi [i.e. al-Mustakfi]. When the latter became caliph, I was the
closest person to him. One day, I saw him in the company of some boon
companions with whom he used to associate among his neighbors in the
residence of Ibn Tahir. This was before he became caliph. They were
discussing wine, its effects, and how people described it in verse and
prose.

3544. “A person who was present said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, no one in my opinion has described wine better than a modern writer who argued in one of his books that there is not one single object in this world that has derived from its four ‘mothers’ their merits, and stripped them of their most noble qualities, except wine. Thus, it possesses the color of fire, the most beautiful of colors. It has the softness of air, the gentlest of all tangible objects. It has the sweetness of water, the tastiest of all palatable things, and it has the coldness of earth. It is therefore the most delicious of all beverages.’ He added: ‘These four elements, though present in all foods and drinks, do not predominate in them to the same extent as they do in wine. The fellow who described it thus composed the following verses in which he mentioned how these elements come together in wine:

I know of no object other than wine,

Which merges the four elements that constitute the very existence of mankind:

The sweetness of water, the softness of air,

The heat of fire and the coldness of earth.’

3545. “Now since wine, as we described it, is superior to all other pleasures in this world, it has been lauded in terms more excellent than all other objects of desire or pleasure, and praise of wine excites all kinds of cravings. Thus, the rays emitted by wine have been compared to every gleaming object like the sun, the moon, the stars, fire and other such radiant bodies. The color of wine might be compared to every red or yellow object in this world such as ruby, carnelian, gold or other similar precious stones and luxurious ornaments. Some ancient writers compared its color to the blood of a sacrificial animal and the blood inside the human body. Others compared it to olive oil, wine from *raziqi* grapes and such like, but comparing it to a nobler substance is more apposite and

more fitting as praise. As regards its purity, it might be compared to any object which can be described as pure. On the subject of its purity, an ancient poet recited:

It reveals to you any floating impurity, but is itself free from it.

This is the best verse that any poet has ever composed in describing wine.

3546. “Abu Nuwas has described wine, along with its taste, bouquet, beauty, color, glow, and effect on the spirit, as well as the manner of serving it, its vessels, how boon companions gather to drink it, morning and evening draughts, and other matters to do with wine, to the point where it could be said that he closed the door on all possible ways of describing it. However, it is too wide a subject to describe with any finality since its attributes are myriad and immeasurable. Abu Nuwas described its luminescence as follows:

*In his hand it appeared like the sun,
While the palm of his hand was like the moon.*

In another poem he described it thus:

*When mixed, it had the same effect in that room
As the dawn has upon the darkness.*

*He who walked by night took it for his guide,
As a person on a journey takes a mountain for his pointer.*

3547. “Among his other wine verses are the following:

*Daughter of ten [i.e. years] pure and delicate,
If poured upon a night, it would dissipate its darkness.*

Or else:

*If a heavy drinker among them gulps it down,
You'd imagine him kissing a star in some dark night.
Wherever it is found in a room, you'd see that corner glow,
And wherever it is not, you'd see the room in darkness.*

Or else:

*So luminous it is in its goblet that he who drinks it
Appears as though he's drinking in the light of a fire-starter.*

Or else:

*I said to him: Be patient with me,
For I have seen the dawn through the cracks in the house.
Amazed at what he heard, he said: You said 'dawn'?
There's no dawn except the light of the wine.*

*He then rose, went to the wineskin and sealed its mouth,
And night once more descended, laying down its curtains.*

3548. Or else:

*Red before it is mixed, yellow when mixed,
As if the rays of the sun meet you beneath it.*

Or else:

*As if there's a fire being stoked in it,
Which at one time you fear, at another you fill with firewood.*

Or else:

*Red in color, and were it not for the refraction of water,
It would dazzle the eyes from their sockets.*

Or else:

*Whenever it is mixed, there springs from it a ray of light,
Like meteors that spring in pursuit of demons.**

Or else:

*Aged in casks until it acquired
The light of the sun at noon and the coldness of shadows.*

Or else:

*He passed by me, carrying a goblet of wine,
Which, you could see, emitted an excessive glow that reached the highest
floors of the house.*

Or else:

He said: Get me a lantern. I replied: Take it easy!

Sufficient as a lantern for you and me is its glow.

So I poured out a draught of it in his glass,

Which served him as a lantern until morning arrived.

3549. "Abu Nuwas composed many verses in this vein, comparing wine to fire and to lights, and how it lifts the darkness, turns the night into day, and darkness into light. This might be thought excessive on the part of the person who described and praised it so extravagantly. But there can be no better description of the color and light of wine than its description by Abu Nuwas, for nothing can be more beautiful than light.' Al-Mustakfi was delighted and elated by that description, saying: 'Blast you! Your description has indeed relieved my anxieties!' He answered: 'Yes, my Lord.'"

3550. 'Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Nashi' said: "Al-Mustakfi had given up drinking date wine, but when he acceded to the caliphate he at once ordered that it be served, and went back to drinking it."

3551. When al-Mustakfi became caliph, he, as already mentioned, sought to capture al-Fadl ibn al-Muqtadir, because of the previous enmity between them and because of other reasons which we have decided not to mention. Al-Fadl fled, and it is said that, in disguise, he sought refuge with Ahmad ibn Buwayh, the Dailamite. Ahmad treated him well and did not reveal his presence.

3552. When Tuzun died, the Dailamite entered Baghdad and the Turks left the city and joined Nasir al-Dawlah Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn 'Abdullah ibn Hamdan. This latter, accompanied by the Turks and by his cousin Abu 'Abdullah ibn Abi'l 'Ala', sailed downriver, and a series of engagements took place between him and Ibn Buwayh the Dailamite, as is well known. The Dailamite then passed on to the western side of the city, taking al-Mustakfi with him. Meanwhile al-Muti` [al-Fadl ibn al-

Muqtadir] was hiding out in Baghdad, hotly pursued by al-Mustakfi. Al-Mustakfi himself was made to reside in a Christian church on the western side, known as Durta.

3553. Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Ishaq, known as Ibn al-Wakil, whose high post in the service of al-Mustakfi we have already described, said: “Al-Mustakfi was constantly terrified that al-Muti` would accede to the caliphate, that he himself would be turned over to him, and that al-Muti` would then do with him as he pleased. His mind was constantly troubled by this thought, and he would at times complain about this matter to his usual boon companions whom we have already mentioned. These would cheer him up and make light of al-Muti` until one day he said to them: ‘I long for us to meet on such and such a day to recollect together the diverse kinds of food and what has been said in verse on this subject.’ So they agreed on a date.

3554. “On the appointed day, they arrived and al-Mustakfi said to them: ‘Let’s hear what each of you has brought forth.’ One of them said: ‘I recollect, O Commander of the Believers, some verses by `Abdullah ibn al-Mu`tazz describing a basket holding jars of pickles.’ ‘Let’s hear it,’ said al-Mustakfi. So the man recited:

*Come and enjoy this wicker basket you have received,
Its sides lined with cups, all in a row.
It has jars of all kinds, all in line,
Red and yellow and faultless.
In them is pickled tarragon, in flower,
And a red pickle, large in size,
Radiating scents which souls find comforting,
As though some perfumer had strewn musk upon it.
In them too is pickled marjoram, and facing it pickled clove,
Of choicest kind,*

*And pickled cinnamon, matchless in taste, and flawless in color,
 Its odor like musk when smelt,
 Hot to the tongue, and its aroma perfumed.
 Pickled thyme, too, freshly picked, with a color
 Similar to musk, as we see it, and to pitch.
 Pickled garlic, which, when glimpsed,
 I detected a scent which commanded one to eat it.
 Its olives appeared like some dark night,
 Though its pickled sides looked like the break of day.
 If you were to contemplate the onions in them,
 They would appear like silver ingots stuffed with fire.
 And here is rapeseed, with rounded waist, with which is mixed
 A flavor of vinegar, and arranged in rows,
 As if the white and red onions therein,
 Were like dirhams lined up, among which is a dinar.
 On each side of that basket a star sparkles upon us,
 Announcing the coming of dawn.
 It is like an orchard in bloom, and facing it,
 A full moon and sun and darkness and light.*

Al-Mustakfi said: ‘Let this meal be served to us exactly as described by these verses. And let us hear more, for today we will eat only what you describe.’

3555. “Another man who attended that gathering said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, Mahmud ibn al-Husain, the state secretary known as Kushajim, composed a poem describing a basket of rare fare:

*When will we summon our appetite for eating?
 The meal is now all ready.
 The cook has decorated it for us,
 As best it can be decorated.*

*It has now arrived,
Full of all the best fare that one can eat.
Here's a kid we roasted,
After having dried its innards,
And strewn some mint and tarragon upon it.
And here's a bird, large of breast,
Which we fattened for a long time, just for you.
And here's a sage grouse and a chick,
Which we have cooked well for you in a pot.
And this is a fried meat pie, to follow the meal of game.
And this is a reddish egg,
Next to an olive.
And here are slices of bread, of best quality, pickled,
And smeared with purest oil,
Which, to one sick from overeating,
Cause him to feel hunger and craving.
And this is bitter orange, kneaded with bits of perfumed amber,
While this is cheese, hot to the tongue,
Accompanied by slices of bread.
And here is vinegar, causing noses to bleed,
Even when these noses are blocked.
And fresh dates, like pearls strung in a necklace,
Upon soft and young women.
And here are Burani aubergines,
With which your soul is enamored.
And here is asparagus,
And you have always, I know, loved asparagus.
And this is a doughnut, buried in melted butter and sugar.
For you, I have prepared a large glass pitcher*

*Of cooked date wine, and a bottle.
And here is a cupbearer,
His cleft chin promising a night of lovemaking.
His glances are very sharp but his words are soft.
And here's a turtle-dove to sing for you,
Tunes that are not set to music.
Who will come and comfort a sad person,
Who wandered far from the house of the person who saddened him?
What excuse can you have not to recognize,
That his drunkenness is in his nature?'*

'Well done,' said al-Mustakfi, 'and bravo to the poet in his description!'
He then ordered all items cited in that poem to be served, if available.

3556. "Then he said: 'Let's hear what the others among you might remember in this regard.' One of them answered: 'Ibn al-Rumi composed the following verses describing sliced bread [sandwich?]:

*You who asked me about the most intense of pleasures,
You have asked the very person who can best describe them.
Listen then to the account I have composed,
Free from any mistake or omission.
Take, you who seeks a delicious meal,
Two thick slices of semolina bread,
The like of which no eye had ever seen.
Then scrape off the edges from their face,
Until, when they've become slender,
Add to one slice thin slivers
Of chicken and chick meat,
With their fillings of rice, sugar and nuts surrounding them
When one blows upon them.
Then spread upon them [reading waj`al] rows of almonds,*

And, facing them, rows of walnuts.
When bitten, it resembles cheese and olives,
While its form is a mixture of mint and tarragon.
Until, between the two slices, you would see something resembling milk,
Parted, like the embroidered cloth of Yemen.
Then take some chard, white and red,
And scatter it on it, like dirhams and dinars.
Then dust its lines with salt, but do not overdo it:
A moderate amount will suffice.
And let your eyes gaze upon it, again and again,
For the eyes too have their share of this meal.
Let your eyes enjoy it to the full,
Then join the slices together, and eat the sandwich in good health.
Fill your teeth with it, and bite it with great vigor,
And quickly destroy what you have built.
At times the sandwich appears like the disk of a wheel,
Its edges and roundness turning slowly [?].
At other times it looks like a millstone,
But without hunger, since your canines have scraped it off.
Alas for that sandwich! For I claim
That my stomach is inhabited by a demon, justly to be stoned.”

3557. Another man said: “O Commander of the Believers, Ishaq ibn Ibrahim al-Mawsili composed the following verses in which he described a meat pie:

O you who asked me about the most delicious of foods,
You have asked the most learned of all mankind on this subject.
Take some tender red meat,
And pound it with a little fat.
Then sprinkle on it some sliced onions,

And a lot of wet and green chard.
And follow this with plenty of rue,
And cinnamon, and a handful of coriander.
Then also some cloves, good ginger and pepper.
Next, a handful of cumin, and some spices,
And two handfuls of Tadmur salt.
Then, my Lord, pound it all very thoroughly,
And light up a very hot fire.
Then put it in a skillet, pour some water on top,
And cover it.
When the water has boiled away,
And the fire has dried it completely,
Wrap it, if you wish, in thin pastry,
And press down its edges to stick them together.
Or, if you prefer, take a small piece of pastry,
Moderately kneaded and soft,
Spread it in a round form, with flour,
Then fold its edges well with your fingertips.
Pour good quality oil in a pan,
Then fry it with oil to your heart's delight.
Next, place it in an attractive platter,
In the midst of which is hot mustard,
And eat it with mustard, and enjoy an excellent meal,
For it is the most delicious food for a person in a hurry."

3558. "Another man said: 'O Commander of the Believers, here's a poem by Mahmud ibn al-Husain ibn al-Sindi, that is, Kushajim the state secretary, describing asparagus:

We have spears, bent at the top,
Their shafts twined like a rope.

*They are well regarded, and without any knots,
 And have heads that come out of their body.
 Erect they stand, like straight tent-poles,
 Clothed, by the act of the One and Eternal God,
 With a garment of silk above an outer coat,
 Infused with a glowing redness of color.
 They appear as if mingled with the redness of a cheek,
 A cheek pinched and made red by the hand of an angry person.
 Thus, mingled with them was the redness of a cheek and hand,
 As though in the center of a bowl, or a cooling vessel.
 All set in layers, like the rings of a coat of mail,
 As pretty as golden netting, all in a row.
 They are like a decorated garment of silk, spread out,
 If only they could last forever.
 They once were precious stones in the rings of virgins,
 Above which the lust of men flowed without cease.
 Passing through their sides is a tide, coming in and going out,
 Their oil furnishing them with a robe made of foam,
 Appearing, from above, when still,
 Like a net of gold, or rubbed down with silver.
 If an ascetic or pious worshipper were to see them,
 He would break his fast; so much would he desire them, and prostrate
 himself before them.*

3559. “When the man had finished reciting that poem, al-Mustakfi said to him: ‘This is something that can hardly be found at this time of year, in this land, and as described in that poem, unless we write to al-Ikhshid Muhammad ibn Tughj to send us some from that region of Damascus. So recite verses that describe something which is readily available here.’

3560. “Another man said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, Muhammad ibn al-Wazir, known as al-Hafiz al-Dimashqi, has a poem describing a meal of rice:

*How splendid was that bowl of rice, served by a cook,
And resembling a beautiful full moon in the sky!
Purer than snow heightened in texture,
But made by human impulse and liberality.
As it sits in a bowl, carved into a shape, and white,
It resembles a white pearl.
Its light dazzled those who beheld it,
Showing you the glow of a full moon before the coming of night.
The sugar at its edges,
Is like a light that materialized above it, adding to its brightness.’*

3561. “Another man said: ‘O Commander of the Believers, a poem was once recited to me by a modern poet describing a *harisa* [goulash of meat and cracked wheat]:

*The most delicious thing a person can eat,
When April arrives, heralding summer,
And when goats and sheep are tasty,
Is a harisa made by women,
With their spotless hands and their skill.
In it is a mixture of game and meat of lamb.
In that cooking pot, lard,
Meat, tail fat, and grease come together.
Next are fattened geese, white flour and sweet peas,
Then almonds, and aban [mountain shrub]
Pounded well by a miller.
Next comes salt and galangal,
Which tires the bodies of those who collect it.*

*All other kinds of food are ashamed when they see it,
 As it appears, carried in by servants,
 Enclosed in a platter or tray.
 Above it is bamboo, like a vault,
 Held up by a roof with walls,
 In structure like a tent, but without props.
 It is presented to the diners by young boys,
 And is a favorite of both the hungry and the sated.
 Craved by both a family and their guests,
 It reigns supreme over its rivals.
 Minds and intellects grow lucid when it is consumed,
 And bodies too gain in health.
 It was Sasan who, in his era, invented it,
 And it delighted Kisra Anushirwan.
 If seen by a ravenous person,
 No hungry person can possibly restrain himself.'*

3562. "Another man said: 'O Commander of the Believers, a modern poet composed the following, describing a *madira* [meat cooked in yoghurt]:

*The madira among foods
 Is like a moon on a night when it is full.
 When it shines forth on a table laden with food,
 It is like the light shining in darkness,
 Or like the crescent moon when it appears to people,
 Through the clouds.
 It lies in a platter filled to the brim,
 Serving people with morsels of greasy meat.
 It won the admiration of Abu Huraira*
 When it arrived among other fare,
 To the point where his desire for it*

Almost made him abandon his desire for fasting.

He saw a chance to eat it,

So quickly rose from the table.

He refused to be seen as a glutton

In the presence of the Imam.

For there is nothing like a madira

To cure a person from his illness.

No wonder that in eating it,

One is not committing any sin.

For among mankind it is regarded as

Delicious, wondrous and extraordinary.'

3563. "Another man said: 'O Commander of the Believers, Mahmud ibn al-Husain composed the following verses about a *judhaba* [a dish of meat, rice, sugar and nuts]:

A judhaba made from superb rice,

Pale in color, like the face of a lover.

A shining wonder, made by the hand

Of an expert and skilled cook.

Pure as gold, reddish in color, rosy,

Made so by the Creator.

Tinted with cane sugar from al-Ahwaz,

In taste more delicious than the purest of draughts.

It lies drowned in fat, quivering,

And turns when those who taste it blow softly upon it.

Soft, and like butter to the touch,

And its aroma is like that of purest amber.

In its platter, when it makes its appearance,

It sparkles like stars in the dusk.

