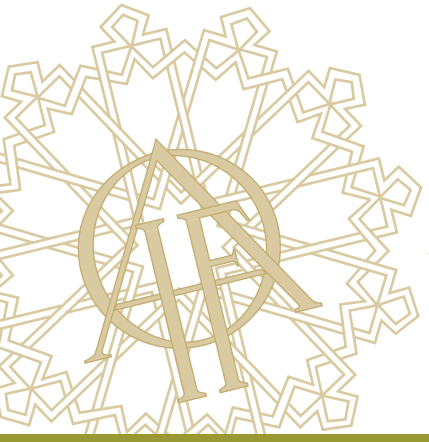
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ANNALES ISLAMOLOGIQUES

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AnIsl 37 (2003), p. 383-442

Pieter Smoor

Murder in the Palace. Poetical Reflections.

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Pieter SMOOR

Murder in the Palace
Poetical Reflections

1

In the final years of the Fatimid Dynasty, the Imâms had to concede most of their ruling power to the Viziers. The Viziers frequently succeeded each other on the Vizieral throne. The frequency with which this took place is quite astonishing. Often the reigning Vizier was dismissed from his function by rebellious Amîrs who then took power by setting themselves up as people to be nominated by the Imâm as the next official Vizier of the Dynasty.

It is possible that an Imâm would only have a very small chance of resisting the nomination of an unsuitable new Vizier, by using his personal army, the special guard of the Imâm.

But success was not always guaranteed and murders happened frequently at the Fâtimid Court in Cairo.[1]

1.1

This is a good point to mention the murder of a certain Vizier at the instigation of his Imâm. A strange way, you might think, for an employer to get rid of one of his employees!

The murder was successful and the father of the murderer became the next Vizier.

The Imâm in question was al-Ẓâfir; the Vizier who became the victim was named ʿAlî ibn al-Salâr. Not long after this, the same Imâm al-Ẓâfir wanted the same murderer to commit an even more daring murder against another Vizier, the man who had followed the recently murdered Ibn al-Salâr on the vizieral throne. The murderer was named Naṣr, and

[1] A short paper (unpublished) on the subject of this article was presented by the present author at the *Tenth Colloquium on the History of Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras (10th-15th c.)* organised by Professor Urbain Vermeulen, Leuven (Belgium) 2001.

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the man to be murdered on this occasion was a certain Amîr named ʿAbbâs, who was none other than Naṣr's very own father. The murderer and his father did not come from the usual circles around the Court of al-Qâhira; instead, they had arrived in Egypt as exiles, or as we would say nowadays, as asylum-seekers.

1.2

The Imâm had disposed of one of his Viziers relatively easily, but to get rid of the succeeding Vizier in a similar manner, was not quite so easy.

In this instance Naṣr had to commit murder against his own father, something which few sons would readily perform. But the Imâm must have thought this deed to be within the bounds of possibility, provided that he maintained a friendly relationship with the son of the Vizier in question. This may well explain why the Imâm constantly tried to seduce the son by an impressive presentation of gifts, both in cash and in kind.

But ʿAbbâs, the intended victim, and the father of the would-be murderer, was successful in turning the tables upon the Imâm. In fact, he persuaded his son Naṣr to change the victim of the plot and murder the very man who had given the initial command to commit the murder!

1.3

Of course there is more to all this than simple blood lust in the mind of one Vizier. In the background a struggle for power was going on between three groups or institutions: on the Imâm's side there was his special guard of some 600 men, the *ṣibyân al-khâṣṣ* which was a specially-trained guard appointed to protect him.

On the Vizier's side there were the *ḥujariyya*, a guard composed of young Amîrs to be, who had been chosen by the Vizier al-Afḍal ibn Badr al-Jamâlî to provide protection against the Frankish Crusaders.

And finally there was a special group designed to protect the Viziers against murderous attacks coming from members of the Imâm's Court. These hardy soldiers were the *ṣibyân al-zarad* (young soldiers in suits of mail).

These soldiers were employed inside the Imâm's Palace. They had an important role to play in the spacious *îwân*, and in the closed-in underground meeting room, the *sirdâb*, which was only accessible by means of dark corridors.

The *ṣibyân al-zarad* had been appointed by the far-sighted Vizier Ibn al-Salâr in order to protect himself against murderous attacks which might occur during a compulsory audience with the Imâm at which the Vizier was supposed to greet the Imâm and to give him his respects.

If you take all these forces into account, you will see that perhaps the only manner left by which an Imâm could dispose of a Vizier would be to have him murdered.

In the latter days of the Fâṭimid period it was not possible for an Imâm to arrange the affairs of the dynasty and the State on his own authority. On the contrary the Imâm was either walled-in, *intra muros*, or kept indoors, *maḥjûr*.

1.4

In the *Dîwân* of ʿUmâra al-Yamanî (515-569 / 1121-1174) as well as in historical sources, we find many interesting details regarding the end of the Fâṭimid Dynasty and the hesitant beginnings of the following Ayyûbid Dynasty.

ʿUmâra himself was an outsider. He had been uprooted from his home in far-off Yemen because there, in the little town of Zabîd, a struggle for political power was going on which caused him to leave the region and move to Mecca. Fortunately the well-known ambassadorship of Mecca was created by the *Sharîf* of Mecca especially for ʿUmâra. He travelled first to Egypt and there he encountered the Fâṭimid Dynasty in a state of ever-growing chaos.

Some months before the arrival of ʿUmâra, the Imâm al-Ẓâfir had been murdered by the son of his own Vizier. This incident had not been the starting point of a quick change of careers for Imâm and Vizier, but rather the continuation of an unfortunate existing practice, one of the hazards experienced by a chain of Viziers as they exercised their function in al-Qâhira.

1.5

First we should call to mind the rough and uncultured manners of the Amîr Ibn al-Salâr who was of *Sunnite* persuasion in a *Shîʿite* environment. In order to set out on his career as a Vizier, he had caused his predecessor to be murdered. Ibn al-Ṭuwayr says: "He seized [the previous] Vizier Ibn Maṣâl and killed him and caused his head to be carried into al-Qâhira, while his [Ibn al-Salâr's adopted] son held it on top of a spear shaft."[2]

We will use this Vizier Ibn al-Salâr as the starting-point for our discussion of the intrigues at the courts of the Imâm and the Vizier in al-Qâhira.

2

First, however, it is necessary to refer to the works of Ibn al-Athîr which give a comprehensive overview of the impression made upon later generations by the last period of the Fâṭimid Dynasty.

Moreover Ibn al-Athîr also mentions a key figure within this Dynasty who managed not only to murder a certain Fâṭimid Imâm, but also the brothers and a nephew of the same Imâm. These incidents were a clear indication that the end of the Dynasty could not be far off.

[2] See *Nuzhat al-muqlatayn fî akhbâr al-dawlatayn, li* Ibn al-Ṭuwayr Abû Muḥammad al-Murtaḍâ ʿAbd al-Salâm ibn al-Ḥasan al-Qaysarânî (524-617 H / 1130-1220 AD) texte établi et commenté (reconstructed text edition) par Ayman Fu'âd Sayyid, Beirut, Stuttgart 1992, p. 56-57. For a general overview (outdated but still useful), see F. Wüstenfeld, *Geschichte der Fatimiden-Chalifen. Nach Arabischen Quellen*, Göttingen 1881, p. 312-327.

However it is interesting to note that Ibn al-Athîr is the only historian to imply that the murderer, the "key figure" came from an undesirable background. He does this by indicating that the key figure had been a *khayyâṭ* (a kind of tailor) at the outset of his career, only later becoming a Fâṭimid official.[3]

3

In a chapter dealing with the murderous attack on Ṭalâ'iʿ and the Vizierate of his son Ruzzîk, we find Ibn al-Athîr making interesting remarks.

The following account by Ibn al-Athîr indicates that the murderous attack by Naṣr was successful:

"In that year [449 H], in the month of Muḥarram, Ibn al-Salâr the Vizier of al-Ẓâfir was murdered.

"His stepson (*rabîb*) ʿAbbâs ibn Abî l-Futûḥ ibn Yaḥyâ al-Ṣanhâjî [and the latter's son Naṣr] were involved in this murder. Moreover the Amîr Usâma ibn Munqidh had perhaps his own reasons for suggesting this murder.

"The Caliph [Imâm] al-Ẓâfir for his part gave permission to Naṣr son of ʿAbbâs to commit the murder.

"Naṣr entered al-ʿÂdil's [Ibn al-Salâr's] palace where his grandmother lived. She [who was called Bullâra] was the mother of ʿAbbâs.

"Ibn al-Salâr died and his stepson (*rabîb*) ʿAbbâs became Vizier after his death. ʿAbbâs was like a stranger in Egypt. He had arrived from the Maghrib, as we have said, and he came to Miṣr (Egypt).

"He had learned the tailoring business (*khiyâṭa*) and he became a good tailor (*khayyâṭ*). But when Ibn al-Salâr married ʿAbbâs' mother [Bullâra], he liked his stepson and gave him a good education."

[3] The profession of *khayyâṭ* was perhaps held in low esteem by the public of those times. However, the Book of Professions does not give any reference to a bad background, see *Takhrîj al-dalâlât al-samʿiyya ʿalâ mâ kâna fî ʿahdi Rasûl Allâh ṣallâ Allâh ʿalayhi wa-sallama mina l-ḥiraf wa l-ṣanâ'iʿ wa l-ʿimâlât al-sharʿiyya*, *li*-Yaʿlâ ibn Muḥammad ibn Suʿûd al-Khuzâʿî, edition Iḥsân ʿAbbâs, Beirut 1985, p. 709. There we find only a reference to one ʿUthmân ibn Ṭalḥa who was a *khayyâṭ*, who took asylum with the Prophet. In the *Lisân al-ʿArab, sub voce*: *khyṭ*, the word *khayṭu bâṭilin* has an unfavourable meaning and was also used as a surname indicating unsubstantiality, or untrustworthiness as characterising a human person, *in casu* the Umayyad Caliph Marwân ibn al-Ḥakam.
See *Lisân al-ʿArab*, sub voce: *kh y ṭ*, where we find the following concerning *khayṭu bâṭilin:*
"This is the light which penetrates through a small peephole in a door. One says it is 'thinner than a *khayṭ bâṭil*.'" according to Thaʿlab. Another opinion is as follows: '*Khayṭ bâṭil* is that by which the saliva of the sun is called; and the twisted thread of the Devil (*luʿâbu al-shams wa-mukhâṭu l-shayṭân*). [The Umayyad] Marwân ibn al-Ḥakam had a surname deriving from this because he was tall and confused [like tangled thread] (*ṭawîlan muḍṭariban*).' The poet said:
'May Allâh keep at a distance a clan which has given power to someone called Khayṭ Bâṭil, to whom power over / the people has been given. Such a one gives to whom he wishes and withholds from whom he wishes.'
Ibn Birrî said: '*Khayṭ bâṭil* is the thread which appears from the mouth of a spider.' Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyâ said: 'Someone is subtler than *khayṭ bâṭil*.' And he said: 'The *khayṭ bâṭil* is the floating dust which enters through a peephole when the sun is glowing hot. This is a proverb for someone whose affairs are of very little importance."'

However at this juncture the narrator Ibn al-Athîr says pointedly:

"The stepson recompensed the other [i.e. the stepfather] by murdering him, after which he took over the government.

"The Vizierate in Egypt always came into the possession of the one who seized power.

"The Caliphs (i.e. the Imâms) were behind the Chamberlains (i.e. the eunuchs) but the Viziers were like the possessors.

"After Vizier al-Afḍal [ibn Badr al-Jamâlî], it almost never happened that somebody reigned unless it was through war and murder and the like.

"Therefore we mention them in their own little biography.

"Allah knows best."[4]

4

As to Vizier Ibn al-Salâr, he had taken power by force; and the Imâm al-Ẓâfir had to agree to accept him as the new Vizier.

It gradually became clear to Ibn al-Salâr however, that the Imâm was not particularly happy about this change. We read in the history by Ibn al-Ṭuwayr for example that the Vizier had a certain fear of the dark corridors in the Imâm's palace.[5]

Although Ibn al-Salâr was himself a very violent person, he saw to it that from now on–or rather, during his Vizierate–the Imâm held audiences in another place offering less danger.

About the relationship between the new Vizier Ibn al-Salâr and Imâm al-Ẓâfir we read the following:

"The Amîr Abu l-Ḥasan ʿAlî Ibn al-Salâr was one of the *ḥujariyya*. His father was a Kurdish person from the Zirzârî clan who had arrived in Egypt where he had been given the honorific title 'Guest of the Dynasty"' (*Ḍayf al-Dawla*).

"His son ʿAlî ibn Salâr [the future vizier] was taken and transferred to a sort of barracks for young cadets (*ṣibyân al-ḥujar*)."[6]

[4] See Ibn al-Athîr, *Al-Kâmil fî l-târîkh* XI, 184-185: "Mention of the killing of Ibn al-Salâr, Vizier of al-Ẓâfir, and the Vizierate of ʿAbbâs".

[5] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 59.

[6] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 57.

5

At this point, the phenomenon of the cadets at the barracks should be explained. An elite corps–the *ḥujariyya*–had originally been established by the well-known Vizier al-Afḍal after an unsuccessful attempt by him to free the Sâḥil [the Levant coast] from the Franks. This unfortunate event was apparently much regretted by al-Afḍal.

Another historian, the author of the *Nuzha* gives us a more precise idea of how the barracks were introduced by al-Afḍal the son of Badr al-Jamâlî.[7]

From this historian we learn:

"Abu l-Qâsim al-Afḍal *Shâhinshâh* ibn *Amîr al-Juyûsh* Badr al-Jamâlî took upon himself the Vizierate. He showed himself to be even more severe and more tenacious than his father. He was handling the affairs in his absolute authority just like his father used to do.

"People wrote to al-Afḍal from their place in Ascalon (ʿAsqalân) about a mustering of the Franks. Al-Afḍal took it upon himself to approach that town.

"As for the acquisition of money, weaponry and horses, he did not leave any possibility unused.

"He established his brother al-Muẓaffar [Abû Muḥammad Jaʿfar ibn *Amîr al-Juyûsh* Badr] as his representative when dealing with the Imâm. He planned to save the Levant Coast (*al-Sâḥil*) from the domination of the Franks."

5.1

"He arrived at Ascalon and marched up to it with that army. But he was let down by (*khudhila min jihati)* his own army which was an army appointed for this expedition (*nawbat al-naṣṣa*).

"Al-Afḍal understood that the cause of his failure could be found in the state of his own fighting men (*jund*). When he had been beaten he burned all of the equipment which was with him.

"The Franks had a poet on their side who had tried to ingratiate himself with them.

"Therefore the poet said in addressing Ṣanjîl (Saint Gilles) the King of the Franks–and may Allâh the High One curse them:

Poem to rhyme *ṣanjali*, metre *mutaqârib*

نَـصَـرْتَ بِـسَـيْـفِـكَ دِيـنَ المَـسِـيـح فَـلِـلَّـهِ دَرُّكَ مِـن صَـنْـجَـلِ
وَمـا سَـمِـعَ الـنـاسُ فِـيـمـا رَووه بِـأَقْـبَـحَ مِـن كَـسْـرَةِ الأَفْـضَـل

1 By your swords you supported the religion of the Messiah (*Masîḥ*); therefore, by Allah, how excellent you are Oh Saint Gilles (*ṣanjal*)!