Its vivid yellowish color resembles carnelian,

*On the neck of a charming girl, clear of skin, and in early womanhood.
It is more welcome than an assurance of safety,
Delivered to a palpitating and anxious heart.'*

3564. "Another man said: 'O Commander of the Believers, a modern poet describes another *judhaba* thus:

*A judhaba with the color of carnelian
Tastes to me like nectar,
Made from purest sugar,
And purest pounded saffron,
Drowned in chicken fat and grease:
How noble a drowned creature is it!
Delicious to the taste when sampled,
And in color like saffron.
Above it are spread pearls,
And its sides are tightly pressed.
As its platter is passed around, it emits an aroma,
And none can resist its sweetness.'*

3565. "Another man said: 'O Commander of the Believers, Mahmud ibn al-Husain Kushajim has the following verses describing *qata'if* [doughnuts]:

*For my friends, when hunger becomes severe,
I have doughnuts, like stacks of books.
When examined closely,
They appear like white bees' honeycombs.
They secrete almond oil, so much of it have they absorbed,
Soggy with the oil they swam in and soaked up.
Rosewater overran them then departed,
Leaving upon them drops on top of drops.
If a heartsick lover saw them he would be elated,*

*Stacked in a flight of steps, like an undisturbed hill of sand.
But more delightful still is when you see that person devouring them,
For each delights in what he loves.'*

3566. "Al-Mustakfi then turned to a man who had tutored him as a boy, a sweet-tempered man who used to make him laugh and whom he found witty, and said to him: 'You have heard the verses that were recited to us so it's now your turn to recite.' He replied: 'I have no idea what these people recited but last night I wandered around until I reached Baturdaya, saw its orchards, and recalled the verses written about it by Abu Nuwas. I swear these verses were very moving and affected me greatly.' Al-Mustakfi asked: 'So what did Abu Nuwas have to say about it, and how did he describe these orchards?' The man recited:

*O Ibn Wahb, the sleep of your eyes is a mere nap,
And the fire of passion is raging in your heart.
O Baturdaya, in you will I settle, and in you,
When cups are passed around, I intend to think and reflect.
The story I tell here is that, one day, I passed by it,
My heart dismayed by passionate love.
In it there was a narcissus which called out to my page:
Stop! It is now time for wine!
A francolin began to warble, joyfulness was invoked,
And the flowers liberally bestowed their radiance.
So we turned our steps towards gardens and flowers,
That stared at us, unwavering:
Their eyelids, as it were, whitish in color, their sockets yellow.
As we stood among them, the rose called out to us:
Come to me, O party-goers!
We have for you a wine that time has forgotten,
That existence itself knows nothing about!*

*So we headed towards the roses,
 Lest the weak narcissus is not obeyed by its swarm.
 So when the narcissus saw what the roses had done,
 It called out for help: Come to my aid, O spices!
 The roses meanwhile saw two yellow armies lined up,
 So called out: Come to my aid, flower of pomegranate!
 They both called for help upon the apples of Lebanon,
 When their desire for revenge grew intense.
 Meanwhile the spices called for help upon an army of bitter oranges,
 In which there were both small and large oranges.
 I saw the spring coming out in the yellow camp,
 While my heart shimmered with redness,
 And this only because of redness in the cheeks
 Of some who wronged us and treated us unjustly.'*

3567. "Never did I see al-Mustakfi, ever since he acceded to the caliphate, filled with greater joy than he was that day. He distributed gifts among all those who attended that gathering and among the singers and entertainers. He then ordered to be distributed whatever he had at hand of gold and silver, despite his straitened circumstances, and by God I never saw a day like that until he was arrested and blinded by Ahmad ibn Buwayh the Dailamite."

3568. This was because, when the war had lasted long between Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn `Abdullah ibn Hamdan, who was camped on the eastern side along with the Turks and his cousin al-Husain ibn Sa`id ibn Hamdan, and Ahmad ibn Buwayh the Dailamite on the western side, along with al-Mustakfi, the Dailamite accused al-Mustakfi of corresponding secretly with Ibn Hamdan and giving him information about their situation. This was in addition to what he had harbored against al-Mustakfi beforehand. So he had him blinded and installed al-Muti`.

The Dailamite then tricked his enemies by marching out at night with his Dailam troops, putting them on boats, with much fanfare and blowing of trumpets, then getting them to spread out in many places in the street on the eastern side. The Hamdanid army were successfully deceived, and marched out to Mosul after several engagements between them and the Turks in Takrit.

3569. So power passed securely to Ahmad ibn Buwayh the Dailamite, and he began to rebuild the city and repair all breaches, according to the news that have reached us about him, though we ourselves are far from home, the roads are unsafe, news are hard to come by, and we ourselves being in Egypt and al-Sham.

3570. Al-Mas`udi said: No other information has reached us about al-Mustakfi despite his short reign, other than what we have recorded here. God grants right guidance.

Chapter 130

An account of the caliphate of al-Muti` Lillah

3571. Al-Muti`, that is, Abu'l Qasim al-Fadl ibn Ja`far al-Muqtadir, received homage seven days remaining from the month of Sha`ban, in the year 334 [March 29, 946]. In another version, this occurred in Jumada I, of that year.

3572. Ibn Buwayh the Dailamite now held supreme power,* whereas al-Muti` was entirely under his authority, able neither to order nor to forbid anything, was in no sense a caliph and had no vizier to speak of. Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn Shirzad managed the affairs of the vizierate in the presence of the Dailamite but held the rank of secretary. He was addressed as vizier only when al-Hasan ibn `Abdullah ibn Hamdan had secured the western side of the city. When the latter left for Mosul, Ibn Shirzad left with him, but then Ibn Hamdan accused him of inciting the Turks against him and blinded him.

3573. It is said that at this present time, which is Jumada I of the year 336 [November/December 947], Abu'l Husain `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Muqla presents all the official correspondence to both the Dailamite and al-Muti`, and manages affairs in the capacity of state secretary but not of a vizier. We have not included a detailed section containing a narrative of al-Muti`s history and conduct as we have done for other caliphs in this book because we are still in his caliphate.

3574. Al-Mas`udi said: In an earlier section of this work we had bound ourselves to mention the deaths of all the Talibids and those among them who rebelled in Umayyad and Abbasid days, detailing who among them was killed, imprisoned or fled. We then mentioned their histories to the best of our ability, from the murder of the Commander of the Believers `Ali ibn Abi Talib onwards. It remains for us to cite here any historical accounts not already cited in order to fulfill what we undertook to do in this book.

3575. For example, Ahmad ibn `Abdullah ibn Ibrahim ibn Isma`il ibn Ibrahim ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib rose in rebellion in the Sa`id of Egypt but was killed by Ahmad ibn Tulun following certain incidents cited in our earlier works. This occurred around the year 270 [883-4]. We also mentioned the rebellion of Abu `Abd al-Rahman al-`Ajami against Ahmad ibn Tulun in the Sa`id of Egypt and all that happened to him until he was killed.

3576. Another instance was the rebellion of Ibn al-Rida whose full name was Muhsin ibn Ja`far ibn `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, in the region of Damascus around the year 300 [912-13]. Several engagements ensued between him and the governor of Damascus, Ahmad ibn Kayghalagh, following which he was executed in cold blood. Another

version has it that he was killed in battle and his head was sent to Baghdad where it was exposed on the new bridge, on the western side. 3577. In Tabaristan and Dailam, al-Utrush appeared. His full name was al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib. In the year 301 [913-14], he drove out the black banners [Abbasids]. He had lived in Dailam and al-Jil for many years when its inhabitants were still pagan or Magians. He called them to the path of God and they responded to him and embraced Islam. A few of them, however, who live in remote and towering mountains, fortresses, valleys or wildernesses, remain polytheists until the present day. He built mosques in their lands. The Muslims had built frontier posts facing their lands in places like Qazwin, Shalus and other localities in Tabaristan. In Shalus, there was a massive fortress and buildings constructed by Persian kings where frontier troops were stationed facing the Dailam. When the Muslims arrived, this fortress remained in place until it was demolished by al-Utrush.

3578. There were several wars between al-Utrush and al-Hasan ibn al-Qasim al-Hasani, the missionary, over Tabaristan, and the fighting had its ups and downs. Al-Hasan the missionary had arrived in Rayy in the year 317 [929], at the head of a large army of Jil, Dailam and others. With him was Makan ibn Kaki, a notable of the Dailam and one of their most redoubtable warriors. He then drove out the troops of Nasr ibn Ahmad ibn Isma`il ibn Ahmad from that city and captured Qazwin, Zanjan, Qumm, Abhar and other towns in the vicinity of Rayy. The caliph al-Muqtadir then wrote to Nasr, his governor of Khurasan, as follows: "I entrusted you with money and people's lives but you neglected the affairs of the subjects and weakened them, and closed your eyes to the affairs of the region until the white banners [Alids] invaded it." He then held him responsible for driving them out.

3579. Nasr, the governor of Khurasan, decided to send one of his commanders from the Jil, called Asfar ibn Shirawayh, dispatching him along with Ibn al-Muhtaj, a Khurasan commander, at the head of a large army, to fight the missionary and Makan ibn Kaki. Between the Jil and the Dailam ancient enmities and hostilities had always existed. Asfar ibn Shirawayh and his troops then marched to the frontiers of al-Rayy, and a battle took place between Asfar from the Jil and Makan from the Dailam. Most of Makan's troops and commanders, such as Mashiz, Taljin, Sulaiman ibn Sharkala al-Ashkuri, Mard al-Ashkuri, Hashuna ibn Umkir and other Jil commanders surrendered on promise of safe conduct. So, Makan with a few of his pages charged them seventeen times, but the Khurasan troops and the Turks with them withstood these charges. Makan ibn Kaki then fled to Tabaristan and the missionary was defeated, even though Makan was acting as his bodyguard. He was pursued by the cavalry of Khurasan, the Jil, the Dailam and the Turks, including Asfar ibn Shirawayh. Makan then fled because of the large troop of cavalry that pursued him while the missionary, nearing Amul, the capital of Tabaristan, took cover in a mill there, having been abandoned by his followers. He was killed there while Makan rejoined the Dailam.

3580. Asfar then captured the lands of Tabaristan, Rayy, Jurjan, Qazwin, Zinjan, Abhar, Qumm, Hamadhan and al-Karaj, and demanded that obedience be paid to the governor of Khurasan. He held the reins of power firmly, and his troops and equipment grew apace. He then grew tyrannical. He was not a Muslim and so rebelled against the governor of Khurasan, wanting to place a crown on his own head, set up a royal golden throne in Rayy, declare himself ruler of the above-mentioned territories, and fight the caliphal government and the governor of Khurasan. So the caliph al-Muqtadir at once dispatched Harun ibn Gharib towards Qazwin and a major battle took place with Asfar and his army,

during which Harun was defeated with the loss of many of his troops. This occurred at the gate of Qazwin, whose people had helped the caliphal army. A large number of them were killed, and, following the defeat of Harun ibn Gharib, there were wars between them and the Dailam.

3581. Asfar ibn Shirawayh then marched on Qazwin, killed many of its inhabitants and captured the fortress in the center of Qazwin, called *Kashwin* in Persian. This was an ancient and impregnable city fortress, first built by the Persians to act as a frontier post facing the Dailam, and had stationed troops there. This is because the Dailam and the Jil had never embraced any religion or any religious law. When the Muslims arrived and, with God's help, conquered that land, Qazwin was made into a frontier post facing the Dailam and other tribes in the vicinity of the Dailam and the Jil. This remained the case until the arrival of al-Hasan ibn `Ali al-`Alawi al-Utrush, the missionary, and the above-mentioned conversion of the kings of the Dailam and Jil at his hands, as described at the beginning of this chapter. At present, their beliefs have grown corrupt, their religious views have changed and most of them are atheists. Previously, a number of Dailam kings and notables had embraced Islam and had given aid to the Talibid rebels in Tabaristan such as al-Hasan and Muhammad, the two sons of Zaid al-Hasani.

3582. Asfar then proceeded to destroy Qazwin because its inhabitants had given aid to the caliphal army against his own army. He demolished the city's gates, enslaved its people and allowed its women to be raped. At one time he heard the muezzin calling to prayer from the minaret of the mosque and ordered that he be tossed down headlong from it. He then destroyed the mosques and forbade prayers. Throughout the mosques in the cities of the east, people cried out for help as Asfar's depredations grew worse.

3583. The governor of Khurasan then marched out with his troops to al-Rayy to fight Asfar. He began his expedition from the city of Bukhara, which at present is the seat of the Khurasan governor, crossed the Balkh river and camped in the city of Nishapur. Meanwhile, Asfar headed to al-Rayy having collected his army from all regions, and intended to fight the governor of Khurasan. Asfar's vizier, Mutarraf al-Jurjani, who was addressed as "al-Ustadh," advised him to act peacefully towards the governor, treat him with kindness, correspond with him, and tempt him with money and the prospect of reestablishing the Abbasid system. He spoke to him as follows: "War is uncertain and changeable in its fortunes, and money spent upon it depletes one's capital of wealth. If, in corresponding with him, he inclines to what you offer him, fine and good. Otherwise war is always available to you as an alternative. The Turks who are with you and most knights of Khurasan are in fact his men. Indeed, you only enrolled them in your service through being generous towards them but you can never know, once his army approaches, whether they might not rejoin their former master." Asfar accepted his advice and ordered that letters be sent to the governor.

3584. When the governor of Khurasan received Asfar's letters, he refused to accept any of his conditions and determined to march against him. His vizier, however, advised him to accept his offer and the monies he promised together with the reestablishment of the Abbasid call, saying to him: "War's misfortunes cannot be lightly dismissed nor can one predict where they might lead, for the man [Asfar] is powerful in both wealth and troops. If defeated, this would not be counted as a great conquest since he was once one of your men whom you chose to send against your enemy, and attached to him your own troops and pages, but he rebelled against you. If, God forbid, you are defeated, you cannot escape the consequences." The governor then sought the views of his commanders

and friends as to the advice of his vizier, and they agreed with the vizier's opinion. So he adopted their advice, responded to Asfar's proposals, and granted him what he requested after having imposed certain conditions upon him such as tribute and other matters.

3585. When the governor's letter reached Asfar, he said to his vizier: "The tribute he has imposed upon us is immense, and there is no way we can pay it from the treasury, so we need to gather the land tax of this region." The vizier replied: "Gathering the land tax when it is not yet due would do great harm to the owners of estates, ruin the land and cause many peasants to flee the fields before the harvest is gathered." Asfar asked, "So what's to be done?" He answered: "The land tax applies to only some estate owners, but what I propose is a tax that includes everyone, both estate owners and other Muslims and non-Muslims in this land, together with foreigners, but without harming them much or imposing too great a burden upon them. This amount would be paltry. Let each head pay one dinar, and the amount collected would not only cover what we undertook to pay him but exceed the tribute considerably."

3586. Asfar then ordered this poll tax to be imposed. All names of merchants and shopkeepers, Muslims and *dhimmi**, were inscribed in a register and the tax was even imposed on foreign merchants residing in inns and khans. People were then led into the Land Tax Treasury in al-Rayy and elsewhere in its vicinity, and all who paid the tax were given a receipt stamped just like the receipt given to *dhimmi* when they pay the poll tax in Muslim lands. Some inhabitants of Rayy as well as merchants and foreigners who happened to be in that city informed me---I was then in the region of al-Ahwaz and Faris---that they paid that poll tax and received a receipt that they had done so. A vast sum was thus collected, and the amount stipulated was sent off with about a thousand dinars remaining. Another version, mentioned by the people of al-Rayy and its

regions, has it that many times more than this amount of money remained, over and above what was sent as tribute.

3587. The governor of Khurasan then returned to Bukhara and Asfar's power, against all expectations, greatly increased. He later sent one of his men who commanded the Jil contingent of his army, a man called Mardawij ibn Ziyar,* to one of the Dailam kings beyond Qazwin. That man ruled the town of Tirm in the land of the Dailam. His name was Ibn Aswar, and known as Sallar, whose descendant currently rules Adharbaijan and elsewhere. Mardawij was delegated to get Sallar to pay homage and obeisance to Asfar. Mardawij then travelled to see Sallar, and the two men began to swap stories about Asfar and the harm he had done to Islam, his ruinous policies, his killing of his subjects, neglecting the development of the land, and his utter disregard of the consequences of his actions. So they concluded an alliance and covenanted to help one another against Sallar and to fight him in concert.

3588. In the meantime, Asfar led his army to Qazwin. Arriving at the frontier of the Dailam in the land of Tirm, where Sallar was king, he awaited his companion Mardawij. He sent word that if Sallar did not submit to him and if his messenger to him returned with a response he did not like, he would invade his land. Sallar is the maternal uncle of `Ali ibn Wahsudhan, known as Ibn Hassan, another Dailam king. He was the one killed in al-Rayy by Sallar, as reported in a lengthy account.

3589. When Mardawij came near Asfar's camp, he corresponded with Asfar's commanders, urging them to help him in killing Asfar and informing them that Sallar would also back them up in defeating him. Asfar's commanders and companions had had enough of him and his state and behavior, so they responded positively to Mardawij. When Mardawij approached Asfar's camp, the latter recognized his desperate situation and that a trick had been played upon him. He found out that he

had no support among his companions or others because of his evil ways, so fled with a few of his pages. When Mardawij arrived, Asfar having escaped his clutches, he seized his army and treasure, summoned Asfar's vizier, Mutarrafa al-Jurjani, and extracted the monies from him. He then got the officers and men to pay him allegiance, distributed the monies, salaries and gifts among them, increased their subsidies and treated them well, all of which treatment they had not been used to from Asfar.

3590. Asfar headed towards al-Sariya, a town in Tabaristan, but found no place in which he could seek refuge. Confused and at a loss, he headed towards an impregnable Dailam fortress known as Alamut, held by a Dailam chieftain called Abu Musa with a troop of soldiers. Abu Musa was in charge of Asfar's treasures and much of his wealth and monies. Now Mardawij, having, as already stated, seized Asfar's camp and monies, rode out hunting a few miles from Qazwin, along the road taken by Asfar in his flight, in order to learn any news of Asfar, which land he was heading towards, and in which fortress he had sought refuge. Turning towards that fortress, he saw a small troop of cavalry in a valley, so his companions speedily rode out to ascertain what news they could bring them. They found Asfar with a tiny number of his pages heading towards the fortress, where he intended to recover his treasures, gather an army of Dailam and Jil, and return to wage war against Mardawij. Asfar was arrested and brought before Mardawij who, as soon as he saw him, dismounted at once and slit his throat.

3591. Men from the Jil and the Dailam then flocked to join Mardawij after having learnt of his generosity and kindness to his troops. People heard of his largesse in distributing salaries to his army and came to him from all towns. Thus, his army and troops increased and he grew in power and importance. The towns he held no longer sufficed to provide funds for himself and his men, so he sent out his commanders to the

regions of Qumm, Karaj ibn Abi Dulaf, al-Burj, Hamadhan, Abhar and Zinjan.

3592. Among those he sent to Hamadhan was a nephew of his at the head of a large army along with a group of his officers and men. In Hamadhan, there was a caliphal army commanded by Abu `Abdullah Muhammad ibn Khalaf al-Dinawari al-Nairamani, accompanied by Khafif, the page of Abu'l Haija' `Abdullah ibn Hamdan with some caliphal commanders. Several battles and continuous engagements ensued with the Dailam, and the people of Hamadhan aided the caliphal party. Many Jil and Dailam soldiers of Mardawij were killed, numbering some four thousand, and the nephew of Mardawij, commanding the army, was also killed. The nephew was called Abu'l Karadis ibn `Ali ibn `Isa al-Talhi, and was a prominent figure among the companions of Mardawij. The Dailam returned to Mardawij, having suffered a grievous defeat. When the news reached Mardawij, his sister was loud in her lamentations. Having witnessed what had happened to her because of the death of her son, Mardawij marched from al-Rayy with his army until he reached the city of Hamadhan, camping at the gate known as Lion's Gate.

3593. This gate was so called because a stone lion had been set up on elevated ground on the road leading to al-Rayy and Khurasan. It was far larger than an actual lion and resembled a huge bull or a kneeling camel, and looked real until a person came close and discovered it was a stone sculpture, carved with consummate skill to resemble a real lion. Among the people of Hamadhan, a widely spread tradition, transmitted from one generation to the next, had it that Alexander son of Philip had built Hamadhan on his way back from Khurasan and from his wanderings in India, China and elsewhere, and that the lion was meant to act as a talisman for the city, its walls and its inhabitants. Furthermore, the people of Hamadhan believed that the city's ruin, the extermination of its

population, the demolition of its walls and frightful massacres would ensue if that lion was destroyed and uprooted from its place, and that all this would come about from the direction of the Dailam and the Jil. For that reason, the people of the city forbade all who passed by, whether they were military troops, ordinary travelers or their own spoilt youth to turn the lion around or break off any piece of it. Because of its huge size and the hardness of its stone it could only be turned around by a vast crowd of people. The army that Mardawij had sent with his nephew to Hamadhan had reached that gate and had spread out in that plain before their battle with the caliphal army. This lion was now overturned and broken, and the battle proceeded as described. This was an act of contempt on the part of the Dailam.

3594. When Mardawij camped at that gate and saw the places where his followers had been massacred and how the population of the city had killed his nephew, he was incensed and his anger against its people was boundless. The population was now abandoned by the caliphal troops, and during the first day of the battle forty thousand of those who carried arms were killed, and this according to the lowest estimate of the number of casualties reported to us.

3595. The population was put to the sword for three days in addition to burning and enslavement. On the third day, Mardawij ordered a stop to the massacre, proclaimed safe conduct to those who remained, then commanded that the notables of the city and its upright citizens should be brought out to him. When they heard that summons, they hoped that this meant relief. Those who felt confident among the notables and the virtuous went to the mosque along with others who tagged behind them. The person in charge of torture, called al-Saqati, went in to ask Mardawij what was to be done to them, and the latter ordered the Dailam and Jil to surround them with their spears and daggers and kill them to the last man.

So the Dailam and the Jil encircled them and massacred them all, joining them to those who had been killed before them.

3596. Mardawij then sent one of his commanders, called Ibn `Allan al-Qarawi, whose title was “Khawaja”----this is a title applied by the people of Khurasan to any notable who enjoys special esteem----along with a contingent of his troops to the city of Dinawar, a distance of three days’ march from Hamadhan. Ibn `Allan stormed the city and on the very first day killed some seventeen thousand of its inhabitants according to the lowest estimate, while the highest estimate gives a figure of twenty-five thousand. A man called Ibn Mashad, one of the city’s upright men, a Sufi and ascetic, came out to see Ibn `Allan, with an open copy of the Qur’an in his hand, and said to “Khawaja”: “Fear God and restrain your sword from these Muslims for they have committed no wrong or crime to deserve such treatment.” Khawaja ordered the Qur’an to be removed from his hand, struck him with it on his face, and had his throat slit. He proceeded to enslave its inhabitants, seize their wealth, kill them and rape their women.

3597. The army of Mardawij now reached a place called al-Shajaratain, a valley between the land of the Jil and the province of Hulwan, adjacent to Iraq, lying between the land of Tarar, al-Matamir and Marj al-Qal`a, where his troops killed, enslaved and seized the wealth of its people. His armies then turned back, having gained much wealth, killed men and enslaved children. These latter were turned into slave pages. As for the number of free girls and boys they enslaved from the regions of Dinawar, Qarmasin, and al-Zubaidiyya, up to where they had reached in their march, described above, the lowest estimate puts their number at fifty thousand, while the highest estimate cites the number at one hundred thousand.

3598. When Mardawij had accomplished all these things we have described and the money and booty was conveyed to him, he sent a number of his commanders with a contingent of his army to Isbahan, which they proceeded to occupy. The city provided them with accommodation and fodder for their animals while one of the palaces of Ahmad ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Abi Dulaf al-`Ijli was made ready for Mardawij, gardens and orchards were laid out, and all sorts of flowers were planted for him as was the case in the days of Ahmad ibn `Abd al-`Aziz. So Mardawij journeyed to Isbahan where he resided in the company of some fifty thousand, or forty thousand, troops. This number did not include the other troops he commanded in al-Rayy, Qumm, Hamadhan and his other provinces.

3599. Mardawij had sent a number of his officers and troops under the command of Abu'l Hasan Muhammad ibn Wahban al-Fudaili; it was he who later sought safe-conduct with the caliph. He then headed towards Muhammad ibn Ra'iq, who was then in al-Raqqah in Diyar Mudar before his invasion of al-Sham and fighting Muhammad ibn Tughj. He was tricked by Rafi` al-Qarmati, who was a commander with Ibn Ra'iq, to the point where he separated him from his troops and had him tied up and placed in the waters of the Euphrates, near Rahbat Malik ibn Tawq. In our work *al-Awsat*, and under the history of Muhammad ibn Ra'iq, we narrated his story, the trick played on him and the length of time he was tied up in the water until he came out, and was later killed. So Ibn Wahban and his troops headed towards the countryside of al-Ahwaz following the road of Manadhir, Tustar and Idhaj, invaded that region, seized its wealth and carried this off to Mardawij.

3600. Mardawij now grew tyrannical, his armies and wealth steadily increased, and he built a golden throne studded with precious stones. He had a robe and crown made of gold, studded with all kinds of precious

stones. He had asked about the shape of royal Persian crowns and these were drawn and described to him. He then chose the crown of Anushirwan. His secretaries and others who surrounded him, men of great cunning and devilish learning, had informed him that the stars directed their light towards the region of Isbahan, where a new religion was about to appear and the capital of a kingdom was to be installed, to which were to be conveyed all the treasures of the earth. They further told him that the king of that region had yellow legs, possessed such and such characteristics, and would reign for such and such a time. He would then be succeeded by forty kings, all of whom would be his descendants. They informed him that the time was near, specified that time, and became close to him by predicting such matters, all of which concurred with his own secret desires, brought him near to them and tempted him. He then announced that he was the man with the yellow legs who would rule over the earth.

3601. He had some four thousand Turkish slave troops who acted as his bodyguards, in addition to the Turkish officers and troops in his army. He treated the Turks badly and frequently executed them, so they resolved to murder him. He was about to march on Baghdad, seize the caliphate, and appoint his followers as governors of the various Muslim cities of the east and west still under Abbasid or some other rule. He distributed the houses of Baghdad among his companions and was in no doubt that supreme power was about to pass into his hands.

3602. One day, he rode out to hunt in a gay and happy mood, then returned in the same mood, feeling that he had achieved power and kingship. He entered the bath in the palace of Ahmad ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Abi Dulaf in Isbahan. A Turkish page called Bajkam, a leader of the Turks and an intimate of his, followed him in, accompanied by three other Turkish notables. One of them, I believe, was Tuzun, who ran the

state after Bajkam. They murdered him and Bajkam and the others came out. Bajkam had previously informed the Turks of his intentions, so they were ready to meet him, unlike the rest of the army. So they rode off at once. This event took place during the caliphate of al-Radi, in the year 323 [935].

3603. During the ensuing turmoil, the army broke up, people plundered one another, and the state wealth and treasuries were looted. The Jil and the Dailam then took stock of the situation and met together to consider their options. They said: "If we remain as we are, that is, divided into factions and without someone to lead us, we would perish." They finally agreed to pay homage to Mardawij's brother Washmkir, ---a name which means "quail catcher" while Mardawij means "man assailant," which might also be pronounced "Mardawiz." So they paid homage to Washmkir after much of the army had dispersed. Washmkir distributed among them a lot of the monies that remained and showed them kindness, then marched off with his troops to al-Rayy, where he resided.

3604. Bajkam and the Turks then marched away, resolved to get rid of the Dailam. He headed to the region of Dinawar where he collected its land-tax and much wealth besides, then proceeded to al-Nahrawan, at a distance of less than a day's march from Baghdad, where he wrote to the caliph al-Radi. This latter, meanwhile, was dominated by the Sajiyya [Turkish] and Hujariyya [African] regiments, who refused to allow Bajkam to reach the capital for fear he would dominate the state. Refused admission to the capital, Bajkam headed to Wasit to join Muhammad ibn Ra'iq, who was camped there. Bajkam became close to him, showed him favor and dominated him, and his power grew. He collected troops and Ibn Ra'iq was too weak to stop him. Ibn Ra'iq's later history is well known and was described in our earlier works: how he disappeared; how Bajkam went out to Mosul accompanied by al-Radi and by `Ali ibn

Khalaf ibn Tayyab, to the territory of the Hamdanids in Mosul and Diyar Rabi`a; how Ibn Ra'iq reappeared in Baghdad where he was helped by the rabble; how he went to the residence of the caliph and killed Ibn Badr al-Sharabi; how he then left the capital followed by his soldiers and by the Qarmatians such as Rafi`, `Umara and others who were his supporters; how he headed to Diyar Mudar and resided in al-Raqqqa; what transpired between him and Numaira; how Yanis al-Mu'nisi then joined him; how he headed to the province of Qinnasrin and al-`Awasim where he drove out Tarif al-Subkari, and how he was appointed governor of the frontier posts of al-Sham.

3605. In our work entitled *al-Awsat*, to which this present work comes next in order, just as *al-Awsat* comes next in order after *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we described his story, how he fought Muhammad ibn Tughj al-Ikhshid in al-`Arish, in the land of Egypt; how he was defeated and returned to Damascus; how he killed the brother [text amended] of Muhammad ibn Tughj in al-Lajun, in the land of al-Urdunn; what took place before the battle of al-`Arish between him and `Ubaidullah ibn Tughj and the commanders with him; how these commanders abandoned `Ubaidullah and sought safe-conduct with Ibn Ra'iq, such as Muhammad ibn Takin al-Khassa, Takin al-Khaqani, the page of Khaqan al-Muflihi and others; in addition to other historical accounts that relate to him and others; the killing of Tarif al-Subkari in the year 328 at the gate of Tarsus; and his battle against the Thumayliyya, who are the pages of Thumayl, the royal servant. All this makes it unnecessary to repeat all these narratives in detail in this work.

3606. It was just that, as we pursued the narrative of the history of the Dailam and the Jil, this led us on to deal with the history of Asfar ibn Shirawayh and Mardawij when discussing the history of the Talibids, the story of al-Hasan ibn al-Qasim al-Hasani, the missionary and ruler of

Tabaristan and his death, as well as the story of al-Utrush, al-Hasan ibn `Ali al-Hasani.

Al-Mas`udi said: In our two works, *al-Awsat* and *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we covered the history and the major events during the days of the caliphs and kings mentioned here, but in this work we merely mentioned what a reader might find sufficient. In composing this present work, we have now reached the month of Jumada I, in the year 336

[November/December, 947], while living in the city of Fustat, in Egypt. 3607. The person who currently holds supreme power in the state and the capital is Abu'l Husain Ahmad ibn Buwayh the Dailamite, surnamed "Mu`izz al-Dawla." His brother, al-Hasan ibn Buwayh the Dailamite is the governor of Isbahan, the countryside of al-Ahwaz and other regions, and is surnamed "Rukn al-Dawla." The eldest brother who is held in greatest esteem by them is `Ali ibn Buwayh, surnamed "Imad al-Dawla" and resides in the land of Faris. Ahmad ibn Buwayh, "Mu`izz al-Dawla," is the one who manages the government of the caliph al-Muti`, and fights the Baridis of Basra. Al-Muti`, as far as we can tell from news reaching us, is totally in his power.

3608. In this work, we have employed a few words to describe a great many incidents, and alluded to major events in abbreviated and succinct historical accounts. In each of our works, we mentioned matters not mentioned in the other, matters that cannot be ignored and had to be included as the need arose to include them. We provided a survey of the history of the inhabitants of each era, and included each era's major events up to the present day. In addition, and at the beginning of this work, we offered an account of the earth, its lands and seas, its inhabited and uninhabited regions, its ancient kings and nations, and their customs and histories. I pray that God might grant me a further length of time and extend my span of life and grant me joy in order that we might follow up

this present work by another. In this future work, we intend to include a medley of historical accounts and of charming anecdotes, but not strictly arranged or organized according to subject matter. Rather, it would include whatever occurs to our mind by way of narratives that are of value and profit to readers or else unique and charming deeds of the past. We plan to call this work *Wasl al-Majalis bi Jawami` al-Akhbar wa Mukhtalat al-Adab*, which would be a follow-up and a supplement to our earlier books.

3609. Everything that we have included in this present work is such material as cannot be ignored by a person of culture, nor can one be excused for failing to know or understand it. Whoso skims quickly through the chapters of this book and does not pay close attention when reading each chapter will have failed to grasp the truth of what we cited or to give due consideration to learning and erudition. Collecting the materials of this book occupied us during many years of very hard work and effort, and after a great deal of travelling through east and west and in many kingdoms lying beyond the realm of Islam. Whoso reads this book, let him do so with the eye of sympathy, and let him take the initiative to correct anything he finds corrupted through the errors of copyists. But let him also bear in mind my own erudition and the sacred duties of learning, the requirements of scholarship and the great hardships I endured while composing it. In composing it and putting it together, I am like one who found precious stones of various kinds and varieties that were scattered, and from which he then strung together a precious necklace that remains a valuable object to one who seeks it. Let him who examines this work know that I did not take sides or support any particular viewpoint. Nor have I related of people anything other than what does them credit, paying no attention to anything else.

3610. Let us now turn to speak of the second part of a comprehensive account of history in accordance with the undertaking we took upon ourselves at the beginning of this book. I seek God's support and upon him I rely.

Chapter 131

A second comprehensive account of history from the Emigration until the present time which is the month of Jumada I, in the year 336, when we finished writing this book

3611. In an earlier part of this book we devoted a chapter to the chronology of the world, the prophets and the kings down to the birth of our Prophet and the beginning of his mission until his Emigration. We then described the period from his Emigration down to his death and the days of the caliphs and kings up to the present time, in accordance with the dictates of chronological calculations and the books of biography and history written by specialists in the history of caliphs and kings. In citing all this information, we made no mention of what may be found in astronomical almanacs as reported by astronomers and the dates cited in their chronologies. So let us in this chapter mention the summaries they adduced in their books of almanac from the Emigration down to the time cited above, in order to increase the value of this work and be more comprehensive as to knowledge of where historians differ from astronomers and where they agree.

3612. What we have found in the almanac books is that the [Islamic] chronology begins on Friday, the first of Muharram, on the Day of Tarwiya [Day of Fetching Water]. That date corresponds to the 16th July of the year 933 of the Alexander era. The Emigration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medinah took place in Year 1, 2 months and 8 days having already passed from that year. He resided in Medinah until he died, a

period of 9 years, 11 months and 22 days. This makes a total of 10 years and 2 months.

3613. Abu Bakr al-Siddiq: 2 years, 3 months and 8 days. This makes a total of 12 years, 5 months and 8 days. `Umar ibn al-Khattab: 10 years, 6 months and 17 days, a total of 22 years, 11 months and 25 days. The Shura meeting took place three days after `Umar's death, thus making a total of 22 years, 11 months and 28 days. `Uthman ibn `Affan: 11 years, 11 months and 19 days, making a total of 34 years, 11 months and 17 days. `Ali ibn Abi Talib: 4 years and 9 months, a total of 39 years, 8 months and 17 days. Until homage was paid to Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan, which was a period of 6 months and 3 days, the total comes to 40 years, 2 months and 20 days.

3614. Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan: 19 years, 3 months and 25 days, a total of 59 years, 6 months and 15 days. Yazid ibn Mu`awiya: 3 years and 8 months, a total of 63 years, 2 months and 15 days. Mu`awiya ibn Yazid ibn Mu`awiya: 3 months and 22 days, a total of 63 years, 6 months and 7 days. Marwan ibn al-Hakam: 4 months, a total of 63 years, 10 months and 7 days. `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair: 8 years and 5 months, a total of 72 years, 3 months and 7 days. `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan until the murder of Ibn al-Zubair: 1 year, 2 months and 3 days. This makes a total of 73 years, 5 months and 10 days.

The days of the descendants of Marwan ibn al-Hakam

3615. `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan: 12 years, 4 months and 5 days, a total of 85 years, 9 months and 15 days. Al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik: 9 years, 7 months and 29 days, a total of 95 years, 5 months and 14 days.

Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik: 2 years, 7 months and 29 days, a total of 98 years, 1 month and 13 days. `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz: 2 years, 5 months and 15 days, a total of 100 years, 6 months and 28 days. Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik: 4 years and 1 day, a total of 104 years, 7 months and 29 days.

Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik: 19 years, 8 months and 7 days, a total of 124 years, 3 months and 6 days. Al-Walid ibn Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik until his murder: 1 year, 2 months and 20 days, a total of 125 years, 5 months and 27 days. After his murder, civil war broke out, lasting 2 months and 25 days, making a total of 125 years, 8 months and 22 days. Yazid ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik: 2 months and 9 days, totaling 125 years, 11 months and 1 day. Ibrahim ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik until he was deposed: 2 months and 11 days, a total of 126 years, 1 month and 12 days. Marwan ibn Muhammad until he was killed: 5 years and 2 months, totaling 131 years, 3 months and 12 days.

The caliphs from the House of Hashim

3616. Abu'l `Abbas `Abdullah ibn Muhammad: 4 years, 8 months and 2 days, totaling 135 years, 11 months and 14 days. Until homage was paid to al-Mansur there was a period of 14 days, so the total was 135 years, 11 months and 28 days. Abu Ja`far `Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Mansur: 21 years, 11 months and 8 days, a total of 157 years, 11 months and 6 days. Until news of his death reached al-Mahdi there was an interval of 12 days, thus totaling 157 years, 11 months and 18 days. Al-Mahdi: 10 years, 1 month and 5 days, totaling 168 years and 23 days. Until news of his death reached al-Hadi there was an interval of 8 days, totaling 168 years, 1 month and 1 day. Al-Hadi: 1 year, 1 month and 15 days, a total of 169 years, 2 months and 16 days.