[7] Vizier al-Afḍal, reigned from 487-515 H / 1094-1121 AD.

2 Among all the things told to them, the people had never heard of anything more serious than the defeat of al-Afḍal.

"Al-Afḍal succeeded later on in butchering this poet. None of the soldiers was of any further use to al-Afḍal after this expedition (*nawba*).

"Al-Afḍal cancelled their honorific titles (*naʿt*-s) and their word was no longer heard after that."[8]

5.2

"He established seven barracks for the cadet corps (*ḥujra*-s) and from the sons of the soldiers he chose three thousand men whom he divided between these barracks.

"For each one hundred men he installed one steward (*zimâm*) and one officer (*naqîb*).

"The entire operation was administered by one Amîr who was called al-Muwaffaq (the Successful).

"Everything which they needed–horses, weaponry and other things–he gave them gratuitously.

"Because of them he did not need the (other) soldiers any more. In cooperation with the *Zimâm al-Akbar* (the head steward), the Muwaffaq, he made them ready for any problem which might arise."[9]

"After all this, keeping watch and guarding became restricted to Ascalon alone. This remained protected by a rota of patrols (*badal*) who were sent over to that place from the standing armies and from the fleet. In the meantime the *Dawla* became gradually weakened by differences of opinion (*ikhtilâf al-ârâ'i*).

"It was difficult for the soldiers to maintain that town; and the affair became too large for them, since in the end they had no alertness, being occupied with their own business.

[8] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha,* p. 3-4. See on the several expeditions of the Vizier al-Afḍal in order to restore the situation in Palestine, Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*. II. *The Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Frankish East* 1100-1187, Harmondsworth 1965, p. 76-90, where among other points of importance there is information on these expeditions over the years 1102, 1103 and 1105. The name Ṣanjal as it occurs in the poem quoted, may refer to Raymond of Saint-Gilles. He was the original Count of Toulouse who in 1104 had constructed nearby Tripolis in Lebanon the huge castle Mount Pilgrim, but to the Arabs the identical castle was known as Qalʿat Ṣanjil, thus according to Runciman, *op. cit.* vol. 2, p. 60: "Raymond was determined to conquer Tripoli itself. During the last months of 1103 he set up a camp in the suburbs of the city and began to construct a huge castle on a ridge, some three miles inland. (...) By the spring of 1104 it was completed and Raymond was in residence. He called it Mount Pilgrim (Mont-Pèlerin); but to the Arabs it was known as Qalʿat Sanjil, the castle of Saint-Gilles. (...) Raymond himself was injured by a burning roof which fell on him. (...) never fully recovered from his burns six months before, [he] fell mortally ill. He died at Mount Pilgrim on 28 February 1105."
Cf. Taqî al-Dîn Aḥmad b. ʿAlî al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ al-ḥunafâ bi-akhbâr al-aʾimma al-Fâṭimiyyîna l-khulafâʾ*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥilmî Muḥammad Aḥmad, Cairo 1973, vol. III, 43, where it says about the besiegers of Tripoli (*sub anno* 502 H / 1108-1109 AD): "their commanding officer (*muqaddam*) was Raymundu bnu Ṣanjîl". This personage must have been either Raymond's nephew William-Jordan who had succeeded when Raymond had died, or the latter's son Bertrand who had just arrived from France. See also Runciman, *Crusades* II, 69-70, and René Grousset, *L'Epopée des croisades*, Paris 1958, p. 51-53 and 58-60. In 1109 AD, Guillaume Jourdain died of an arrow shot just after Tripoli had finally surrendered, only then could Bertrand take possession of all his father's inheritance. For Mons Peregrinus, see Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, *Burgen der Kreuzritter im Heiligen Land, auf Zypern und in der Agäis*, Aufnahmen von A.F. Kersting, München 1966, p. 44-45.

[9] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha,* p. 3-4.

"The Franks brought pressure upon the city until they took it in the year 548 H.

"Two years before that moment I heard a man speaking about this situation. That man said, 'In the year 8, Ascalon will be taken, but with the assurance of safe conduct (*amân*).'"[10]

5.3

It is clear that the *ḥujariyya* was a group who received education in various skills. The *Nuzhat al-muqlatayn* tells us:

"Everyone received his education in the techniques of the different sorts of crafts and sciences which the *Dawla* was in need of, namely courage, horsemanship (*furûsiyya*) and the like.[11]

"When a boy (*ṣabî)* among them became an adult he received a complete set of equipment which he had to keep with him so that there would be no impediment if he were sent on an expedition.

"Their manner is like that of the Templars (*Dâwiyat al-Firinj*).[12]

"When somebody from among them becomes very good at something for which he was sent out, then he is promoted to be an Amîr and to become the Governor of some place. Of a similar kind as this was the career of ʿAlî Ibn al-Salâr.[13]

"He possessed boldness, courage, decisiveness and disinvolvement of the soul [i.e. asceticism] turning away from pleasure and licentiousness.

"He surpassed his contemporaries and was proud of his wealth and tended towards the *madhhab* [school of law] of the people of the *Sunna* [and this in a predominantly *Shîʿite* milieu].

"He tried to approach them via that *madhhab*. The mass of the people were inclined positively toward him."[14]

[10] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 5.

[11] Regarding *furûsiyya*, part of the science of horsemanship consisted of polo, a game common with the Ayyubids, the Mamlûks' predecessors, and played in the hippodromes, see G. Rex Smith, *Medieval Horsemanship. A Fourth-Century Arabic Cavalry Manual*, London 1979.

[12] On the institution of the *Ṣibyân al-ḥujar* and on Ibn al-Salâr, see Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 57, 58 and the note of the editor. As to the Templars, they formed a religious as well as a military Order. In 1118 AD, they were installed in a wing of the royal palace of King Baldwin I, whose palace was at that time situated in the mosque al-Aqsa. Just like the Hospitaliers, the *jamâʿatu l-isbitâriyya*, they were officially founded as religious organisation; however, one of the first duties of the Order was to protect the road from the coast to Jerusalem from incursions. The founder of the Order was a knight from Champagne (France) called Hugue de Payens (circa 1070-1136 AD). See, for instance, Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* II, p. 157-158, 312-314, 318-319; René Grousset, *L'épopée,* p. 78.

[13] Abu l-Ḥasan ʿAlî Ibn al-Salâr or Abu l-Manṣûr ʿAlî b. Isḥâq with the honorific title 'al-ʿÂdil' (the Righteous One), the Vizier of al-Ẓâfir was a *Shâfiʿî Sunnî*. For the traditionalist al-Ḥâfiẓ al-Silafî he constructed a school, the *Madrasat* al-ʿÂdiliyya in Alexandria.

[14] See Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha,* p. 58.

6

When Ibn al-Salâr was in Alexandria as Governor, a young boy (*ṣabî*) arrived from Ifrîqiya (Tunisia) whose name was ʿAbbâs b. Abî l-Futûḥ b. Yaḥyâ b. Tamîm b. al-Muʿizz b. Bâdîs al-Ṣinhâjî. He was accompanied by his mother whose name was Bullâra. As to his father Abu l-Futûḥ, he had accompanied them both, but had died shortly after their arrival in Alexandria, thus leaving behind his (according to the sources) very attractive wife with her little child.

"Ibn al-Salâr heard tell of her (*khabar*) and sent a messenger to her to ask her to become betrothed to him; and then he married her."[15]

The family who had been adopted by the Vizier in such a friendly manner came from al-Mahdiyya, a well-known fortified town on the shores of the Mediterranian. In the meantime however, al-Mahdiyya had been threatened and perhaps been besieged by the Christian overlords, and it is therefore conceivable that they had arrived in Alexandria as refugees, supposedly between the years 509-515 H.[16]

[15] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha,* p. 58.