3617. Al-Rashid: 23 years, 2 months and 17 days, a total of 192 years, 5 months and 3 days. Until news of his death reached his son al-Amin there was an interval of 12 days, so giving a total of 192 years, 5 months and 15 days. Al-Amin, until he was deposed and imprisoned: 3 years and 25 days, a total of 195 years, 6 months and 10 days. He was imprisoned for 2 days, totaling 195 years, 6 months and 12 days. He was then brought out, received homage, fought and was besieged until he was killed, a period of

1 year, 6 months and 13 days. This comes to a total of 197 years and 25 days.

3618. Al-Ma'mun: 20 years, 5 months and 22 days, a total of 217 years, 6 months and 17 days. Al-Mu'tasim: 8 years, 8 months and 2 days, a total of 226 years, 2 months and 19 days. Al-Wathiq: 5 years, 9 months and 5 days, a total of 231 years, 11 months and 24 days. Al-Mutawakkil: 14 years, 9 months and 7 days, a total of 246 years, 9 months and 1 day. Al-Muntasir: 6 months, a total of 247 years, 3 months and 1 day. Until al-Musta'in descended to Baghdad: 2 years, 9 months and 3 days, a total of 250 years and 4 days. Until al-Mu'tazz received homage in Samarra' there was an interval of 10 days, thus totaling 250 years and 14 days. Until the name of al-Mu'tazz was mentioned in the Friday sermon in Baghdad there was a period of 11 months and 20 days, making a total of 251 years and 4 days. Until al-Mu'tazz was deposed there was a period of 3 years, 6 months and 23 days, totaling 254 years, 6 months and 27 days. Until homage was paid to al-Muhtadi there was an interval of 2 days, so the total is 254 years, 6 months and 29 days. Al-Muhtadi: 11 months and 18 days, totaling 255 years, 6 months and 17 days.

3619. Al-Mu'tamid: 23 years and 3 days, a total of 278 years, 6 months and 20 days. Al-Mu'tadid: 9 years, 9 months and 2 days, making a total of 288 years, 3 months and 22 days. Al-Muktafi: 6 years, 6 months and 20 days, totaling 294 years, 10 months and 12 days. Al-Muqtadir, until deposed: 21 years, 2 months and 5 days, totaling 316 years and 19 days. Ibn al-Mu'tazz until he was deposed: 2 days, a total of 316 years and 21 days. Al-Muqtadir until he was murdered: 3 years, 9 months and 8 days, totaling 319 years, 9 months and 19 days.

3620. Al-Qahir until he was deposed: 1 year, 6 months and 10 days, a total of 321 years, 4 months and 9 days. Al-Radi: 6 years, 11 months and 8 days, a total of 328 years, 3 months and 17 days. Al-Muttaqi: 3 years, 9

months and 17 days, totaling 332 years, 1 month and 3 days. Al-Mustakfi: 1 year and 3 months, totaling 333 years, 4 months and 3 days. Al-Muti` until the first day of the month of Jumada I in the year 336: 2 years, 8 months and 15 days, totaling 335 years and four months less 3 nights.

3621. Al-Mas`udi said: The years of the Hijra era are lunar. Between the chronology described above and the chronology cited by historians and biographers there is some divergence, with some months and days added here and there. The chronology we have cited from the Emigration to the present time derives from what we found in the books of almanacs, since the practitioners of this science observe these times and record them with exactitude. The chronology narrated above derives from the almanac of Abu `Abdullah Muhammad ibn Jabir al-Battani* as well as other almanacs that cover the period until the present.

3622. As to the information we presented above [at the beginning of each section] from the Emigration to the present time, we shall now repeat in detail in the following part of this chapter in order that this information might be easier to grasp for anyone seeking it. It does not substantially differ from what we reported from the almanacs.

3623. What has been definitively established by biographers, historians, and traditionists is that the Prophet received his divine mission at forty years of age, remained in Mecca for thirteen years, emigrated to Medinah where he remained for ten years, and was taken up to God at age sixty-three.

3624. Abu Bakr: 2 years, 3 months and 10 days. `Umar ibn al-Khattab: 10 years, 6 months and 4 nights. `Uthman ibn `Affan: 12 years less 8 days. `Ali ibn Abi Talib: 4 years, 9 months and 8 nights. Al-Hasan ibn `Ali: 6 months and 10 days.

3625. Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufian: 19 years, 8 months and 25 days. Yazid ibn Mu`awiya: 3 years and 8 months less 8 nights. Mu`awiya ibn Yazid: 1 month and 11 days. Marwan ibn al-Hakam: 8 months and 5 days. `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan: 21 years and one and a half months. Al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik: 9 years, 8 months and 2 days. Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik: 2 years, 8 months and 5 nights. `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz: 2 years, 5 months and 5 days. Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik: 4 years, 1 month and 2 days. Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik: 19 years, 7 months and 11 nights. Al-Walid ibn Yazid: 1 year, 2 months and 22 days. Yazid ibn al-Walid: 5 months and 2 nights. Marwan ibn Muhammad: 5 years and 10 days.

The days of the Abbasids

3626. `Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Saffah: 4 years and 9 months. Al-Mansur: 22 years less 9 nights. Al-Mahdi: 10 years, 1 month and 15 days. Al-Hadi: 1 year and 3 months. Al-Rashid: 23 years and 6 months. Al-Amin: 4 years and 6 months. Al-Ma'mun: 21 years exactly. Al-Mu'tasim: 8 years and 8 months. Al-Wathiq: 5 years, 9 months and 13 days. Al-Mutawakkil: 14 years, 9 months and 9 nights. Al-Muntasir: 6 months. Al-Musta'in: 3 years and 8 months. Al-Mu'tazz: 4 years and 6 months. Al-Muhtadi: 11 months. Al-Mu'tamid: 23 years. Al-Mu'tadid: 9 years, 9 months and 2 days. Al-Muktafi: 6 years, 7 months and 22 days. Al-Muqtadir: 24 years, 11 months and 16 days. Al-Qahir: 1 year, 6 months and 6 days. Al-Radi: 6 years, 11 months and 8 days. Al-Muttaqi: 3 years, 11 months and 23 days. Al-Mustakfi: 1 year and 3 months. Al-Muti` until the first day of the month of Jumada I of the year 336: 1 year, 8 months and 15 days.

3627. We pray that God will grant us a further term of life so that we can add to this book and include the events of their [caliphs'] days and what will come to pass as regards their state.

3628. This then is the sum total of the chronology from the Emigration down to the present moment which is Jumada I of the year 336. In this chapter we included what both groups had cited [i.e. astronomers and historians] so that the issue becomes clear to one who seeks information about it.

3629. The chronology from the birth of the Prophet until the present time is well known, as also from the start of the Prophet's mission until his death. Nor is it difficult for an educated person to find this information in this book. However, most people date the beginning of the Islamic calendar from the moment when `Umar consulted people as to the necessity of recording accurately the date of certain events that needed to be recorded, what each group had advised him and how he adopted the view of `Ali ibn Abi Talib that he should begin the era with the Emigration of the Prophet and his abandonment of the land of the polytheists. They further believe that `Umar adopted this calendar in the year 17 or 18, according to the divergent opinions on this question.

Chapter 132

An account of those who led the pilgrimage from the beginning of Islam until the year 335

3630. Al-Mas`udi said: God's Prophet conquered Mecca in the month of Ramadan, in the year 8 of the Hijra, then returned to Medinah. He appointed `Attab ibn Asid ibn Abi'l `Is ibn Umayya as governor of Mecca, who led the pilgrimage in the year 8. It is also claimed that people that year performed the pilgrimage in scattered groups without having a leader. In year 9, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq led the pilgrimage at the head of three hundred people, coming from Medinah. The Prophet sent with him twenty sacrificial animals. He then dispatched `Ali ibn Abi Talib after him, who caught up with him in al-`Arj. With him was the chapter of the Qur'an called "Repentance" [*Sura* 9] which he read out on the Day of

Sacrifice at the `Aqaba. Abu Bakr then led the people in the rituals of pilgrimage. Abu Bakr delivered a sermon in Mecca one day before the Day of Fetching Water, the Day of `Arafa and the Day of Sacrifice in Mina. In the year 10, the Lord of Prophets led the pilgrimage and in that year he died.

3631. Year 11: `Umar ibn al-Khattab led the pilgrimage. Year 12: Abu Bakr al-Siddiq. Year 13: `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf. Year 14 and until Year 23: `Umar ibn al-Khattab. He was then killed at the end of the month of Dhu'l Hijja. Year 24: `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf. Year 25 and until Year 34: `Uthman ibn `Affan. Year 35: `Abdullah ibn `Abbas, ordered to do so by `Uthman ibn `Affan while he was besieged. Year 36: `Abdullah ibn `Abbas.

3632. Year 32: `Ali dispatched `Abdullah ibn `Abbas to lead the pilgrimage while Mu`awiya sent Yazid ibn Shajara al-Rahawi for the same purpose. They met in Mecca and there was a conflict as to who was to lead but neither conceded to the other. Eventually they agreed that the leader of prayers would be Shaiba ibn `Uthman ibn Abi Talha ibn `Abdullah---who is `Abd al-`Uzza--- ibn `Uthman ibn `Abd al-Dar, who was the chamberlain of the Holy House, and he did so. Year 38: the leader of the pilgrimage was Qutham ibn `Abbas, governor of Mecca. Year 39: Shayba ibn `Uthman. Year 40, when Mu`awiya and al-Hasan disputed the caliphate: Al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba led the pilgrimage, armed with a letter from Mu`awiya which, it is said, he forged. Year 41: `Utba ibn Abi Sufian. Year 42: `Anbasa ibn Abi Sufian. Year 43: Marwan ibn al-Hakam. Year 44: Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufian. Year 45: Marwan ibn al-Hakam. Years 46 & 47: `Utba ibn Abi Sufian. Year 48: Marwan ibn al-Hakam. Year 49: Sa`id ibn al-`As. Year 50: Yazid ibn Mu`awiya.

3634. Year 51: Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufian. Years 52 & 53: Sa`id ibn al-`As. Years 54 and 55: Marwan ibn al-Hakam. Year 56: `Utba ibn Abi

Sufian. Years 57 & 58: Al-Walid ibn `Utba. Year 59: `Uthman ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Sufian. Year 60: `Amr ibn Sa`id ibn al-`As.

3635. Years 61 & 62: Al-Walid ibn `Utba ibn Abi Sufian. Years 63 to 71: `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair. Year 72: Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. The pilgrims went to Mina but did not circumambulate the Holy House. Year 73: Al-Hajjaj again led the pilgrimage. This was the year when `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair was killed. Year 74: Al-Hajjaj. Year 75: `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. Years 76 to 80: Aban ibn `Uthman ibn `Affan.

3636. Year 81: Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik. Year 82: Aban ibn `Uthman ibn `Affan. Years 83 to 85: Hisham ibn Isma`il al-Makhzumi. Year 86: Al-`Abbas ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik, but another version holds that al-`Abbas was simply one of the pilgrims and the pilgrimage was led by another man, but God knows best. Year 87: `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz. Year 88: Al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik. Years 89 & 90: `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz.

3637. Year 91: Al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik. Year 92: `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz. Year 93: `Uthman ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik or, in another version, `Abd al-`Aziz ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik. Year 94: Maslama ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. Year 95: Bishr ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik. Year 96: Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn `Amr ibn Hazm. Year 97: Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik. Year 98: `Abd al-`Aziz ibn `Abdullah ibn Khalid ibn Asid ibn Abi'l `As ibn Umayya. Years 99 & 100: Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn `Amr ibn Hazm.

3638. Year 101: `Abd al-`Aziz ibn `Abdullah, governor of Mecca. Year 102: `Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Dahhak al-Fihri. Years 103 & 104: `Abd al-Wahid ibn `Abdullah ibn Ka`b ibn `Umair ibn Qunai` ibn `Ubad ibn `Awf ibn Nasr ibn Mu`awiya al-Nasri. Year 105: Ibrahim ibn Hisham al-Makhzumi. Year 106: Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik. Years 107 until 112: Ibrahim ibn Hisham al-Makhzumi. In another version, the year 113 is

cited, which is the more correct date, denying the claim that Sulaiman ibn Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik led the pilgrimage.

3639. Year 114: Khalid ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn al-Harith ibn al-Hakam ibn Abi'l `As ibn Umayya. Year 115: Muhammad ibn Hisham al-Makhzumi. Year 116: Al-Walid ibn Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik, the crown prince. Year 117: Khalid ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn al-Harith ibn al-Hakam ibn Abi'l `As, or, in another version, Maslama ibn `Abd al-Malik. Year 118: Muhammad ibn Hisham al-Makhzumi. Year 119: Abu Shakir Maslama ibn Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik.

3640. Years 120 until 124: Muhammad ibn Hisham al-Makhzumi. Year 125: Yusuf, nephew of al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. Year 126: `Umar ibn `Abdullah ibn `Abd al-Malik. Years 127 & 128: `Abd al-`Aziz ibn `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz. Year 129: `Abd al-Wahid ibn Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik. Abu Hamza al-Mukhtar ibn `Awf, the Kharijite from the Azd tribe who acted as missionary for the one known as *Talib al-Haqq* [Seeker of Righteousness], had declared an open rebellion that year. The people asked him to allow `Abd al-Wahid to lead the prayers then return to his house. Year 130: Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan.

3641. Year 131: Al-Walid ibn `Urwa ibn Muhammad ibn `Atiyya al-Sa`di led the pilgrimage in accordance with a letter he forged from his uncle `Abd al-Malik ibn Muhammad ibn `Atiyya, governor of Hijaz and Yemen for Marwan ibn Muhammad. Al-Mas`udi said: This was the last pilgrimage led by the Umayyad dynasty.

3642. Year 132: Dawud ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib. Year 133: Ziyad ibn `Ubaydullah ibn `Abdullah ibn `Abd al-Madan al-Harithi. Year 134: `Isa ibn Musa ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn `Abbas. Year 135: Sulaiman ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn `Abbas. Year 136: Abu Ja`far al-Mansur. In this same year, he was paid homage. Year 137: Isma`il ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn `Abbas. Year 138:

Al-Fadl ibn Salih ibn `Ali. Year 139: Al-`Abbas ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali.
Year 140: Abu Ja`far al-Mansur.

3643. Year 141: Salih ibn `Ali. Year 142: Isma`il ibn `Ali. Year 143: `Isa
ibn Musa ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Year 144: Abu Ja`far al-Mansur. Year
145: Al-Sariyy ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Harith ibn al-`Abbas. Year 146:
`Abd al-Wahhab ibn Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Year 147: Abu
Ja`far al-Mansur. Year 148: Ja`far ibn Abi Ja`far al-Mansur. In other
versions, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Imam or else al-Mansur led the
pilgrimage. Year 149: `Abd al-Wahhab or else Muhammad ibn Ibrahim
ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Year 150: `Abd al-Samad ibn `Ali.

3644. Year 151: Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Year
152: Abu Ja`far al-Mansur. Year 153: Al-Mahdi Muhammad ibn
`Abdullah al-Mansur. Year 154: Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Muhammad
ibn `Ali. Year 155: `Abd al-Samad ibn `Ali. Year 156: Al-`Abbas ibn
Muhammad ibn `Ali. Years 157 & 158: Ibrahim ibn Yahya ibn
Muhammad ibn `Ali. Year 159: Yazid ibn Mansur ibn `Abdullah ibn
Shahr ibn Zaid ibn Muthawwib al-Himyari. Year 160: Al-Mahdi
Muhammad ibn al-Mansur.

3645. Year 161: Al-Hadi Musa ibn al-Mahdi, the crown prince. Year 162:
Ibrahim ibn Ja`far ibn Abi Ja`far. Year 163: `Ali ibn Muhammad al-
Mahdi. Years 164 & 165: Salih ibn Abi Ja`far al-Mansur. Year 166:
Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Year 167: Ibrahim ibn
Yahya ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Year 168: `Ali ibn Muhammad al-
Mahdi. Year 169: Sulaiman ibn Abi Ja`far al-Mansur. Year 170: Harun
al-Rashid.

3646. Years 171 & 172: Ya`qub ibn al-Mansur. Year 173: Harun al-
Rashid. He left his camp in a state of *ihrām* and headed to Mecca. Year
174: Harun al-Rashid. Year 175: Sulaiman ibn Abi Ja`far al-Mansur.
Year 176: Harun al-Rashid. Year 177: Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn

Muhammad ibn `Ali. Year 178: Harun al-Rashid. Years 179 & 180: Musa ibn `Isa ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali.

3647. Year 181: Harun al-Rashid. Year 182: Musa ibn `Isa ibn Muhammad. Year 183: Al-`Abbas ibn Musa al-Hadi. Year 184: Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi. Year 185; Al-Mansur ibn al-Mahdi. Year 186: Harun al-Rashid. Year 187: `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali, or al-Mansur ibn al-Mahdi in another version. Year 188: Harun al-Rashid. Year 189: Al-`Abbas ibn Musa ibn `Isa ibn Musa ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Year 190: `Isa ibn Musa al-Hadi.

3648. Years 191 & 192: Al-`Abbas ibn `Ubaidullah ibn Ja`far ibn Abi Ja`far al-Mansur. Year 193: Dawud ibn `Isa ibn Musa ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Year 194: `Ali ibn al-Rashid. Year 195: Dawud ibn `Isa ibn Musa ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Years 196 to 198: Al-`Abbas ibn Musa ibn `Isa ibn Musa ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Year 199: Muhammad ibn Dawud ibn `Isa ibn Musa ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Ibn al-Aftas al-`Alawi rose in rebellion in Mecca and dominated the city so Muhammad ibn Dawud abandoned the pilgrimage and did not proceed to `Arafa. The pilgrims came out to the way station on `Arafa without a leader of prayers. Arrived in al-Muzdalifa, Ibn al-Aftas appeared to the pilgrims and completed for them the rituals of their pilgrimage. Year 200: Abu Ishaq al-Mu`tasim.

3649. Year 201: Ishaq ibn Musa ibn `Isa ibn Musa ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Year 202: Ibrahim ibn Musa ibn Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib. He was the first Talibid to lead the pilgrimage in Islam, but did so having usurped that function and without being delegated by a caliph. He was a man who sowed corruption on earth, having killed the followers of Ibrahim ibn `Ubaidullah al-Jumahi and others in the Holy Mosque, as well as Yazid ibn Muhammad ibn Hanzala al-Makhzumi and other ascetics. Year 203: `Abdullah ibn Ja`far

ibn Sulaiman ibn `Ali. Years 204 to 206: `Ubaidullah ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ubaidullah ibn al-`Abbas ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, who was delegated to lead the pilgrimage by al-Ma`mun, and was also his governor of the two holy mosques of Mecca and Medinah. Year 207: Abu `Isa ibn al-Rashid. Year 208: Salih ibn al-Rashid, accompanied by Zubaida.

3650. Years 209 to 211: Salih ibn al-`Abbas ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Year 212: `Abdullah ibn `Ubaidullah ibn al-`Abbas. Year 213: Ahmad ibn al-`Abbas. Year 214: Ishaq ibn al-`Abbas ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Years 215 & 216: `Abdullah ibn `Ubaidullah. Years 217 & 218: Sulaiman ibn `Abdullah ibn Sulaiman ibn `Ali, nicknamed *Faqi`* [blond]. He was an eloquent and fluent orator. Years 219 & 220: Salih ibn al-`Abbas ibn Muhammad.

3651. Year 221: Salih ibn al-`Abbas ibn Muhammad. Years 222 to 226: Muhammad ibn Dawud ibn `Isa ibn Musa ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib. Year 227: Ja`far al-Mutawakkil. Years 228 to 235: Muhammad ibn Dawud ibn `Isa ibn Musa ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Year 236: Muhammad al-Muntasir ibn al-Mutawakkil, accompanied by his grandmother Shuja`. Year 237: `Ali ibn `Isa ibn Ja`far ibn al-Mansur.

3652. Years 238 to 241: `Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Dawud ibn `Isa ibn Musa ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas. Years 242 to 244: `Abd al-Samad ibn Musa ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Imam ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas. Years 245 to 248: Muhammad ibn Sulaiman ibn `Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Imam. Year 249: `Abd al-Samad ibn Musa ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Imam. Year 250: Ja`far ibn al-Fadl ibn `Isa ibn Musa, nicknamed *Bashashat* [cheerful face].

3653. Year 251: Isma`il ibn Yusuf al-`Alawi, mentioned earlier, led the pilgrims at the way station on `Arafa. The pilgrimage was invalid except

for a few, since Isma`il appeared on `Arafa with his troops, surveyed the pilgrims and killed a large number of Muslims to the point where it is said that he would make people listen to the *talbiya* [‘Here I am O Lord!'] of those whom he killed. He was a man who did great evil. Year 252: Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn `Isa ibn Ja`far ibn al-Mansur, nicknamed *Ka`b al-Baqar* [bull’s ankle]. Year 253: `Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Sulaiman al-Zainabi. Years 254 & 255: `Ali ibn al-Hasan ibn Isma`il ibn al-`Abbas ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Year 256: Muhammad ibn Ahmad *Ka`b al-Baqar*. Years 257 & 258: Al-Fadl ibn al-`Abbas ibn al-Hasan ibn Isma`il ibn al-`Abbas ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Years 259 & 260: Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn Isma`il ibn Ja`far ibn Sulaiman ibn `Ali, nicknamed *Burayh* [Little Ibrahim].

3654. Years 261 to 263: Al-Fadl ibn al-`Abbas ibn al-Hasan ibn Isma`il ibn al-`Abbas ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Years 264 to 278: Harun ibn Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn Musa ibn `Isa ibn Musa ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali led the pilgrimage for fifteen uninterrupted years. Years 279 to 287: Abu `Abdullah Muhammad ibn `Abdullah ibn Dawud ibn `Isa ibn Musa led the pilgrimage for nine uninterrupted years. Year 288: Harun ibn Muhammad ibn al-`Abbas ibn Ibrahim ibn `Isa ibn Ja`far ibn Abi Ja`far al-Mansur. Years 289 to 305: Al-Fadl ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn `Abdullah ibn `Ubaidullah ibn al-`Abbas ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali led the pilgrimage without interruption throughout these years.

3655. Years 306 & 307: Ahmad ibn al-`Abbas ibn Muhammad ibn `Isa ibn Sulaiman ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Imam. He is known as the brother of Umm Musa al-Hashimiyya, housekeeper of Shaghab, mother of al-Muqtadir. Years 308 to 311: Ishaq ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn `Abdullah ibn `Ubaidullah ibn al-`Abbas ibn Muhammad. Year 312: Al-Hasan ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn `Abdullah ibn `Ubaidullah ibn al-`Abbas ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali. Years 313 & 314: Abu Talib `Abd al-Sami` ibn

Ayyub ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn `Abdullah ibn `Ubaidullah ibn al-`Abbas, deputizing for his uncle al-Hasan. Years 315 & 316: `Ubaidullah ibn `Abdullah ibn Sulaiman ibn Muhammad the Elder ibn `Abdullah ibn `Ubaidullah ibn Muhammad, known as Abu Ahmad al-Azraq, and deputizing for al-Hasan ibn `Abd al-`Aziz al-`Abbasi.

3656. Year 317: Sulaiman ibn al-Hasan [Abu Tahir al-Qarmati], ruler of Bahrain, invaded Mecca. `Umar ibn al-Hasan ibn `Abd al-`Aziz, whose genealogy was cited above, had come to lead the pilgrimage as deputy of his father. The events that followed have already been mentioned earlier. Thus, no pilgrimage took place in the year 317, because of the invasion of the accursed Qarmatian except for a very small group of raiders who performed the pilgrimage without a prayer leader. They were infantrymen. Year 318: `Umar ibn al-Hasan ibn `Abd al-`Aziz al-Hashimi, deputizing for his father al-Hasan ibn `Abd al-`Aziz. Year 319: Ja`far ibn `Ali ibn Sulaiman ibn `Ali ibn Sulaiman ibn Ja`far ibn Sulaiman ibn `Ali, deputizing for al-Hasan ibn `Abd al-`Aziz. Year 320: `Umar ibn al-Hasan ibn `Abd al-`Aziz, deputizing for his father. He continued to lead the pilgrimage until the year 335. He is the judge of Mecca at this present time which is the month of Jumada II, in the year 336 [December/January, 947], and he also acts as judge of Egypt and elsewhere.

3657. Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali al-Mas`udi said: In earlier parts of this work we made mention of diverse kinds of history and of the sciences, together with the histories of prophets, kings and their conduct, the history of diverse nations, reports about the lands and seas and their wonders and monuments, as well as matters connected thereto. The intention is that all this information would act as a pointer to our earlier works and as an introduction to our previous books that dealt with the various sciences. In this book, we have not failed to mention any science

or any kind of history or ancient tradition, either in detail or in abbreviated form, or else referred to it using some form of reference, or alluded to it by using certain expressions, when dealing with the history of non-Arabs and Arabs and the major events in the history of all nations. 3658. If anyone distorts any idea to be found in this work, or removes any concept from its context, or deliberately disregards any clear expression of its thoughts, or casts doubt on any evidence cited in its biographies, or otherwise alters it, or changes it, or extracts from it, or abbreviates it, or attributes it to another author, or fails to mention that we are its author, may the anger and vengeance of God and His calamities speedily fall upon him whereby he can no longer bear them, leaving him in utter confusion and making him an example to the world and an admonition to men who reflect and heed the signs of the divine. May God, creator of heavens and earth, deprive him of what He has bestowed upon him, and cut short what He generously granted him of power and prosperity, whatever his religion or opinion might be. {God is powerful over all things}.

3659. We placed this warning at the beginning and the end of this work, and the same may be said of all our previous works and books. Let each man guard against the power of his Lord and be watchful as to his own end, for life is brief and the distance is short and {to God is the journey's end}.

3660. In several places in this work we have already apologized for any mistakes that might have occurred through inadvertence, any misspelling or any mistake made by a copyist. This is so because of our unceasing travels and constant movement, at times towards the east, at others towards the west, at times southwards, at others northwards. In addition, there are the mistakes that accompany the human condition itself and are conjoined to the weakness that prevents all humans from attaining an

ultimate and ideal perfection. Had it been the case that no book is written unless it contains the sum total of all sciences, no one would have written any book or authored any tome, since God says: {Above every person possessed of knowledge is One All-Knowing}.

3661. May it please God to count us among those who prefer obedience to Him and are led to His right guidance. We ask Him to wipe out any evil with good and any levity with seriousness, then to turn favorably towards us with His forgiveness and bestow His grace upon us, for He is most generous and most charitable. There is no god but He {Lord of the great throne}, and blessings upon the Lord of Men, Muhammad and his pure progeny, and the most profound benedictions.

END

Mas`udi Glossary arranged according to Pellat's paragraphs

Vol. 1

4. Sind: northwestern India, the region around the Indus valley. Zanj: the coast of southeastern Africa. Sanf: Island and city in southeastern Vietnam. Zabij: The island of Java. Khurasan: eastern Iran and western Afghanistan. Al-Ran: region to the north of Adharbaijan. Bailaqan: chief town of al-Ran.

13. Many of these authors will be cited later by Mas`udi where they will be glossed.

14. `Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa` (d.ca.756) was Persian by origin and widely considered one of the earliest masters of Arabic literary prose. In spirit and world view, he belonged to the world of late Antiquity more than to the world of Islam. He translated many Persian works into Arabic.

34. Luqman: A pre-Islamic Arabian sage.

44. The terms imamate or imam will be encountered frequently in Mas`udi. In Sunni usage, the term means leader of prayers while the "Great Imam" is a title of the caliph. In Shi`i usage on the other hand the term refers exclusively to a line of divinely elected politico-religious figures descended from Muhammad through `Ali and Fatima.

47. Sarandib is Sri Lanka; Judda is a port city in western Hijaz; Baisan is in eastern Palestine. Ruhun might refer to the kingdom of Ruhuna in the south and east of Sri Lanka.

57. Mina and Mount Abu Qubais are localities near Mecca.

59. All these groups will be identified later.

61. Qimar is probably Kashmir.

62. The Sabians were an ancient gnostic religious group who played a major role in transmitting Greek wisdom to the Islamic world in the 8-10th centuries.

64. A *farsakh* is approximately 6 kilometers.

88. A *mithqal* is approximately 4.2 grams.

91. For al-Samaida`, cf. Shemida in Numbers 26: 32. How he is turned into a "King of the Greeks" is a mystery.

92. Al-Balqa' in the days of al-Mas`udi was the name of the region which corresponds roughly to northern Jordan today.

94. Al-Jazira is the name given by Arab geographers to the region which today comprises northwestern Iraq, northeastern Syria and southeastern Turkey.
105. The institution of clientship (*wala'*) afforded a client (*mawla*) of a tribe protection in return for the client's loyalty to the tribe. His social status however was not the equal of a full tribal member.
124. Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. ca. 730) was a Yemenite historian with a particular interest in Biblical history.
145. Waraqa ibn Nawfal, said to be a relative of Khadija, first wife of Muhammad, was described as a Christian ascetic in the traditional biographies of Muhammad and one who attested to his prophecy.
146. The Battle of Badr in 624 was the first major battle between the Muslims and the pagan Meccans, and resulted in a Muslim victory. The Muslims who fought at Badr were later held in very high esteem.
147. The *Ansar* (Supporters) was the name given to the Muslims of Medinah who took the Prophet in when exiled from Mecca and were his supporters, hence the name.
169. Al-Zabaj was a kingdom that included Java and Sumatra.
170. The Zanj are the black tribes of the East African coast. The Damadim are said by one medieval source to be the neighbors of the Zanj and their scourge.
171. Al-Kindi (d.873) was an early philosopher and naturalist of Baghdad.
173. Tawus the Yemenite was an early Hadith transmitter. `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas (d.ca. 687), or Ibn `Abbas for short, a cousin of the Prophet, was regarded as the foremost religious scholar of early Islam and was also the ancestor of the Abbasid dynasty. The Epistle of Jahiz has been translated into English: see T. Khalidi, *Islamic Quarterly*, vol.25 (1981).
175. For Sarandib, see 47.
178. Qimar is Cambodia. Kalah is the northern region of modern Malaya.
184. A *mann* was about 800 grams.
185. According to Pellat, *Ballahara* was a title of the kings of the Deccan in India, while Mankir is Malkhed.
186. Qannuj is a city and kingdom near the Ganges.
187. The Khalidat islands are the Canaries.
189. Faris is very roughly southern and central Iran.

190. The *dhira`* in the days of Mas`udi was approximately 54 cms.
192. The Dibajat are the Maldives.
206. Al-Dahhak is the Azi Dahaka of the *Avesta*.
211. The entire sentence until “al-Shamma`” is unclear.
215. Qanbalu is identified by some modern scholars with Madagascar.
230. Khalid ibn al-Walid (d.642) was a celebrated military commander during the early Muslim conquests of the Near East.
244. Qanbalu is uncertain: Pellat suggests either Madagascar or the Grand Comoro.
245. The *rajaz* is the simplest and probably the oldest of Arabic meters and was used mostly for simple chants.
248. The *titawa* is the sandpiper; the *hisani* could be the plover; the *shamurk* is a hen about to lay an egg.
250. Qulzum is a town near modern Suez. The word can also refer to the Red Sea.
251. The Khawarij, or Kharijites, [rebels] were early Muslim rebel groups of whom much will be heard later on in this work. *Al-Sharat* means “those who sell their soul to God” which was the name they gave themselves, while “Khawarij” was the name given to them by their enemies. See also parags.2076-79 of the text.
253. Bahrain in the days of Mas`udi was a coastal region roughly corresponding to the region of al-Hufuf in modern Saudi Arabia while Uwal is the island of Bahrain. Al-Shihr and al-Ahqaf are south Arabian coastal regions.
254. In Mas`udi’s days, Siraf was an important port city, also known as Bandar Siraf, now in ruins, in southwestern Iran.
262. This paragraph is in several places uncertain in meaning.
268. Ahmad ibn al Tayyib al-Sarakhsi (d. 899) was a philosopher and historian and a pupil of al-Kindi.
271. Al-Battani (d. 929) was widely considered the most renowned astronomer of pre-Modern Islamic civilization.
272. The Arabic has Sita which is an error for Sibta [Ceuta].
278. Ladhika was ancient Colchis, now roughly western Georgia.
296. Abaskun was an important port city in the pre-Modern period on the southeastern coast of the Caspian, now in ruins.

297. The Banu al-Munajjim were a family of astronomers and astrologers working at the Abbasid court from the eighth to the tenth centuries.

308. *Al-Filaha al-Nabatiyya* [Nabatean Agriculture] by Ibn Wahshiyya (fl. 9th/10th centuries) deals not solely with agriculture but also with the occult sciences.

358. Abu Ma`shar of Balkh (d.886) was a famous astrologer of the Abbasid court.

361. The Sea of Harkand is the Bay of Bengal. The Sea of Kalah Bar is the Straits of Malacca. The Sea of Kanduranj is the Gulf of Thailand and the Sankhi Sea is the South China Sea.

362. Saluqiya was called Seleucia ad Mare, to distinguish it from other cities by that name. It was the main port of Antioch.

364. The following sentences which include examples of the substitution of *lash* for *lak* is omitted.

365. Al-Zabaj or al-Zabij probably refers to Sumatra.

371. Al-Ramni and Fansur are both in northern Sumatra.

372. Lanjabalus is one of the Nicobar Islands, north of Sumatra.

376. The Maharaj is the name given to the islands of Sumatra and Java.

378. Sribuza is Sumatra.

379. A *shibr* is approximately 40 to 50 centimeters.

386. Zabulistan is roughly modern southern Afghanistan.

389. For Di`bil, see 1086.

400. This is `Abd al-Rahman III (d.961), arguably the greatest of Muslim Spain's rulers.

409. Musa ibn Nusair (d.716) was an Umayyad governor and military commander who directed the conquest of Visigothic Spain. The "Great Land" is the name given by the Arabs to the central plains of France.

410. It is not entirely clear who 'they' refers to. The most likely explanation is that it refers to the Berbers of North Africa.

411. Ifriqiyya is the term generally applied to North Africa, corresponding very roughly to modern Libya, Tunis and eastern Algeria. The Rustam dynasty (ca. 777-909) was centered in roughly modern Algeria. The Aghlab dynasty (ca. 800-909) were centered roughly in Tunis. Abu `Abdullah was the champion of the

emerging Fatimid state, which destroyed both dynasties and later conquered Egypt.

412. Al-Lan, or Alans, were a nation who lived north of the Caucasus and are said to be the ancestors of the modern Ossetians.

417. Lu'ayy ibn Ghalib was an ancestor of Muhammad. For *mann* see 184.

426. Juraz is commonly identified with Gurdjara.

428. According to Pellat, Dahram is to be identified with the state of Pala, located in the Bengal and Arisa.

433. Tanluinj is Tanlwing, in southern Burma.

444. For the Ansar, see 147.

445. Al-Dudaniyya are according to Pellat, still called Dido or Tzezes and inhabit the heights of central Daghestan.

459. Atil was the capital of the Khazars and located on the northwestern shore of the Caspian Sea, not far from modern Astrakhan.

467. Muqatil ibn Sulaiman (d.767) was a famous Qur'an exegete. The dates of Muqatil and al-Rashid makes the story impossible to believe.

477. Kurj is Georgia. Zirikaran is, according to Pellat, a tribe of Daghestan called Kobeci.

478. Al-Sarir is roughly Upper Daghestan.

479. For Al- Lan, see 412.

480. Maslama ibn `Abd al-Malik (d.738) was a royal Umayyad prince and renowned military commander.

491. Hunain ibn Ishaq (d. 873) was a famous Christian translator, physician and scientist of Baghdad who played a central role in the translation movement of the 9th century from Greek into Arabic and Syriac.

499. According to Pellat, the Sanariyya, are a Christian nation living north of Tiflis and known as Tsanark to the Armenians.

503. Ibn Khurradadbeh (d.912) was a geographer and historian, and author of one of the earliest works on administrative geography in Arabic.

506. Babik (d.838) was the leader of a major rebellion against the Abbasid empire.

509. For a full discussion of these ancient kings, see vol.7, pp.598ff of the Pellat edition of Mas`udi. The word *Nabat* is usually applied to the native population of Iraq and the Near East.

510. This reference to windmills is perhaps unique in the pre-Modern Islamic world.

511. The Hirmand is Hilmend.

521. Lawustanas is Laosthenes, according to Pellat.

527. Pellat provides a list of their names and their historical counterparts in volume 7 of his edition, pp.598-601.

536. Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar (d.825) was a highly respected philologist and expert on antiquity.

537. Abu Nuwas (d.814) was arguably the most talented “modernist” poet of the Abbasid period, a libertine, and a charming wine and love poet whose simple diction eschewed the more classical diction and themes of his contemporaries.

552. The book called *al-Jafr* is believed by the Shi`a to be by `Ali ibn Abi Talib as transmitted from the Prophet. It is a gnostic work dealing with matters like numerology and prognostication.