[16] Abu l-Futûḥ was a brother of ʿAlî ibn Yaḥyâ, whose biography can be found in al-Ṣafadî, *al-Wâfî bi l-Wafayât*, *Das biographische Lexikon des Salâḥaddîn Ḫalîl ibn Aibak aṣ-Ṣafadî* vol. 22 ed. Ramzi Baalbaki, Wiesbaden 1983, p. 308-309, No. 224, under the heading "Ṣâḥib al-Mahdiyya". In this chapter information is given on several members of this family; not only concerning ʿAlî and his father Yaḥyâ, but also about his brother called Abu l-Futûḥ when the latter took his departure in the company of his wife Bullâra and her little son. The information will follow here as it sheds some light on this family from Mahdiyya:

ʿAlî b. Yaḥyâ b. Tamîm b. al-Muʿizz b. Bâdîs, Sulṭân Abu l-Ḥasan al-Ṣunhâjî and King of the West (i.e. present-day Tunisia) was born in al-Mahdiyya, in Ṣafar in the year 499 H. This date is also found in Ibn Khallikân, *Wafayât,* but *ʿUyûn al-tawârîkh* gives it as for 479 H.

"He [ʿAlî, reigned 509-515] died in the month of *Rabîʿ* II in the year 515 H. He took the kingship upon himself at the death of his father. The father had been stern and decisive; a man of decision and courage (*shahâma*).

"He had delegated the command to his son al-Ḥasan [515-?] from whom the Franks have taken al-Mahdiyya. Al-Ḥasan was the last of the Sultans."

The following fragment of poetry belongs to ʿAlî b Yaḥyâ:

1. Through her pretty dallying (*dalâli-hâ)* and her figure straight as a spear, a woman robbed me of my senses.

2. Thereupon she desired a union with me, whereat I satisfied my cravings through her. I remained lying between her throat and her wrists.

3. Never have I experienced any greater sweetness than that of this union. Oh how pleasant is the reunion which comes after the decision to part.

"His father Yaḥyâ b. Tamîm, had installed him [ʿAlî] as Governor of Sfax. But when his father was suddenly dying–which will be mentioned in its rightful place under the letter *yâ'* if Allah permits–the notables of the *Dawla* gathered together in order to compose a written message which they addressed to him on the authority of his father, so as to command him to come quickly to him. The letter reached him whereupon he quickly set out. With him was a group of the Amîrs of the ʿArab. He forced himself to travel fast and he reached them. He entered the palace on Thursday the second day of the Festival (*yawm al-ʿîd*). That was the day that his father died. He let nothing distract him except the preparations for the burial of his father. He performed the *ṣalât* (for the dead) over him and buried him.

"On the morning of Friday 13th *Dhu l-Ḥijja* in the year 509 H he [ʿAlî] held an audience for the people. They came inside and greeted him as Amîr. He went riding in the middle of his people and armies.

"In his days, his brother Abu l-Futûḥ, son of Yaḥyâ, set out for Egypt. With him was his wife Bullâra."

"She was the daughter of al-Qâsim and her little son ʿAbbâs was still at her breast. And he arrived in Alexandria. He stayed there and was hospitably received (*wa-unzila wa-ukrima*). At the command of al-Âmir [died 524 H], the master of Egypt (*Ṣâḥib Miṣr*), he stayed there for a short while and then he died. After his death, Bullâra the above-mentioned wife married al-ʿÂdil ʿAlî ibn al-Salâr and ʿAbbâs grew up. Al-Ḥâfiz, the subsequent master of Egypt made him a General

7

In historical sources the son ʿAbbâs is often described as *al-Rabîb* (the One to be Educated, i.e. the Adopted Child) and it seems that he was highly esteemed by Ibn al-Salâr, for the latter saw to it that his *Rabîb*–who was also called ʿAbbâs al-Ṣinhâjî by historians–was promoted as Governor of the Province of Gharbiyya.

Regarding the high position which this *Rabîb* received under the lordship of Ibn al-Salâr, there is an explanation in the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church* which possibly accounts for the exceptionally favourable treatment of the Rabîb. This states that the Rabîb was: "an Amîr of the rank of those kings who had connections with the Arabs, he was named ʿAbbâs and he was of the children of the Amîr Tamîm ibn Bâdîs; he became Governor in al-Gharbiyya. His mother whose name was Ballûra became the wife of this ʿAlî ibn al-Salâr. (... *Wa-kâna amîr min jins mulûk al-mulimmîn bi l-ʿArab yusammâ ʿAbbâs min awlâd al-amîr Tamîm ibn Bâdîs wâliyan bi l-Gharbiyya wa-kânat ummuh ismuhâ Ballûra zawjat hadhâ ʿAlî ibn al-Salâr fa-lammâ...*)."[17]

This indicates that the original position of ʿAbbâs' family was an elevated one. The *Rabîb* did not belong to the children of the barracks, whilst Ibn al-Salâr himself had been one of those low-class people. In fact Governor Ibn al-Salâr came from the *ḥujariyya* that is, from a totally different background.

8

"When Amîr Sayf al-Dîn Abu l-Ḥasan ʿAlî Ibn al-Salâr arrived in al-Qâhira in the month of Shaʿbân in the year 544 H–or, it is also said in the month of Rajab in the year 543 H–the Imâm al-Ẓâfir bi Amr Allâh was compelled to grant him an audience. As was customary he clothed him with the Vizierate, and the new person received the honorific title (*laqab*): al-ʿÂdil Sayf al-Dîn Nâṣir al-Ḥaqq (Righteous One, Sword of Religion, Supporter of the Truth)."[18] There is a certain ambiguity about the last title which could mean: Supporter of the Imâm–or, Supporter of the *Shîʿite* Religion.

"He began with an inspection of the affairs of the soldiers, those known for their energy and their decision-making. He augmented their salaries, inspected the armouries, and treated

(*qaddama-hu*). He ruled over the Vizierate after the death of the above-mentioned al-ʿÂdil."

Compare also al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ* III, 105, *sub anno* 517 H, where it says:

"In that year there arrived a messenger from the Amîr Tâj al-Khilâfa Abû Manṣûr Ḥasan (ibn ʿAlî ibn Yaḥyâ ibn Tamîm ibn Muʿizz ibn Bâdîs) Lord of al-Mahdiyya informing him [al-Âmir] about his adherence to the [Fâṭimid] Dynasty, and about the fact that Rujâr ibn Rujâr, Lord of Siqilliya, was continuous in his damaging action as he had already prepared to wage war against himself. He asked him [al-Âmir] to lead an expedition towards Rujâr in order to prevent him [Rujâr] from that action."

[17] For the Rabîb ʿAbbâs, see the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church Known as the History of the Holy Church*, by Sawîrus ibn al-Muḳaffaʿ, bishop of al-Ashmûnîn, vol. III, part I Macarius II-John V (AD 1102-1167), translated and annotated by A. Khater and O.H.K. KHS-Burmester, Cairo 1968, p. 43 Arabic text (p. 72 English translation). See also for ʿAbbâs, P. Smoor, "'Umâra's odes describing the Imâm" *AnIsl* 35 (2001) p. 552, note 4.

[18] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha* p. 59.

their (the Imâms') religious ceremonies (*nawâmîs*) with respect. But he was fanatical in his favouring of the law school of the *Sunna* (*shadda min madhhab al-sunna*).

"But in his soul there was desolation vis-à-vis the Imâm al-Ẓâfir bi Amr Allâh and so he was on his guard against him.