558. Hisham al-Kalbi (d.819) was a genealogist and historian of antiquity.

567. Tubba` was the title of the ancient kings of the Yemen.

568. Jarir (d.ca. 728) was one of a trio of distinguished poets of the Umayyad period, the others being al-Farazdaq and al-Akhtal.

569. Bashshar ibn Burd (d. 783) was a distinguished and highly original poet of the Abbasid period.

572. `Abdullah ibn al-Mu`tazz (d. 908), the so-called “Caliph for one night,” was an Abbasid royal prince, an exquisite poet and a renowned literary critic.

573. Al-`Abbas (d. 653) was the paternal uncle of the Prophet and eponymous ancestor of the Abbasid dynasty.

594. The term *zindiq* was also generally applied to heretics of various sorts.

600. Ya`qub al-Saffar(d.879) was founder of the Saffarid state which was one of the earliest dynasties to break away from the Abbasid empire. Its center was in modern southwestern Afghanistan but at its height controlled a much wider area including modern Iran and Afghanistan.

601. `Ad is an ancient Arabian polity mentioned in the Qur'an and destroyed because they rejected Hud, the prophet sent to them by God.
602. A mountain in Najd, in central Arabia, which is often mentioned in classical poetry.
603. Mu`awiya (d.680) was the founder of the Umayyad dynasty. `Ali ibn Abi Talib (d.661) was the Prophet's cousin, the fourth of the "Rightly-Guided Caliphs", immediate successors of Muhammad, and the center of Shi'i devotions.
607. Hercules is obviously a title of the Byzantine rulers. Abu Qabus is the patronymic of al-Nu`man ibn al-Mundhir, last and most famous king of the semi-independent Arab kingdom of al-Hira. For al-Hira, see 613.
610. The Barmakids were a famous family of viziers and courtiers of the early Abbasid caliphs whose power was brutally ended by Harun al-Rashid.
613. The semi-independent kingdom of al-Hira, south of Kufa, was an important Christian city state in pre-Islamic Arabia, and an important cultural center.
625. *Kalila wa Dimna* was a book of animal fables, Indo-Persian in origin, translated into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa`. Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik (d.743) was the last major Umayyad ruler before the outbreak of the Abbasid Revolution.
627. A *jarib* was approximately 1600 square meters. The Sawad [dark green] was the name given to the fertile plains of southern Iraq.
633. The word *tarakhina* is the plural of *tarkhan*, which Mas`udi in # 397 compares to the Byzantine *patricius*. Al-Rayy was once a great city of Iran, now absorbed into modern Tehran.
640. The Washkansh, or Vascones, are said to be the ancestors of the Basques.
648. The Battle of Dhi Qar (ca.609) was a battle that took place between Arabs and Persians, and regarded by the Prophet as the first occasion on which Arabs had defeated Persians, thus presaging the future Islamic conquest of Persia. For the Battle of Badr (624), see 146.
651. A Baghdadi *ratl* in the time of Mas`udi was about 400 grams.
- Vol. 2**
666. Abu'l `Abbas al-Nashi' (d.905) was a poet, grammarian, logician and theologian.
667. For Kharbius, Pellat suggests Cecrops.
668. The Nawkubard are the Lombards: cf. Latin *Longobardi*.

671. `Umar ibn al-Khattab (d. 644) was the second of the Rightly-Guided or *Rashidun* caliphs, immediate successors of Muhammad. Ibn `Abbas was `Abdullah ibn `Abbas, cousin of the Prophet: see 173. The People of the Book or *Ahl al-Kitab* is the name given by the Qur'an to religious communities who possessed a revealed scripture, e.g. Christians and Jews.

673. Fur is *Porus* according to the Greek historians of Alexander's campaigns.

723. `Ali ibn `Isa ibn Dawud ibn al-Jarrah (d.946) was a celebrated Abbasid vizier at a period when the empire was in rapid decline.

729. Aurelius Severus Alexander (emperor AD 222-35) had a mother called Mamaea, under whose influence he remained to the end of his reign. This might be why al-Mas`udi dubbed him 'the impotent'.

730. Muhammad ibn Musa was one of three 9th century brothers, known as Banu Musa, who wrote important treatises on mechanical devices, geometry and astronomy.

731. Al-Farghani (d.870) was a celebrated astronomer of Baghdad and Egypt.

735. *Imala* is how an *alif* is pronounced when followed by a *ya'*.

741. The view that Christianity had erased Greek philosophy and science was common among Muslim scholars of Mas`udi's age, for instance al-Jahiz (d.869) who argued that Muslim culture had revived and rescued Greek learning from neglect by Christianity.

747. Muhammad ibn `Umar al-Waqidi (d.823) was a very important early Muslim historian best known for his history of the Prophet's life and expeditions.

752. Little Armenia is Pellat's conjecture.

753. This is an interesting and important account of the *Mandylion* of Edessa.

757. He, according to Pellat, is Leon III.

758. Abu'l `Atahiya (d.828) was a "modernist" poet who broached themes of daily life in a simple style that eschewed the "classicism" of many of his contemporaries. A *dhimmi* normally designates a person belonging to a community of revealed scripture, e.g. a Christian or Jew, who lives under the protection of a Muslim state in return for certain obligations which include the payment of a poll tax and the requirement not to aid the enemies of the Muslims.

778. Munkar and Nakir are, according to the Islamic tradition, two angels who interrogate the souls of the dead.

780. Al-Ikhshid Muhammad ibn Tughj (d.946) was Abbasid governor then autonomous ruler of Egypt. Al-Fustat was the first Muslim capital of Egypt and is sometimes referred to as Old Cairo.

781. Ahmad ibn Tulun (d. 884) was the founder of the Tulunid dynasty which ruled Egypt between 868 and 905.

790. Al-Farama was Pelusium, an important ancient city to the east of the Nile Delta. Al-Balayna, according to the geographer Yaqut, was a city on the western bank of the Nile, in the Sa`id of Egypt.

803. The Daisanites were the followers of Bardaisan, a second century AD gnostic considered heretical by the Christian church.

805. A *makkuk* weighed about 5 to 6 kilograms.

806. The Banu Hamdan, or Hamdanids, were a Shi`ite Arab dynasty that ruled what today is northern Syria and northern Iraq between 890 and 1004.

812. Dhu'l Nun al-Misri (d.859) was a famous Egyptian mystic and was said to have had knowledge of hieroglyphs.

823. `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Marwan (d.705), royal Umayyad prince, was a long-time governor of Egypt and brother of `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (d.705), the Umayyad caliph who restored Umayyad power after a destructive civil war. `Abd al-`Aziz was father of the caliph `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz (d.720), greatly admired by Muslim historians of all hues for his piety.

835. All these were well-known astronomers and astrologers of the ninth and tenth centuries.

838. Al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik was Umayyad caliph from 705 till his death in 715. His reign witnessed success in foreign affairs and an important building program especially in al-Sham.

845. Al-Jahiz (d.869) is widely regarded as the greatest exponent of *Adab*, or Belles-Lettres, in classical Arabic/Islamic civilization. Mas`udi quotes his *Book of Animals*, an encyclopedia of the animal kingdom, at some length though is critical of it at times.

847. Sufala or Sofala is now the name of a province in central eastern Mozambique. Waq Waq, a loose geographical term applied to numerous localities by Muslim geographers, in this context probably refers to Madagascar.

860. The second Abbasid caliph al-Mansur (d. 775) was the real founder of the Abbasid empire.

870. *'Anqa' Mughrib*, usually translated as the Fabulous Gryphon or else the Phoenix, is a mythical bird in Arab mythology which makes its appearance in stories like Sindbad and the *Thousand and One Nights*. The paragraph in brackets is thought by Pellat to be out of place.

872. Qanbalu was a town, now in ruins, on the west coast of the island of Pemba.

877. Pellat suggests Ka`ban for Ka`bar. Dhu Nuwas, a Jew, is regarded as the last great king of the Yemen. He is said to have committed suicide by riding his horse into the sea at around the year 527 AD. The ditch mentioned in the Qur'an at 85: 4 ff, is commonly interpreted to be a reference to a massacre of Christians by Dhu Nuwas.

881. `Amr ibn al-`As (d. 664) was the Muslim conqueror and governor of Egypt. He founded the city of Fustat, and was known for his cunning.

889. A *daniq* is approximately half a gram.

905. The Indexes of Pellat should be consulted in identifying these Slav names.

919. The term *Mulkiyya* here means Catholic rather than Melkite, which is its normal meaning.

943. The *Buraq* in Muslim tradition is the miraculous animal on which Muhammad rode on his famous Night Journey from Mecca to Jerusalem. Earlier prophets, e.g. Abraham in this account, were also privileged to ride it.

948. Umayya ibn Abi'l Salt was a pre-Islamic poet, a figure of mystery, regarded either as a Muslim *avant la lettre* or as a would-be prophet who led people astray. Al-Hajun and al-Safa are two Meccan localities. *Ihram* is a state of ritual purity, imposed, among other obligations, upon pilgrims.

953. Al-Hasan ibn `Ali (d.670) was the grandson of Muhammad and briefly a caliph before resigning in favor of Mu`awiya, founder of the Umayyad dynasty.

955. Dirar, Thumama and al-Jahiz were all 9th century Mu`tazilite theologians. Mas`udi discusses Mu`tazilite theology in parags. 2254-57 of the text.

956. This argument was typical of the *kulturkampf* raging in the 9th century and often referred to as the *Shu`ubiyya* controversy, a debate about the relationship between Arabo-Islamic culture and the culture of foreign nations.
957. *Shu`ubiyya*: see above. For al-Munajjim, see 297.
960. Hashim was the great-grandfather of Muhammad and eponymous ancestor of the Hashim clan, which included both Alids, or Talibids, and Abbasids.
962. The *Hanifs* or *Hanifiyya*, referred to several times in the Qur'an, were in the Muslim tradition regarded as monotheists before the coming of Islam.
964. `Arafa, Mina and Muzdalifa were all Meccan or near-Meccan pilgrim stations.
965. This pre-Islamic practice of "postponing a month" each year, called *nasi'*, done in order to keep in time with the solar year, was later forbidden by the Qur'an.
966. Qusayy was a distant ancestor of Muhammad.
969. For client (*mawla*), see 105.
970. "Allies" and "Perfumed Ones" were pre-Islamic Meccan clans that covenanted together to form political parties. `Umar ibn Abi Rabi`a (d.719) was a distinguished poet of Quraish, best known for his amatory verse.
972. `Abd al-Muttalib (d. 597) was the paternal grandfather of Muhammad.
973. For `Umar, see 671.
979. The Jibal (mountains) was the name that Arabs gave to the region of the Zagros mountains.
983. For al-Jazira, see 94.
985. Ka`b (d.ca.654) was a Yemenite convert from Judaism and was regarded as an expert on Israelite and Yemeni antiquities.
987. The theory of the seven climes of the earth was taken over by Muslim geographers from the Greeks and much expanded.
992. Al-Sharqi (d.ca.767) was an early Arab historian of Arabic antiquities. The name Samarra was interpreted to derive from the phrase *surra man ra'a* meaning "its beholder is made joyful".
993. For Hisham ibn al-Kalbi, see 558. For Ansaris, see 447.
995. Al-Khidr is a figure mentioned in the Qur'an and said to be a pious and wise servant of God possessed of mystical knowledge.

996. Al-Haytham ibn `Adiyy (d.822) was a historian and genealogist.

1005. Yathrib is the older name of Medinah (“the city”) so called because it is the city of Muhammad.

1010. Ta’if was a town to the east of Mecca. For Jarir and al-Farazdaq, see 568.

1020. Ghumdan was an ancient and celebrated palace in San`a, Yemen.

1021. Al-Buhturi (d.897) was a famous poet of the Abbasid era.

1027. `Ubayd ibn Shariya was a semi-legendary sage and antiquarian and narrator of South Arabian antiquities.

1032. Imru’ul Qays (d. 6th century) is commonly regarded as the greatest of pre-Islamic poets.

1044. For Khalid, see 230. Abu Khirash al-Hudhali (d. mid-6th century) was a warrior and poet from the tribe of Hudhail, celebrated for its many poets who wrote amatory verse.

1046. Queen al-Zibba’, better known as Zenobia (d. ca. 274), was queen of the Palmyrene kingdom of Syria.

1056. Al-Mutalammis (d. 6th century) was a pre-Islamic poet, and probably a Christian.

1057. Al-A`sha (d.ca.625) was a famous pre-Islamic poet who travelled widely throughout the Near East and was much admired for his poetic brilliance and the wide diversity of subjects treated in his verse.

1059. Ghassan was a great Arab dynastic kingdom of southern Syria who were Christians and a client state of the Byzantines. Their glory days spanned the fifth and sixth centuries.

1062. Al-Nabigha (d. ca. 604) was one of the last major pre-Islamic poets.

1063. *Allat* was a major pre-Islamic Arabian moon-goddess.

1067. Zuhair (d. ca.609) was one of the most celebrated of pre-Islamic poets.

1070. For Dhi Qar, see 648.

1071. Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas (d. ca. 674) an early Muslim, was best known for his conquest of Iraq and Persia.

1072. Al-Mughira ibn Shu`ba (d.670) was a late convert to Islam, a man of great cunning and governor of Iraq. His private life was far from exemplary.

1077. Hassan ibn Thabit (d.674), a Companion of Muhammad, was the Prophet’s favorite poet, though he praised many kings in pre-Islamic days.

1080. The fire stick is a metaphor for generosity.
1086. Di`bil and al-Kumait were both Shi`ite poets of the 8th and 9th centuries, but the first defended the South Arabs whereas the second defended the Northern Arabs.
1118. For Kharijites, see 251.
1132. An idiom meaning “May God grant you a long life.”
1136. Al-Hallaj (d.922) was one of the most interesting mystics of Islam, some of whose verses and pronouncements were considered heretical by conservative circles, leading to his execution.
1137. The “time of appearance” refers to the belief in the coming of a Messianic or Savior figure who would institute a reign of justice and prepare for the world’s end.
1138. All these were politico-theological groups of whom more will be heard later. “Choice” versus “delegation” refers to the dispute about the appointment of the Imam between the Sunnites (by popular choice) and Shi`ites (by divine delegation).
1172. A *Qil* is the title of Yemeni kings or chieftains.
1180. *Abjad*, *Hawwaz* etc are the traditional names of the letters of the Arabic alphabet.
1190. Ta`abbata Sharran and al-Shanfara were famous pre-Islamic poets.
1193. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that a worm in the belly called *safar* could cause disease to spread. The Prophet apparently denied that it was infectious.
1194. Laila al-Akhyaliyya (d.709) was a poetess renowned for her eloquence and beauty. Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf (d.714) was the most famous and brutal of Umayyad governors. Hatim al-Ta`i was a pre-Islamic poet proverbial for his generosity.
1200. Abu Ma`shar al-Balkhi (d.886) was a renowned astronomer and astrologer at the Abbasid court.
1204. For Wahb, see 124. *Hamamis*: otherwise unidentified.
1208. Marwan ibn al-Hakam (d.685) was the fifth caliph of the Umayyad dynasty and founder of the Marwanid branch of that dynasty.
1212. For Abu `Ubaida, see 536.
1213. Abu Huraira (d.681) a Companion of the Prophet, was a prolific and authoritative transmitter of the Hadith of Muhammad.

1218. For the term “Great Land” (*al-Ard al-Kabira*), see 409.
1220. This paragraph is not fully clear.
1223. I have no idea who these two unmentionables can be unless al-Mas`udi has in mind some esoteric sect of the Shi`a whom he does not wish to openly name, or else some crypto-Manichean groups.
1228. This was at the start of Muhammad’s journey from Mecca to Medinah in 622, which marked the beginning of his Emigration, or Hijra, as well as the start of the Islamic, or *Hijri*, calendar.
1229. Mujazziz was a contemporary of the Prophet famed for his skill as a tracker.
1242. This paragraph is not fully clear.
1245. This description of a dream comes in a Hadith from Muhammad.
1247. I am not sure that Mas`udi is consistent in his usage of *nafs* and *ruh* as spirit and soul respectively.
1248. The Dualists is a term commonly used for the Manicheans.
1257. Abu’l `Abbas al-Saffah (“the blood shedder”) (d.754) was the first caliph of the Abbasid dynasty.
1285. Al-Zayyat (d.847) was a long-serving vizier of three Abbasid caliphs.
1292. For al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik , see 838.
1294. The Arabs used to refer to the gradual increase of heat as the “falling of the three live coals.”
1327. Abu Hanifa al-Dinawari (d.896) was a polymath who wrote on a very wide range of subjects, scientific and literary. Ibn Qutaiba (d. 889) was also a polymath, but best known for his contributions to Arabic literature and literary theory.
1328. Masha`allah (d.815) was an astrologer of the Abbasid court. Al-Khwarizmi (d. 850) was a celebrated mathematician and astronomer who gave his name to algorithm. Thabit ibn Qurra (d.901) was a mathematician and astronomer. Al-Nayrizi (d.922) was a mathematician and astronomer.
1338. For *`Anqa Mughrib*, see 870.
1344. The *`arabid*, singular *`irbid*, is a legendary snake.
1345. For Hunain, see 491.

1352. "Tales of the Israelites" or *Isra'iliyyat*, was a term which referred to the large body of Biblical and Arabian lore circulating in the pre-modern Islamic world.

1358. *Kishk* is a gruel made of cracked wheat and yoghurt.

1365. Ibrahim al-Fazari (d. 777) was an astronomer attached to the Abbasid court. His son Muhammad (d.806) was also an astronomer.

1368. Ibn Masawayh(d.857), was a physician at the Abbasid court. The Bakhtishu`s were a family of physicians active in Baghdad in the 8th and 9th centuries. Mikha`il (d. after 835) was the personal physician of the caliph al-Ma`mun.

1372. Hubal was a famous pre-Islamic Meccan idol. Isaf and Na`ila were a male and female idols of pre-Islamic Arabia.

1374. For the Barmakids, see 610.

1377. For `Ali ibn `Isa, see 723.

1384. Shawsan, or Soshiyans, is, according to Pellat, a savior figure in Magianism who appears every thousand years.

1397. Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi (d. 925) was one of the most celebrated physicians and philosophers of pre-modern Islam. He was known as Rhazes in medieval Europe.