"He selected men who rode beside his stirrups. They were in suits of mail, with helmets on, to the number of six hundred.[19]

"Ibn al-Salâr arranged them into two patrols with two commanders: one patrol per day. He had a suspicion (*wahm*) that the Caliph was keeping certain people lying in wait for him within the palace in order to assassinate him.[20]

"Thus al-Ẓâfir bi-Amr Allah's audience with him was transferred from the hall which one could enter only via darkened corridors (*dahâlîz*) to an open audience chamber (*îwân*) with much more sunlight and more space. All those people mentioned (i.e. the Men in Suits of Mail) came inside together with him.

"The Imâm al-Ẓâfir sat facing him in the *shubbâk* (a kind of balcony) which was visible (*al-ẓâhir*) from the inner side of the *îwân*."[21]

9

"In the first instance, Sayf al-Dîn ʿAlî Ibn al-Salâr with the honorific title (*naʿt*) 'al-Malik al-ʿÂdil' (the Righteous King), the Vizier to al-Ẓâfir bi Amr Allah al-ʿUbaydî, Overlord of al-Diyâr al-Miṣriyya, was great in his own soul and in his pride. He was very tyrannical and violent, and also daring in the shedding of blood.

"In spite of this, he nonetheless tended to exaggerate when serving al-Ẓâfir bi Amr Allah. He showed obedience to him even though they mutually avoided each other. He did nothing but good, both in the Imâm's absence and in his presence. So there was no disapproval, and no argument gripped him in this respect.[22]

"The son of his wife [Bullâra], his adopted son Amîr ʿAbbâs b. Abi l-Futûḥ al-Ṣinhâjî was his guide and gave him advice about al-Ẓâfir bi Amr Allah."[23]

[19] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha,* p. 59, and al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ* III, 198-199; according to Ibn al-Furât these were the 'Men of the Suits of Mail" (*ṣibyân al-zarad*); see also Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, ed. Ayman Fuʾâd Sayyid, Beirut Stuttgart 1992, p. 95 note 1, and *op. cit.*, p. 165 note 3.

[20] According to Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 63, Ibn al-Salâr feared the Imâm's Guard, that is the elite corps of young soldiers especially educated and devoted to the service of the Imâm, called *ṣibyân al-khâṣṣ*. Later on, Ibn al-Salâr tried to eradicate this group of soldiers, by open murder or exile to remote provinces, where they were to be murdered secretly. This led to an enhancement of the feelings of hatred and revenge from the side of the Imâm and his *ṣibyân al-khâṣṣ*.

[21] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha,* p. 59.

[22] Thus according to *Nuzha,* p. 59, but in reality the situation was quite different: the Vizier did as if he executed the commands of the Imâm. This appears from his wording as given by Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha,* p. 63: "Thus, whenever he arrested one of them, he killed him. But al-Ẓâfir didn't say one word to him about it, because Ibn al-Salâr would only say: 'Our master (*mawlânâ*) is not guilty of this, and did not agree to it (the threatened murderous attack upon Ibn al-Salâr). I did not do it except for those reasons.' But anger grew in al-Ẓâfir's heart with regard to the question of his *ṣibyân al-khâṣṣ* and the acts of murder perpetrated upon them. And his hatred for al-ʿÂdil ibn al-Salâr increased."

[23] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 60. See also al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ* III, 55 note 1; his full name was ʿAbbâs Abû l-Faḍl, al-Muẓaffar Abû Manṣûr Rukn al-Dîn, ibn Abî l-Futûḥ Yaḥyâ ibn Tamîm ibn al-Muʿizz ibn Bâdîs.

10

Amîr ʿAbbâs, the *Rabîb*, had married in the meantime, and had a son from this marriage who was called Naṣr and who had been granted the honorific title (*laqab*) Nâṣir al-Dîn. Unwisely, as things turned out, the Vizier Ibn al-Salâr also felt kindly disposed towards the son of his stepson (*rabîb*), who was almost a grandson to him.

"He gave him much respect in the house (*dâr*) of his grandmother [Bullâra] who was still the wife of the Vizier."[24]

10.1

It is impossible from our own place in history to assemble many details about this young man; but what is certain is that Naṣr son of ʿAbbâs al-Ṣinhâjî went on to develop into a criminal. Perhaps because in his youth he had encountered so many intrigues, he later developed a definite taste for murder.

In the *Nuzhat al-muqlatayn*, we find a description of relationships between the son of the stepson, and the Imâm al-Ẓâfir, and between the Imâm and his Vizier Ibn al-Salâr.

"Al-Ẓâfir bi-Amr Allah Master of Egypt was very much attracted to Naṣr Nâṣir al-Dîn son of ʿAbbâs, with an inclination as a result of which he became notorious, in such measure that he [the Imâm] asked for his [Naṣr's] opinion, and carried it out."[25]

Another witness to these events exists: Usâma,[26] a family friend and someone well conversant with the affairs of the *Rabîb*. He provides us with more details; and in what he says there is a suggestion of a politically bad relationship between the Imâm al-Ẓâfir and the Vizier Ibn al-Salâr. In this connection, it is interesting to hear what Usâma said to the stepson *Rabîb*:

"Send someone [i.e. your own son] to the Imâm in order to ask him if you, ʿAbbâs, may become the Vizier. Because your son does not contradict him, he is suitable for the plan-making of al-Ẓâfir. For the latter harbours an enormous hatred against Ibn al-Salâr. There is sufficient evidence of this in the fact that he has been entrusted with the Vizierate up until this very day, without ever setting eye upon al-Ẓâfir, and without answering any question which he might put to him.

[24] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 60.

[25] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 60 and 62.

[26] According to both the authors Ibn al-Ṭuwayr (*Nuzha*, p. 61) and al-Maqrîzî (*Itti'âẓ* III, p. 198), the complete name of Usâma is as follows: Usâma ibn Murshid ibn ʿAlî ibn Muqallid ibn Naṣr Ibn Munqidh al-Kinânî, his honorific name is Mu'ayyad al-Dawla Majd al-Dîn. According to Usâma's own writing, he had first arrived in Egypt in 539 H, under the regime of the Fatimid Imâm al-Ḥâfiẓ ʿAbd al-Majîd. Al-Ḥâfiẓ died in 544 H and his reign had continued for some 20 years since the murderous assault on his predecessor Imâm al-Âmir. See for Usâma's arrival in Egypt, *Kitâb al-I'tibâr li l-amîr Abi l-Muẓaffar Mu'ayyad al-Dawla Majd al-Dîn Usâma ibn Murshid ibn ʿAlî ibn Munqidh al-Shayzarî al-Kinânî al-Kalbî 488-584 H*, ed. Qâsim al-Samarrâ'î, Riyad 1987, p. 29; and *Memoirs of an Arab-Syrian Gentleman or An Arab Knight in the Crusades, Translated from the Unique Manuscript* by Philip K. Hitti (Princeton 1929) Beirut 1964.

"Should al-Ẓâfir answer the wish of your son in a positive way, then your son ought to enter without Ibn al-Salâr noticing him, and should murder him as soon as he is alone with him. For, obviously, he can always have free access to him.

"And then, when he has killed him, his [the dead man's] blood will remain unimportant. For there is no blood revenge; for there is no-one who will ask after him. Then you can acquire the Vizierate."

"These words found a willing ear with ʿAbbâs and an open mind. He invited his son Amîr Nâṣir al-Dîn Naṣr into his tent and suggested to him everything that he intended.

"The same night he sent his son to Cairo." [The father and the son were waiting at that time with their army in front of Balbays.][27]

10.2

This Naṣr ibn ʿAbbâs would mastermind the killing of at least one Vizier and one Imâm. With his taste for murder he became a prime mover in developments in and around the two palaces belonging to the Imâm and the Vizier. While discussing these murderous attacks we should also take note of the reflections of the Ambassador, the poet ʿUmâra al-Yamanî, who arrived in Egypt shortly after these events in order to settle there and develop his career as a court poet.[28]

10.3

After this introduction it should now be clear that the futures of the Vizier and the Imâm in al-Qâhira were uncertain. Clearly, careers and lives could be interrupted by deposition or murder. Moreover, anyone who was murdered should not expect a dirge to be dedicated to him. A deposed or murdered Vizier like Ibn al-Salâr was, in the eyes of subsequent Viziers, not worth more than an ordinary executed court official.

The only exception to this is the still to come Vizier Ṭalâ'iʿ. After a rough-and-ready attempt to murder him, he nevertheless managed to stay alive for one day–or some hours, at any rate– and this delay enabled him to deal with government affairs from his death bed. Ṭalâ'iʿ will become the subject of many funeral elegies from the poet ʿUmâra. Some of these poems were composed immediately after his death, some after an interval of one or more years on the anniversary of the death, and some on the occasion of the transfer of the bodily remains from the precincts of the Vizieral palace to their final resting place in the graveyard.

[27] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 62.

[28] ʿUmâra al-Yamanî, see for instance, al-Maqrîzî, *Itti'âẓ* III, 224. He was a poet and a *Shâfi'î faqîh* who originated from the neighbourhood of the city of Zabîd in Yaman. His name in full is as follows:
Najm al-Dîn Abû Muḥammad ʿUmâra ibn Abi l-Ḥasan ʿAlî ibn Zaydân al-Ḥakamî, from the town of Murṭân in the Wasâʿ valley in Yaman. He arrived in the month *Rabîʿ* First, of the year 550 H in Egypt; and this visit to Egypt was for the first time; he came as an embassador from the Amîr of Mecca, named Qâsim ibn Hâshim ibn Fulayta. Later having returned to Yaman, he came to Egypt for a second time, this being in the year 552 H. According to Muḥammad Ḥilmî Aḥmad, the editor of the *Itti'âẓ*, ʿUmâra served within the court circles of the Fatimid Imâms, but allegedly kept adhering to his *Sunna* persuasion. He remained in Egypt for a long time up till 569 H when he died at the orders of Saladin. The poet is said to have fallen under suspicion of trying to restore Fatimid rule over Egypt.

11

Now however we must return to the situation in the palace several years before the appearance of Ṭalâ'iʿ.

The Vizier ʿAlî ibn al-Salâr was certainly a violent man but he also made careful plans for the defence of the *Dawla* against attacks from outside. Obviously in this connection we should think of attacks from the Crusaders "the Franks, may Allah cast them off from Himself (*al-ʿadûw al-makhdhûl mina l-Firinj)*!"[29]

The Fâṭimids were able to point with some pride to their occupation of the South Levant, which we could describe as the coastline of Greater Syria, using modern terminology. There, they held in their possession the important city-fortress of Ascalon.

"The Vizier Ibn al-Salâr was very much preoccupied with the business at Ascalon in order to stop it from being breached for he knew very well that the Franks wished to possess it. He carried provisions and weapons in great amounts.[30]

"In the meantime, there were more and more messages about the Franks saying that they were going to lay siege to Ascalon. For this they had gathered horses and men from over land and sea.

"The Vizier commanded that an army should be assembled under the direction of the *Rabîb* ʿAbbâs. After this however he kept ʿAbbâs waiting outside the outer walls of Balbays."

According to the author of the *Nuzhat al-Muqlatayn*:

"The Vizier commanded that the army would assemble at that place commanded by Amîr Rukn al-Islâm ʿAbbâs. And thereafter he retained him on the outside of Balbays."[31]

"After that he organised soldiers to travel towards Ascalon, namely 10,000 archers and 20,000 infantrymen.

"And he caused the stores which he was in need of to be carried in the galleys (*shawânî*). Only the army should still travel."

"And then at the end of each ritual prayer he added a personal prayer that Allah might not decide upon the occupation of Ascalon in his days."[32]

The purpose of this waiting was to ensure that the troops would only proceed to Ascalon when the supply transport of provender for man and animal had been brought inside the fortified harbour by galley (*shawânî*). The army would not travel until the last moment.[33]

[29] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha,* p. 61.

[30] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 60.

[31] This town was continually besieged by armies as they were attempting either to enter Egypt or to retreat from it. See G. Wiet, article Balbays in *Encyclopaedia of Islam Second Edition.*

[32] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha,* p. 60-61 and p. 95 note 2, the remark on *shînî*, plural *shawânî*, meaning a galley propelled by up to 140 oars (*mijdâf*). According to V. Christides, we must assume that in the Arab warships there was one rower for one oar (see on this, Dionisius A. Agius, "The Arab *shalandî*" in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras* III, eds. U. Vermeulen and J. van Steenbergen, Leuven 2001, p. 47-60). The *shînî* was larger in size than the *shalandî* (an average of 150 oars is assumed for the *shînî*). The *shînî* was perhaps a transport ship like the Byzantine *dromon*, and would have carried 1000 men on each vessel.

[33] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 60-61.

12

In his *Nuzhat al-muqlatayni*, the historian Ibn al-Ṭuwayr is the only source to mention a rather touching story about Ibn al-Salâr. According to this author, the Vizier performed a number of *ṣalât* each day; and at the end of each ritual prayer he added a personal prayer of his own, a *duʿâ'* directed towards Allah to the effect that: "Allah would not decide upon the seizure of Ascalon within his lifetime."

And the historian adds "Allah took heed of his prayer and this is what happened with these people."[34]

In his subsequent report the historian mentions in what manner the prayer of Ibn al-Salâr was to be fulfilled. Indeed Ascalon was not seized in the days of this Vizier because he himself would be murdered by the disposal of Allah through the hand of the killer Naṣr son of *Rabîb*.

13

ʿAbbâs incidentally belonged to the Division of the army which was sent to the fortress of Ascalon by the Vizier. On the road to Ascalon ʿAbbâs was kept waiting in front of the city-fortress of Balbays [which is half way between Cairo and present-day Port Said].

ʿAbbâs complained a great deal about the Vizier within the hearing of a co-warrior, a certain Usâma. ʿAbbâs complained that he could not take part in the delights of al-Qâhira and also that he had to travel towards a dangerous enemy, namely the Franks.

Indeed on that occasion a plot to murder Ibn al-Salâr was constructed by the so-called grandson of Ibn al-Salâr, otherwise known as the son of *Rabîb* who was still young and headstrong.[35]

"Indeed the plan was executed. Naṣr travelled to al-Qâhira, because the military expedition would be too heavy for him to endure, as they say.[36]

"Having arrived in al-Qâhira, he already knew how to enter by the secret harem porch into the residence of the Vizier as far as its innermost chambers (*wa-dakhala ʿalayhi Nâṣir al-Dîn ibn ʿAbbâs min bâbi sirri dâri l-wizâra...*).[37]

[34] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha,* p. 61.

[35] Ibn Muyassar, *Akhbâr Miṣr. Choix de passages de la Chronique d'Égypte* d'Ibn Muyassar Tâǧ ad-Dîn Muh. b. ʿAlî b. Yūsuf b. Ǧalab Râgib m. 677 H., sélection faite par Taqiyy ad-Dîn Aḥmad b. ʿAlî al-Maqrîzî en l'année 814 H., édité et présenté par Ayman Fu'âd Sayyid, Ifao, 1981, p. 146; *Nuzha,* p. 61.

[36] Ibn Muyassar, *Akhbâr Miṣr,* p. 147, "And Naṣr went to the residence of his grandmother the wife of al-ʿÂdil and informed al-ʿÂdil that his father had allowed him to go from Balbays in compassion for him because of the expedition (*shafaqatan ʿalayhi min al-safar*)."