1398. The *musnad* was the ancient south Arabian script.

1427. For Yahya, see 1374.

1428. For `Amr ibn al-`As, see 881.

Volume 3

1442. Ibn Hisham(d.833) redacted the earlier biography of Muhammad by Ibn Ishaq (d.ca.767) on whom see 2423.

1443. Ibn al-A`rabi (d.846) was a philologist and scholar of Arabic literature.

1454. Maysara was a servant of Khadija, first wife of Muhammad and mother of his only surviving issue.

1462. Al-Rabadha was a station on the road from Mecca to Medinah.

1463. The Ibadiyya were a sect of the Kharijites.

1467. For the Ansar, see 147.

1468. Al-Shafi`i (d. 820) was a celebrated Muslim jurist and founder of the Shafi`ite school of Sunni law.

1470. *Taiba* (“sweet-smelling”) was another name for Medinah.

1471. This is a mistake for Year 11, corrected later on in parag.1496 of the text.

1473. For al-Waqidi, see 747.

1474. Al-Tabari (d. 923) is arguably the most influential and authoritative historian of early Islam.

1479. Sa`id (d.715) was an early jurist and Qur’an commentator. Al-Zuhri (d.741) was an influential early historian. `Urwa ibn al-Zubayr (d.713) was an early jurist and traditionist and nephew of `A’isha, wife of Muhammad.

1509. Ibn Durayd (d.933) was a grammarian, philologist, lexicographer and poet. Al-Zajaj (d. ca.922), and al-Mubarrad (d. 898) were famous grammarians. Niftawayh (d. 935) was a renowned philologist and historian, and a teacher of al-Mas`udi.

1512. The Emigrants [*Muhajirun*] were Meccan believers who emigrated to Medinah with the Prophet. They, along with the Medinese Ansar, were the two earliest political groupings in Islamic history, and mentioned and praised in the Qur’an.

1513. Abu Sufyan (d.652) was a Meccan grandee and determined enemy of Muhammad until the conquest of Mecca in 630. He was father of Mu`awiya, the first Umayyad ruler.

1517. Sa`d ibn `Ubada (d.637) was a prominent Companion of the Prophet and chief of the Khazraj tribe of Medinah.

1518. Fuja’a was a highwayman who was captured and burned by Abu Bakr. The “two men” referred to are, according to Pellat, Sa`d ibn `Ubada and `Ali ibn Abi Talib.

1519. Asma’, (d.695), daughter of Abu Bakr, was an early Muslim. When Muhammad and her father were hiding in a cave near Mecca, she hid the food she conveyed to them in her two girdles, so this name was given to her as an honorific by the Prophet.

1521. Tulaiha is the derogatory diminutive of Talha, a “false prophet” of Arabia. Sajah too was a prophetess.

1522. Musailima, the derogatory diminutive of Maslama, surnamed the “Liar”, was the most powerful of the “false prophets” who appeared in Arabia in the caliphate of Abu Bakr. For Khalid, see 230. Wahshi (“the wild one”) was an

Ethiopian warrior who killed Hamza before embracing Islam then killed Musaylima after his conversion. The words uttered by al-Hubab became proverbial and mean something like this: 'I am one whose opinion is curative just as many camels are cured by rubbing against a post, and am propped up by my clan, so if you wish we can return to our earlier pre-Islamic sectarianism.'

1523. The Aws and Khazraj were the two major clans of the Ansar. The oasis of Fadak, which once belonged to Muhammad, was the subject of a dispute between Fatima, daughter of Muhammad, and Abu Bakr. For "choice" versus "delegation", see 1138, above. For "second-best" see 2282, below.

1524. For al-Mughira, see 1072. `Abd al-Rahman (d.ca.654) was a distinguished Companion of Muhammad. Suhayb, a former Byzantine slave and a convert, was a much loved Companion of Muhammad.

1525. Abu Musa al-Ash`ari (d.ca.662) was a Companion of Muhammad who played an important role in early Islamic history.

1529. Thaqif was the main tribe of the city of Ta'if, which had once expelled Muhammad when he tried to preach there, hence the question. For Badr, see 146.

1535. For the Sawad, see 627.

1547. Al-Khidr is a Qur'anic figure of uncertain identity, most probably an angelic warrior.

1557. *Tarawih* are supplementary prayers performed at night during the month of Ramadan.

1558. Al-Mada'ini (d.843) was a prolific scholar and historian.

1568. Abu Mikhnaf (d.774) was an important early historian with pro-Shi'ite tendencies.

1569. Drawing lots was a Jahili custom forbidden by Islam. Dhu Ru`ayn is the name of a district and a clan in southwest Yemen as well as of the founder of that clan.

1573. "Trading arrows with Qarra" is a proverb. The Qarra is a tribe of famous archers.

1577. Seventy-six is a scribal error for six years old.

1581. Zaid ibn Thabit (d.ca. 660) was the scribe of the Prophet and according to the Islamic tradition played a central role in the collection of the Qur'an.

1585. For Ta'abbata Sharran, see 1190. Al-Hutay'a (d.661) was a poet of the pre- and early Islamic period, celebrated for his poetry of praise as well as satire.
1593. Abu Dharr (d.652) was one of the most pious and ascetical of Muhammad's Companions.
1594. Abu'l `As ibn Umayya was the grandfather of `Uthman and ancestor of the Umayyad family. A *qirat* is about one-quarter of a gram.
1597. A proverb describing a meaningless act.
1598. For Abu Sufyan, see 1513. Abu Sufyan's oath indicates his lingering pagan beliefs.
1600. The "Homage under the Tree" refers to an incident in 628 when Muhammad asked his followers to pledge allegiance during a severe crisis. Those who pledged allegiance were held in high esteem.
1608. The "first three" refer to the first three people to embrace Islam. For Hassan ibn Thabit, see 1077.
1611. Two verses in the Qur'an allegedly refer to al-Walid ibn `Uqba as a sinner.
1615. Hind is another name for Fakhita. The poem ends abruptly.
1617. Al-Zubair ibn Bakkar (d.870) was a prominent genealogist and historian.
1620. For Kharijites, see 251.
1623. `Uthman's bloodied shirt was taken to Damascus where it was used to great effect by Mu`awiya to stir up compassion for the murdered caliph.
1628. The hadith of Muhammad about Haw'ab is as follows: One day the Prophet said to his wives "I wonder which one of you will be barked at by the dogs of Ha'wab as she travels with a contingent towards the east."
1638. Al-Kusa'i's repentance was a proverb based on the story of a man who mistakenly broke his bow then regretted his act.
1639. *Ha Mim* are among the so-called "mysterious letters of the Qur'an" with which seven *Suras* of the Qur'an begin. It is possible that in this poem they signify the Qur'an as a whole.
1641. *Humaira'* ["little reddish white girl"] was the playful nickname by which the Prophet called `A'isha. *Talhat al-Talahat* ["The Talha of all Talhas"] was an early Umayyad governor whose mother was from Quraish.
1642. A *mashrafi* sword was a much prized broad Yemeni sword.
1654. Untying one's belt is a metaphor for feeling free to do whatever one likes.

1656. *His mother* etc is an echo of Qur'an 101: 9.

1664. *Our millstone* etc is an expression meaning our affairs were well ordered.

1668. Yarmuk was a decisive battle in August 636 against the Byzantines during the Muslim conquests.

1676. *The impious* etc is an echo of Q.29:48.

1680. *houris* etc is of course a reference to paradise.

1683. The Ghuta is the fertile countryside near Damascus.

1687. An expression meaning one is forced to perform a heroic deed but is not oneself a hero.

1690. The Fates, or *Manaya*, a pre-Islamic concept, were female spirits that trapped the unwary and killed them.

1705. *Delay the incision* etc is an expression that refers to one who strives to do something but misses his aim.

1726. *Upon hands* etc is an expression normally used for malicious glee at someone's death, which is strange coming from Mas`udi, given the fact that al-Ashtar was a follower of `Ali.

1736. `Imran was a Kharijite poet.

1738. The seven *mathani* is a phrase which occurs in Qur'an 15: 87 and is uncertain in meaning. It is commonly interpreted to refer to the seven oft repeated verses of Sura 1 of the Qur'an, *al-Fatiha*.

1742. The "woman who eats livers" is a reference to Mu`awiya's mother, Hind, who, during the Battle of Uhud in 625, tore out the liver of the dead body of Hamza, Muhammad's uncle, bit it, then spat it out in revenge for Hamza's killing of her uncle. "When this is dyed from that" means that all this will happen within a single lifetime.

1763. "Those enfolded" etc refers to an incident in the life of Muhammad when he enfolded in his robe himself, `Ali, Fatima, al-Hasan and al-Husain, these being the dearest to his heart and most excellent of mankind.

1764. The Tree of Tuba is believed to be a tree in paradise.

1772. See chapter title above it. To be noted is that Mas`udi declines to speak of Mu`awiya's "caliphate", or that of any other Umayyad ruler with the exception of `Umar II, and chooses instead to use the term 'days of'. This is one of the many indications of his pro-Shi`ite leanings.

1773. Khawarnaq and Sadir were two magnificent palaces built by al-Nu`man, ruler of al-Hirah in the 4th to 5th centuries, which became proverbial for their splendor in ancient Arabic poetry and tradition.

1774. "Abu Turab" was a nickname given to `Ali by the Prophet.

1777. The fornication is explained in the following paragraphs.

1778. Flags: prostitutes in pre-Islamic Arabia apparently planted flags outside their tents to indicate that they were ready to receive customers.

1782. `Ubaid ibn Asid was, according to Pellat, a client of Sumayya.

1787. "The tooth" etc. I presume the reference is to the pain that accompanies regret.

1793. The "person set free" is a reference to Abu Sufyan whom Muhammad set free when he conquered Mecca in 630.

1796. Al-Sayyid al-Himyari (d.795-6) was a famous and prolific Shi`ite poet. *Zunaim*, derogatory diminutive of *zanim*, means one who is arbitrarily attached to a clan. Here Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas is intended.

1815. I am not sure what the expression "my hand" etc means. It might be some gesture of repentance.

1817. Ziad "Son-of-his-Father" implies uncertain parentage.

1821. For al-Nu`man, see 607.

1823. For Fadak, see 1523.

1825. The sheep called *naqd* were an ugly and despised breed. The reference is probably to a demon who shepherds people to hell.

1826. Shuraih (d.ca. 699) was a respected judge of Kufa, and later, of Damascus.

1829. Ramla and Hind are two common names of Umayyad women.

1842. For Thumama, see 955.

1843. These are all sects that hold radically opposed views.

1845. `Abdullah ibn `Ali (d.764) was the uncle of the first two Abbasid caliphs who played a leading role in the revolution that brought the Abbasids to power. Marwan (d.750) was the last Umayyad ruler.

1853. The red tree and black column are objects planted by God in paradise, according to a hadith of `Ali.

1856. The white etc is probably a reference to Quraish ruling over the whole of mankind.

1860. The 'red tent' is a tent made of leather, constructed specially for important or wealthy personalities. Here it means something like the most prominent tribe of Mudar.

1870. For al-Mubarrad, see 1509.

1874. Sa'id (d.715) was a famous jurist.

1879. The "army of hardship" is a reference to the raid on Tabuk in 630, to which `Uthman contributed generously.

1883. The verb "perished" is *halaka*, normally used for sinners and unbelievers. Al-Akhtal (d.710), a distinguished Christian poet of the Umayyad era, was loyal to the dynasty.

1891. "Son of Marjana" is a reference to `Ubaidullah's illegitimate birth.

1896. Qutaiba ibn Muslim (d.715-16) was a famous military commander best remembered for his conquests in Transoxiana.

1899. The Day of `Arafa is the day when pilgrims gather at the plain and mountain of `Arafa in one of the most important stations of the pilgrimage.

1902. This is a day of mourning commemorated by the Shi'a.

1906. The "old man" is al-Husain. The "much-married hag" refers perhaps to Hind, mother of Mu`awiya and grandmother of Yazid.

1924. Wadi'l Qura was a valley near Mecca.

1929. For `Ad, see 601.

1930. The Maqam and the Musalla were two hallowed spots within the Meccan sanctuary.

1939. The `Awwam clan is the clan of Ibn al-Zubair. Zamzam and al-Rukn are two hallowed spots in the Meccan sanctuary.

1941. Kuthayyir (d.ca.723), commonly known as Kuthayyir `Azza, was a Shi'ite poet of the Kaysaniyya sect who paid allegiance to Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, a son of `Ali ibn Abi Talib: see also parags. 1945 and 1946 of the text.

1943. For `Urwa (d.713) see 1479.

1946. For Ka`b, see 985.

1947. For al-Sayyid al-Himyari see 1796. Khawla is the Hanafiyya, i.e. the woman from the Hanifa tribe, and mother of Muhammad after whom he is commonly referred to, rather than to his father `Ali.

1948. Ja`far al-Sadiq (d.765) was the sixth imam in the Twelver, or Imami Shi`ite line and a major figure in the development of Shi`ite thought and jurisprudence. The line of verse implies that al-Sayyid had switched his allegiance from the Kaysani to the Imami branch of the Shi`ites.

1951. For trading arrows with the Qarra clan, see 1573.

1974. Al-Sha`bi (d.ca.723) was a transmitter of both Hadith and ancient lore.

1982. This is an expression meaning something like “when the fighting became intense.”

1986. Leontios is meant, later to become emperor.

2000. Clearly an expression indicating total disdain.

2012. Harb ibn Umayya was the grandfather of Mu`awiya and so the ancestor of the Umayyads.

2013. `Ubaidullah ibn Qays (d.ca. 694) was a distinguished poet of the Umayyad period.

2021. Abu'l `As refers to the Umayyad family.

2022. Abu Qubais is a mountain east of Mecca.

2025. For Asma' “of the two girdles” see 1519.

2026. The Egyptians were sometimes called “sons of Ham”, Ham being supposedly the ancestor of all Africans.

2030. Jabir (d.697) was a prominent transmitter of Muhammad's Hadith and had Shi`ite inclinations. The Pool is a place in paradise where the Muslim faithful will gather on Resurrection Day. For “eater of livers”, see Hind in 1742. The “celestial record” is a heavenly register kept for every person's good and bad deeds.

2041. Ibn al-Ash`ath (d.704) an Arab grandee and military commander, led an unsuccessful rebellion (700-703) against al-Hajjaj.

2042. For Qutaiba ibn Muslim, see 1896.

2043. Khalid al-Qasri (d.743) was the last great governor of Iraq under Umayyad rule.

2049. `Abdullah ibn `Umar (d.693) was the son of the second caliph `Umar ibn al-Khattab and an authority on the Hadith of Muhammad. He had an ascetic personality.

2051. Al-Mansur (d.775) was the second Abbasid caliph and the real founder of the Abbasid state. I have no idea what “Ayr `abki darnika” etc means though it is obviously intended to make fun of a Kurd speaking Arabic .

2057. Ziyam, according to Pellat, is the name of a mare or camel.

2061. `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair al-Asadi was a poet of the Umayyad period.

2066. The meaning is uncertain.

2071. Hammad “the transmitter” (d. ca. 772) was perhaps the first systematic collector of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry.

2072. The grandfather’s share in inheritance was a point of dispute among early jurists.

2074. `Amr and Ibn Qays is a reference to the arbitrators after the Battle of Siffin, a crucial event in the rise of the Kharijite movement.

2078. For the Hamdanid dynasty (ca.890-1004) see 806.

2082. For Laila, see 1194.

2093. A *dihqan* was an ancient Persian landowner who continued to exercise certain administrative functions under early Islamic rule. I have no idea what the phrase “Skin the area” etc. means.

2094. I could not make any sense of this question.

2100. The meaning is unclear.

2105. For Jarir, see 568.

2109. A`sha Hamdan (d. 702) was a poet who joined the rebellion of Ibn al-Ash`ath. Al-Ashajj etc are members of al-Ash`ath family.

2113. To be noted, here and elsewhere, is the verb *halaka*, “he expired”, which Mas`udi uses for almost every Umayyad caliph.

2115. `Umar was the cousin of al-Walid and later caliph (reg. 717-720). He was the only Umayyad called “caliph” by al-Mas`udi and was notable for his piety and sense of justice. For Wahb, see 124.

2123. For Maslama, see 480.

2129. These were the ancestors of al-Mas`udi himself; hence his special interest in them and in their genealogy.

2130. For Sa`id see 1874. Sa`id’s name means something like “Happy son of Mended.”

2136. For al-Farazdaq, see 568.

2145. The stars “breaking their promise” is a reference to the belief that the stars affected climate.

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2154. For *ratl* see 651.

2155. Al-Asma`i (d. 828) was a celebrated grammarian, philologist and expert on poetry.

2160. Abu Hazim (d.ca.757) was an ascetic, jurist and Hadith transmitter, and an important figure in the early ascetic and mystical movement.

2163. Khalid’s mother was a Christian. Yazid (d.720) was governor of Khurasan and Iraq and a close friend of Sulaiman. He appears to have intervened on behalf of Khalid.

2165. “Neither in the caravan” etc is an expression meaning you have nothing to do with the matter.

2169. Note the heading. To be noted is Mas`udi referring to `Umar II as a “caliph,” the only Umayyad he dignified thus.

2170. All three were distinguished Hadith scholars and jurists.

2171. Sa`id and Hisham were two sons of `Abd al-Malik.

2172. Tawus (d.723) was a Hadith scholar and jurist and a teacher of `Umar II.

2189. The Battle of Nahrawan in 659 pitted `Ali ibn Abi Talib against the Kharijites and ended in the defeat of the latter.

2191. These verses refer to prominent Kharijite warriors who fought al-Hajjaj, hence the reference to Thaqif, the tribe of this latter.

2192. The *Rafida* [rejecters] are Shi`ites who rejected the caliphate of the first three caliphs after the Prophet and is a term which is sometimes used to indicate Twelver Shi`ites in general. The Hashwiyya is a derogatory term applied by their opponents to Hadith scholars, and meaning something like “those who cram their works with useless knowledge.”

2193. Hisham ibn al-Hakam (d.795) was a celebrated Shi`ite theologian. The Qat`iyya were a Shi`ite sect of the Imamis who affirmed (*qat`*) the death of the seventh Imam of the Twelver line [Musa] and the designation of his son [`Ali al-Rida] as the eighth Imam, and and were generally quietist in politics.

2194. `Amr ibn `Ubaid (d.761) was a very early leader of the movement that came to be called the Mu`tazilites.

2200. The War of Basus was supposedly a war lasting forty years between two pre-Islamic Arabian tribes.

2201. Abu Lahab (d.624), Muhammad's paternal uncle, was a determined enemy of the Prophet and is condemned to hellfire in the Qur'an.

2206. "Yellow locust" and "Nastos": Maslama had yellowish hair while al-'Abbas had a Byzantine Christian mother, hence the derogatory Greek names.