[37] Thus, according to Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha,* p. 62.

"By coincidence his grandmother Bullâra was absent for she had just gone to bathe in the *ḥammâm*. Indeed Naṣr was able to penetrate inside the bedchamber of his adopted grandfather, the Vizier.

"After a tiring day of organising the ships and their crews in order to strengthen the defences of Ascalon, the Vizier had thrown himself exhausted upon his bed.

"Naṣr however was so afraid that he only wounded the Vizier lightly, only in his foot. Ibn al-Salâr jumped up, asking: 'You little dog, where are you (*ilâ ayna yâ kulaybu*)?

Whereupon Naṣr ran outside in panic.

"His friends were there, asking what had occurred."[38]

From the same source we know that the friends of Naṣr belonged to the special guard (*ṣibyân al-khâṣṣ*) of the Caliph. They were not companions in debauchery but had apparently been seconded to Naṣr ibn ʿAbbâs. From this it would seem that the Imâm supported the assassination attempt upon Ibn al-Salâr. They immediately concluded the worst and said: "You have already killed yourself and us!"[39]

They went back into the inner rooms. Inside, a chamberlain had arrived, an *ustâdh*, who stood speaking to the lightly-wounded Vizier.

The gang did not hesitate any longer: as one man they threw themselves upon the Vizier again, this time murdering him properly!

They then took his head away with them. In fact Naṣr himself took it outside to show it to the Imâm al-Ẓâfir. According to the *Nuzha*, "Naṣr took the severed head up and came to the portal of the [Imâm's] Palace and showed it; whereupon it was drawn up into the Palace by using a rope (*wa-akhadha ra'sahu wa-jâ'a ila bâbi l-qaṣri wa-aẓharahu fa-rufiʿa ila l-qaṣri bi-ḥablin*)."[40]

The story of the severed head spread like wildfire amongst the people of al-Qâhira.

"People were in great disorder," says the historian. Naṣr is said to have sent the information of the Vizier's elimination by carrier pigeon to his father, the *Rabîb* ʿAbbâs, who was still waiting with his army outside the walls of Balbays (*wa-mâja l-nâsu fi l-Qâhira fa-sarraḥa l-ṭâ'ira li l-waqti bi-ṭalabi ʿAbbâs min Balbays*).[41]

[38] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 63-64 and al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ* III, p. 205.
[39] Al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ* III, 205.
[40] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 63.
[41] See al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿaẓ* III, p. 205, and compare with Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 66, where it states that the following text was written on a loose manuscript sheet: *ṭayyara al-amîr Nâṣir al-Dîn Naṣr ibn al-amîr Rukn al-Islâm ʿAbbâs ṭayran ilâ abîhi bimâ jarâ.*

13.1

The end of this story is that ʿAbbâs seized the power and was confirmed as Vizier and later installed by the Imâm al-Ẓâfir.

The head was carried to al-Ẓâfir who was in the Golden Porch (Bâb al-Dhahab) and looked down upon the head through an opening.

After that the head was set up so that people could see it. Then it was carried to the room where severed heads were stored (*Khizânat al-ru'ûs*) in the Financial Affairs building (Bayt al-Mâl). In the store-room the head was laid alongside the other heads which were already there.[42] "Those who were keeping calm in al-Qâhira were not disturbed because of the head; nor did anyone speak about it (*wa-mâ taḥarraka la-hâ sâkinun wa-lâ takallama aḥadun*)."[43]

13.2

The idea that nobody was bothered about the murder, or even that the inhabitants of Cairo were afraid to express any criticism, appears again in the report about the effect this murder had on the public, in the history of Ibn al-Ṭuwayr al-Qaysarânî, *Nuzhat al-Muqlatayn*. On page 64 the following remark is to be found:

"Al-ʿÂdil ibn al-Salâr was murdered in his bed on Thursday, the 6th day of the month *Muḥarram* in the year 548, at the residence of the Vizier (Dâr al-Wizâra) in al-Qâhira, may it be well-guarded. It is also said that he was murdered on the 12th day of *Muḥarram*. Ibn al-Salâr passed away and no two billy goats thrust against each other with their horns in relation to his death (*wa-dhahaba Ibn al-Salâr wa-lam yantaṭiḥ fî qatlihi ʿanazâni*).[44]

"But he was still lauded; for that laudation had been performed already by Abû ʿAlî al-Maghribî with an ode whose opening lines spoke of the Imâm al-Ẓâfir, for such was the custom of poets (i.e. praising the Imâm in the first instance). He said the following:

١ يـــا إِمـــامَ الحَـــقّ قـــد أوْسَـــعْـــتَـــنـــا مـــنْـــكَ بـــالـــعـــادلِ عَـــدْلاً وتُـــقَـــى
٢ الـــقَـــنـــا تـــهْـــتـــزُّ مـــنـــه خِـــيـــفـــةً والـــطِّـــنـــابِـــرُ عُـــدِمْـــنَـــه فـــوقـــا

1 Oh Imâm of the [*Shîʿite*] Truth, by presenting us with the person of al-ʿÂdil [i.e. Ibn al-Salâr] you are generous towards us in righteousness and the fear of God.
2 The spears quivered for fear of him. But the lutes were missing for he was God-fearing."[45]

[42] Ibn Muyassar, *Akhbâr Miṣr*, p. 147.
[43] Al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿaẓ* III, 205.
[44] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 64.
[45] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 64.

The second line of this fragment is presumably an illustration of the orthodox attitude of this *Sunna* Vizier who was not a lover of worldly things such as music.

On the other hand, the Vizier had little time for the *Shîʿa* Ahl al-Ḥaqq. However it is known from historical sources that he caused an orthodox *Sunnî* traditionalist of the *Shâfiʿite madhhab* to come to Egypt, and that this man, al-Ḥâfiẓ al-Silafî, arrived in Alexandria.[46]

13.3

Apart from the official poetry which we have been dealing with so far, there is some unofficial poetry which refers to the murdered Vizier in a more informal way.

There is for instance a lament by a highly professional mourning woman called Khusruwân who composed such moving compositions that people of her own time who were well-versed in literature felt great admiration for her.

Khusruwân compared the murdered Vizier in a very sympathetic manner to his namesake ʿAlî, who at the very beginning of pristine Islam had once laid himself on the bed of the Prophet Mohammed in order to give the impression that it was the Prophet himself who was lying there–when in fact the Prophet was elsewhere, taking flight to Medina. Thus that ʿAlî had been ready to risk his life for the Prophet.

The sobriquet Dhû l-Nûrayn, the Possessor of the Two Lights might refer to ʿAlî as the father of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. The comparison was not so far-fetched because the murdered Vizier was also called ʿAlî.

However, according to H. Lammens, the title "Dhû l-Nûrayn" was known to be a surname for the Caliph ʿUthmân. Indeed the third Caliph was known under the identical sobriquet. As ʿUthmân died in his own home in Medina, and like ʿAlî was a Companion of the Prophet, he might well have been intended as a point of comparison.[47]

Khusruwân's song was therefore quite ambiguous because ʿAlî ibn al-Salâr was after all of *Sunnite* persuasion and could better be compared to ʿUthmân ibn ʿAffân the "*Shahîd al-Dâr*" (The Martyr of the Residence) and "*al-Bâb al-Maftûḥ*" (The Door Left Open).