2210. Al-Hasan al-Basri (d.728) was a towering figure of early Islamic piety, a preacher, ascetic, scholar and mystic. He is so celebrated that whenever the name "al-Hasan" is found in the classical sources without any further identification, this will always be a reference to him.

2213-2216. All the names mentioned in these paragraphs were notable religious scholars and historians.

2223. For 'Abdullah ibn 'Ali, see 1845.

2226. The term *tashriq* may refer to the Shi'i-Isma'ili missionary activity in the Maghrib and thus refer to a follower of the "eastern" [*sharq*] movement.

2235. For Abu 'Ubaida, see 536. For the *Shu'ubiyya*, see 956.

2237. Al-Khansa' (d. ca. 644) was a gifted poetess best known for her elegies.

2238. The *burda* is the Prophet's cloak and together with his rod and ring are insignia of caliphal power.

2241. I follow the reading *sabaha al-Tajibi min 'Asqalan*.

2242. 'Abd Shams is an ancestor of the Umayyads. The *ghada* is a desert bush often mentioned in classical Arabic poetry and is quick to catch fire.

2243. The blasphemy is presumably to reduce the heavens from seven to four.

2259. Abu Hanifa al-Nu'man (d.767) was a distinguished jurist and eponymous founder of the Hanafi school of Sunni law.

2264. Black was the color of the Abbasids.

2265. For Marwan, the last Umayyad ruler, see 1845.

2270. The reference is to the Abyssinian invasion of the Yemen in the 6th century.

2280. For al-Jahiz, see 845.

2282. The imamate of the "second best" was propounded by some Sunnite political theorists who argued that if the best candidate for rule could not be found, the second best may be chosen.

2288. “Abu Mujrim” (“father of the sinner”) is what Marwan called Abu Muslim (“father of the Muslim”).
2304. The proverb means approximately that there is no point hiding anything of value after calamity has struck.
2306. The “period of waiting” is the one imposed on divorced or widowed women before they can remarry.
2309. The Abbasid revolution had an elaborate hierarchy of functionaries.
2312. Mas`udi is being ironical about the Awd.
2319. The *qibla* is the direction to be faced in Muslim prayers, fixed first as Jerusalem then finally as the Ka`ba of Mecca.
2337. Rawh (d.703) was a tribal grandee and intimate of the Umayyad `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan.
2346. For `Abdullah ibn al-Mu`tazz (d.908), see 572.
2353. The meaning of the last two lines is not entirely clear. For the *nabit* or *nabat*, see 509. It could also mean that they infect their women with *sill*, or consumption, because they are so ill fed.
2367. For clients, see 105.
2370. For *ihram*, see 948.
2374. These are all Abbasid princes.
2380. Ma`n ibn Za`ida (d. ca.769) was a renowned military commander who served the Umayyads until the very end then switched his allegiance to the Abbasids. He was proverbial for his generosity.
2395. For Abu Mujrim, see 2288.
2407. Al-Rabi` ibn Yunus (d.ca.785), a former slave, rose to be chamberlain of the caliphs al-Mansur, al-Mahdi and al-Hadi.
2411. Battle of Badr: the reference is to the fact that al-`Abbas, ancestor of the Abbasids, had fought with the polytheists at that battle, was captured by the Prophet, and was then allowed to ransom himself.
2417. The “naked intercessor” refers to a pre-Islamic tale where a man stripped naked in order to warn his people of impending danger.
2418. `Amr ibn `Ubaid (d.761) was an early Mu`tazilite theologian and ascetic.

2423. For Abu Hanifa, see 2259. Muhammad ibn Ishaq (d. ca. 767) was author of the first systematic biography of the Prophet, which begins with a universal history.

2425. Ibn Abi Laila (d.761) and Ibn Shubruma (d.761) were renowned jurists.

2428. For `Abd al-Malik and `Amr ibn Sa`id, see parag. 1997 of the text.

2432. Rabi`a *al-Ra'i* ("of individual rational opinion") (d. 750-51) was one of the earliest Muslim jurists to employ analogy in legal judgments rather than rely wholly on the Qur'an or Prophetic traditions.

2435. Abu'l `Atahiya (d.826), a celebrated poet of great originality and simplicity, moved from composing amorous verse to composing pious and ascetical verse. See also parag 2452 of the text.

2436. Al-Fadl (d.823) was the son of al-Rabi` (see 2407) and an important official of the Abbasid state, serving several caliphs of that dynasty.

2465. Sufyan al-Thawri (d.778) was a distinguished jurist, Hadith transmitter and Qur'an commentator.

2467. `Abd al-Rahman was an ancestor of Mas`udi.

2481. Al-Ahnaf ibn Qays (d.ca. 689) was a tribal grandee and military commander during the early conquests.

2488. "Stripping the goat's thorn" was an expression indicating extreme difficulty and pain.

2490. `Amr ibn Ma`dika'rib (d.642) was a celebrated warrior who distinguished himself during the early Muslim conquests.

2500. Malik ibn Anas (d.796) was a famous early jurist and eponymous founder of the Maliki school of Sunnite law.

2501. The correct date is 181[797].

2502. Abu Yusuf (d.798), a follower of Abu Hanifa, was a judge and author of a very important manual on taxation.

2511. Jibril (d.829), a Nestorian Christian, was a member of a famous family of physicians.

2516. Bilal (d.640) "the Abyssinian" was a Companion of Muhammad and the first *muezzin* in Islamic history.

2520. Al-Kisa'i (d.805) was a grammarian and Qur'an expert.

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2524. *Al-Sa`dan* is a succulent plant which is said to provide the best kind of pasture for camels and other animals.

2535. Abu'l `Abbas Tha`lab (d.904) was a leading grammarian, philologist and expert on poetry.

2537. Wearing woolen garments was a sign of an ascetic abandonment of worldly things. The word *sufi* [wearer of wool] was of course applied to Muslim mystics and ascetics who wore coarse wool: hence 'Sufis'.

2547. For al-Khansa', see 2237.

2548. For Ibrahim, see 2697.

2559. Khalid ibn Barmak (d.782) was descended from a family of chief priests of a Buddhist temple who converted to Islam and played an important role in the Abbasid revolution. He served as governor of several cities under al-Mansur and al-Mahdi. For Barmakids, see 610.

2565. *kumun*, *zuhur*, and *tafra* are topics in Muslim theology.

2571 and 2572. The first paragraph is wrongly numbered in the Pellat edition, and the second is missing altogether, but inserted here for clarity's sake.

2573. Bahrain sheep were apparently maimed and ugly. See also 1825.

2576. The movement called Murji'a was one which in its origins opposed the Kharijites who asserted that a major sinner was a non-believer and destined for hell. The Murji'ites argued that the decision as to final salvation or damnation should be 'postponed' (*irja'*) and left up to God.

2581. Jamil (d.701) was a renowned love poet of the `Udhra tribe, a tribe well known for poets who wrote chaste love poetry.

2593. Zubaida (d.831) was the daughter of Ja`far, half brother of the caliph al-Mahdi, and granddaughter of the caliph al-Mansur. She was called Umm Ja`far.

2601. `Ali ibn `Isa ibn Mahan (d.811) was a prominent military commander who amassed a great fortune as governor of Khurasan.

2606. For Rabi` and his clan, see 2407 and 2436.

2608. Ibn Nahik (d.803) was commander of police and was executed by al-Rashid for showing excessive sorrow over the downfall of the Barmakids.

2628. Al-Fadl ibn Sahl (d.818) was the vizier of the caliph al-Ma'mun and played an important role in the war between the two royal brothers.

2649. Harthama (d.816) was a general and governor who played a decisive role in al-Ma'mun's victory over al-Amin.
2663. The Baridis were three brothers who rose to political prominence in Basra in the early tenth century.
2671. Some lines are not entirely clear in meaning.
2679. The Husain intended here is Husain ibn `Ali ibn `Isa ibn Mahan, an Amin commander.
2688. For these insignia, see 2238.
2697. Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi (d. 839) was an Abbasid prince, distinguished singer, musician and poet. The Prophet's two Companions were of course Abu Bakr and `Umar, whom many Shi`ites considered as usurpers, having denied `Ali his rightful claim to the caliphate.
2703. The argument is somewhat complex.
2704. `Amr ibn Mas`ada (d.832) was a vizier of al-Ma'mun.
2714. Yahya ibn Aktham (d.857) was a celebrated jurist and was at one time chief judge of the Abbasid Empire.
2734. Ahmad ibn Abi Du`ad (d. 854) was chief judge of the Abbasid empire and a skilful Mu`tazilite debater, much mentioned in the literary sources of the era.
2735. For al-Shafi`i, see 1468.
2749. For Babik, see 506.
2752. Al-Hasan ibn Sahl (d.850) was a senior Abbasid official and governor of Iraq for al-Ma'mun.
2758. For al-Haitham, see 996.
2759. For al-Waqidi, see 747.
2771. Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad (d.ca.786) was a towering figure in Arabic philology and grammar and reputedly the first to formulate the rules of Arabic prosody.
2775. The doctrine of the "Created Qur'an" was a Mu`tazilite doctrine espoused here by al-Ma'mun and continued by his two immediate successors. The aim was to prevent the belief that anything other than God was uncreated. Al-Muwaffaq (d.891) was an Abbasid prince and military commander. For al-Mughira, see 1072.
2781. For Bakhtishu` and Ibn Masawayh, see 1368.
2792. I could not trace the reference to Jassas and Khalawayh.

2797. Bishr al-Marisi (d.834) was a theologian of the Murji'a school. Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855) was a major figure in Sunni jurisprudence and eponymous founder of the Hanbali school of law, and a determined opponent of Mu'tazilism.
2821. Abu Tammam (d.845) was a famous poet and anthologist who rose to fame under al-Mu'tasim. The 'Two in the Cave' is a curious allusion to an incident in Muhammad's life when he and Abu Bakr hid in a cave to evade pursuit by Meccan enemies, an incident that is mentioned in the Qur'an.
2828. Bishr *al-Hafi* [barefoot] (d.850) was a famous and saintly ascetic.
2830. For al-Kindi, see 171.
2841. For Zuhair, see 1067.
2850. Abu Bakr al-Suli (d.946) was a boon companion of several Abbasid caliphs and a distinguished anthologist and literary critic. Jahm (d.746) was an early theologian who taught that few if any attributes can be predicated of God. Hence wine is indescribable.
2853. The Inquisition (*Mihna*) referred to was first instituted by al-Ma'mun to test all judges of the realm as to their beliefs, dismissing and punishing any who believed the Qur'an was uncreated. See also 2775.
2862. For Hunain, see 491.

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2874. Al-Fath ibn Khaqan (d.861) was a favorite of al-Mutawakkil, a courtier and patron of literary personalities.
2876. For the "Homage under the Tree", see 1600.
2898. For Ibn Abi Du'ad, see 2734.
2912. Presumably Muhammad is the brother of `Umar.
2915. The Qaramita, or Qarmatians, were a revolutionary movement and a branch of Isma'ili Shi'ites. They terrorized Iraq, Syria and eastern Arabia in the late ninth and tenth centuries.
2917. Abu'l Hudhail (d.ca. 841) was a major theologian of the Mu'tazilite school. For Rafida, see 2192.
2922. Ibrahim al-Suli (d.857) was the great uncle of Abu Bakr al-Suli, see 2850. Ibrahim was an accomplished poet and state official.
2930. `Abbas ibn al-Ahnaf (d. ca.808) was a famous courtly love poet.
2944. Bugha the Elder (d. 862) was a renowned Turkic military commander.

2947. Bugha the Younger (d.868) no relation to 2944, was a Turkic military commander who led the conspiracy to murder al-Mutawakkil.

2954. Mukhariq (d. ca. 844) was one of the most famous singers of the Abbasid era.

2962. The *Nawruz*, or Persian New Year, which falls around March 21, was celebrated in some Islamic countries despite its Zoroastrian origin.

2973. Al-Mada'ini was a prolific historian whose works survive mostly in extracts found in later historians.

2990. A *dirham* of weight was approximately 3 grams.

2991. Ibn Abi'l Dunya (d.894) was a Hadith scholar and ascetic.

2993. For Fadak, see 1523.

2999. For Ibn Durayd, see 1509.

3021. The gazelle and belt refer to a comely Christian youth.

3028. For the Mosque of Khaif, see 57.

3031. For al-Muwaffaq, see 2775.

3033. Al-Mu`arraf is a station of pilgrimage on `Arafat. The "two weights," a Qur'anic term, are traditionally regarded as designating either mankind and *jinn* because they are "weighed down" by their moral responsibilities in this life—the Sunni view---or else the Prophet's immediate family, specially al-Hasan and al-Husain, in the Shi'i view.

3048. Ibn Sallam al-Jumahi (d.ca. 846) was a philologist and anthologist.

3066. I was unable to make full sense of this line of verse, except to suggest that al-Musta'in was conveyed to Wasit in a cargo boat carrying chicken.

3102. For *shibr*, see 379.

3145. "Those who wore white" was a term applied to many movements of rebellion against the Abbasids, whose color was black.

3147. Ibrahim al-Nazzam (d.ca.845) was a Mu`tazilite theologian and one of the sharpest intellects of that movement, and one of its most controversial figures.

3156. "Occultation" (*ghayba*) was a doctrine devised by Shi'ite groups to account for an absent Imam by maintaining that the Imam was present but invisible.

3158. For al-Saffar, see 600.

3178. For Malik, see 2500.

3191. For al-Ikhshid, see 780.

3213. For Ibn Khurradadbeh, see 503.
3214. According to Pellat, this entire section is corrupt.
3215. The *ghandurat* are long-necked string instruments resembling the mandolin.
3226. Mas`udi seems to have taken much of his information here from Ibn Khurradadbeh's *Kitab al-lahw wa'l malahi*.
3244. *Oka*, or *uqiyya*, was about 33 grams.
3265. A *taylasan* is a shawl worn on the shoulders, usually by scholars. The star called *`awwa'*, or "barker", is a star in the constellation Virgo.
3311. These lines of verse are corrupt and uncertain in meaning.
3312. For al-Razi, see 1397. Qarun, in the Islamic tradition, was a wealthy Israelite in the days of Moses who could turn earth into gold.
3328. Abu Sa`id al-Jannabi was a famous leader of the Qarmatians, on whom see 2915.
3333. The "missionary" was Muhammad ibn Zaid ibn Muhammad ibn Isma`il ibn al-Hasan ibn Zaid ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib, ruler of Tabaristan. He died in 289/902.
3336. According to Pellat, the Black Church is now called Erzin/Hatay, in southern Turkey.
3339. Yusuf ibn Abi'l Saj (d. 928) was the powerful and semi-independent ruler of Adharbaijan.
3341. Isma`il ibn Ahmad, the Samanid (d.907) was ruler of Transoxiana and Khurasan. His reign witnessed the emergence of the Samanid dynasty as a powerful force in the politics of the period.
3342. "Al-Ustadh" was at the time a title of high state officials or army commanders.
3350. Nasr ibn Ahmad (d. 874), brother of Isma`il (see 3341), was the founder of the Samanid dynasty.
3359. Al-Qasim ibn `Ubaidullah is said to have been a heretic.
3374. Ja`far and Yahya were members of the Barmakid family: see 610.
3375. Ibn al-Rumi (d.896) was a towering poet of the Abbasid era.
3380. The Nawbakht was a family of scientists and astrologers of the 8th to 10th centuries, with strong Imami Shi`ite beliefs.

3381. For Tha`lab, see 2535.
3382. Sibawayh (d.ca. 793) was the author of the fundamental work on Arabic grammar, sometimes called the “Qur’an of grammar.”
3393. Ziyadatullah III (d. 916) was the last Emir of north Africa of the Aghlabid dynasty.
3397. For Ibn al-Mu`tazz, see 572.
3398. Al-Jahshiyari (d. ca. 942) was a courtier and author of a celebrated history of viziers.
3404. Ibn Dawud al-Isbahani (d.909) was a distinguished jurist and leader of the Zahiri school of Sunni law but best known for his anthology of poetry.
3407. Eagles were popularly thought to have long life-spans.
3411. For Hatim al-Ta’i, see 1194.
3438. The invasion referred to as coming “from the west” signaled the beginning of attempts by the Fatimid dynasty of North Africa to conquer the east, which they eventually succeeded in doing some fifty years later.
3442. Ibn Muqla (d.340) was a three-time vizier and a celebrated calligrapher.
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3446. For *Kalila wa Dimna*, see 625. *Kitab al-Sind Hind*, was an Indian astronomical handbook brought to Baghdad in the caliphate of al-Mansur and translated into Arabic. See also parag. 153 of the text.
3455. For the Inquisition, see 2853.
3461. For the Baridis, see 2663.
3468. This poem is, in several places, uncertain in meaning.
3479. Kushajim (d. 970) was a poet and courtier of the Hamdanid dynasty.
3482. For Qutaiba ibn Muslim, see 1896.
3484. Thamud, often associated with `Ad (on whom see 601), was a legendary Arabian tribe to whom the Qur’anic Prophet Salih was sent.
3486. `Ali ibn Rabban al-Tabari (d.870), a convert from Christianity, was the author of *Firdaws al-Hikma*, a medical encyclopedia.
3502. Bajkam (d.941) was a Turkish military commander, a typical “strong man” of the type who appeared frequently during the 10th century, a century that witnessed the collapse of Abbasid caliphal power.
3509. For the Hamdanids, see 806.

3518. *Fa`ilatun* etc are the feet of a meter, here designated *al-Raml*. Aban is the name of two mountains in Najd.
3520. Abu `Amr ibn al-`Ala' (d.ca. 771) was an important early philologist and Qur'an commentator.
3524. This poem is difficult and my translation is in several places conjectural.
3528. The 'divining arrows' were employed in pre-Islamic times to determine whether a person was 'pure-bred' or illegitimate. Some lines of this poem are uncertain in meaning.
3531. Al-Khubzaruzzi (d. ca.938) was a poet of lowly origin and self-taught, best known for his amorous poems addressed to young men.
3534. Muhammad ibn Ra'iq (d. 942) was a typical warlord of the period who exploited Abbasid weakness to become *amir al-umara'* [commander of commanders] and effective ruler of the state.
3548. The allusion in 'meteors' and 'demons' is to Qur'an 15:18.
3562. For Abu Huraira, see 1213.
3572. This marks the beginning of about a century of Buwayhid rule in Iraq and western Iran.
3586. For *dhimmi*s, see 758.
3587. Mardawij ibn Ziyar (d.935) was the founder of the Ziyarid dynasty of northern Iran.
3621. For al-Battani, see 271.