[46] According to al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ* III, 198, al-ʿÂdil ibn al-Salâr was fanatic in his adherence to the creed of the people of the *Sunna*. He had been visited by the scholar of tradition al-Ḥâfiẓ Abû Ṭâhir Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Silafî, for whom he had constructed the madrasa ʿÂdiliyya in Alexandria.
Abû Ṭâhir ʿImâd al-Dîn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Silafa al-Aṣbahânî was a scholar who had travelled in search of tradition materials and had thus visited many towns such as Iṣhahân, Baghdâd, Kûfa, Baṣra, Makka and Madîna. After travelling for about ten years, he settled in Alexandria in 511 H. From that time onwards he only left Alexandria if he wished to come to al-Qâhira in order to hear the *ḥadîth* personally. It is also said that he remained in Alexandria for an additional 65 years.
Silafa is a persian word, meaning someone with a split upper lip. Al-Silafî's grandfather has been described elewhere as having a harelip which would explain his nickname. For more information on this, see note of the editor in *Ittiʿâẓ* III, page 198. See also al-Ṣafadî, *al-Wâfî* VII, Stuttgart 1992, p. 351-356.

[47] H. Lammens, *Fâṭima et les filles de Mahomet*, Rome 1912, p. 4.

The lines of Khusruwân's mourning poetry sound very different from the sort of verse which we have grown used to with ʿUmâra. For instance:

١ يـــا قَـــتـــيـــلَ الـــغَـــفْـــلَـــةِ يـــا شَـــهـــيـــدَ الـــدَّار
٢ يـــا شَـــبـــيـــهَ ذي الـــنُّـــورَ يْـــ ـــنِ صـــاحِـــبَ المُخْـــتـــار

1 Oh you, the One who was murdered in sleep
Oh you, of this house, made a martyr
2 Oh you, who resemble the Master of Two Lights [ʿUthmân]
He, the Companion of the Chosen One [Mohammad].[48]

There is another version of this lament; but we have of course no way of telling if Khusruwân added it to what she had previously said, or whether she said it instead of what is given in verse 1 above.

١ مـــا تـــقـــبـــل الـــغـــفْـــلـــة يـــا شـــهـــيـــد الـــدار
٢ يـــا شـــبـــيـــهَ ذي الـــنَـــوريْـــ ـــنِ صـــاحـــب المخـــتـــار

1 Why accept this negligence [i.e. sleep]
Oh Martyr of this residence?[49]

The second verse is the same as in the first version.

13.4

Let us now return to ʿAbbâs whom we left with his army at Balbays. It is clear that the reinforcement of the city-fortress of Ascalon had broken off completely. The Franks exerted themselves strenuously and seized the town, while the newly-installed Vizier ʿAbbâs had obviously no time to spare for the arrangements neeeded to carry out such a complex military operation as the salvation of the town.

Insufficient food supplies for people and animals had been imported into the town. On the contrary, a small delegation came by ship to Ascalon to ask for some special sugar cane to be given to the pretty girls in Cairo to enhance their beauty.

[48] Thus, according to Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 65.

[49] See al-Maqrîzî, *Itti'âẓ* III, 205.

The later historian al-Dawâdârî was of *Sunnite* persuasion, as he makes very clear in his introductory remarks *sub anno* 549 H where he describes the strange incident of a ship coming to Ascalon to ask for sugar cane.[50]

Under the heading 'Mention of the Caliphate of al-Ẓâfir ibn al-Ḥâfiẓ and a résumé of his biography", on page 557, he says the following:

"He is Abu l-Manṣûr Ismâʿîl ibn Abi l-Maymûn ʿAbd al-Majîd al-Ḥâfiẓ and the rest of his genealogy (*nasab*) has already been mentioned. His mother was an *umm walad* and her name was Sitt al-Wafâ'."[51]

Then on page 562, we are enlightened about the sugar-cane incident as follows:

"It is said that in this year the Franks became masters over Ascalon, after heavy fighting and fierce warfare. In this war many people were killed from among the two sides.

"The Muslims asked for safe conduct (*amân*) from the Franks.

"The reason for this was as follows: those who were in Ascalon, not being powerful enough against the Franks, had returned to Egypt several times to ask for help. They called to them for help and sought to be saved.

"While they were in this most terrible situation, waiting for rescue which was due from Egypt, for they had already shown great endurance, while they were in this situation, behold! a ship approached them from the direction of Egypt. They were happy and surmised that salvation would follow after it. But when it reached them, there alighted from that ship one voyager with a letter in his hand.

"He carried it towards the *nâ'ib* (substitute for Ibn al-Salâr) in Ascalon. And behold! therein was written the following:

"As soon as You take cognizance of this, and before You put it down from Your hand, You should send to us something, namely a rooted-stock of Persian sugar cane, from the sugar cane plantation of Ascalon. Take care that these are not too tough for budding young girls.'

"The *nâ'ib* replied:

"I hear and obey.'

"He waited assiduously until night and then went to the Franks and asked for safe conduct for himself and for the inhabitants inside the town. That did they grant to them. And then in the morning he opened the gate. And he gave the inner city over to the Franks.

[50] What al-Dawâdârî informs us about the Fâṭimids and their activities may help us form an idea of his personal inclination which was certainly anti-*Shîʿa*, for under the year 549 H, we find him saying the following [Abû Bakr ibn ʿAbd Allâh ibn Aybak al-Dawâdârî, *Kanz al-durar wa-jâmiʿ al-ghurar*, vol. VI, *Al-durra al-muḍîʾa fî akhbâr al-Dawla al-Fâṭimiyya,* vol. VI, ed. Ṣalâḥ al-Dîn al-Munajjid, Cairo Wiesbaden 1961, p. 562]: "Al-Ẓâfir was the Caliph of Egypt until he was killed in the year 9 [i.e. 549 H) in accordance with what is still to be mentioned. In the year 8, the Ismâʿîlîs changed the religion of Islam. They drank wine and behaved unchastly towards their daughters and their mothers and their sisters. And they did everything which was forbidden in the month of Ramaḍân, both at night and in the day. They set fire to the Jâmiʿ (the ʿAmr ibn al-ʿÂṣ mosque, the oldest mosque, in old Cairo) and all the shrines which were in their surroundings, and also the pulpits."

[51] Abû Bakr ibn ʿAbd Allâh ibn Aybak al-Dawâdârî, *Kanz al-durar wa-jâmiʿ al-ghurar*, vol. VI, *Al-durra al-muḍîʾa fî akhbâr al-Dawla al-Fâṭimiyya* VI, p. 557. For a funeral poem on the decease of Sitt al-Wafâ, see P. Smoor, "'Umâra's Elegies and the Lamp of Loyalty", *AnIsl* 34 (2000), 491 and 560-564.

"He said to the messenger who had brought him the letter:

"Now let them go to the Franks as the possessors of the town in order to ask on behalf of the nymph-like young girls."

So the town was seized by the Franks in 548 H. This was much less painful for the Fâṭimid Dynasty than it might have been, for shortly beforehand another severed head had been transported from Ascalon in the nick of time. This time we are not thinking of the head of yet another murdered Vizier, but the noble head of Ḥusayn, grandson of Mohammad. That head had been discovered a few years previously in a House of Prayer at Ascalon.[52]

Just before the town was conquered by the Franks the head was taken up again, 'with a smell like musk, whilst its blood had not been dried up. After which, in a galley rowed by ten men (*ʿushârî*), the head was carried (...)."[53]

In al-Dawâdârî *Kanz al-durar wa-jâmiʿ al-ghurar*, there is a very simple explanation for the need for safe-conduct. It was essential to preserve the noble head of Ḥusayn; and safe-conduct (*amân*) of the head alone was requested. This was granted by the Franks in exchange for the voluntary surrender of the town. Al-Dawâdârî explains this saying:

'The reason that the Franks took hold of Ascalon was linked to the fact that the head of Imâm al-Ḥusayn son of ʿAlî ibn Abî Ṭâlib (peace be upon them both) was transported through all the lands."

And this ultimately led to occupation of Ascalon by the Franks.

"He had been interred in Ascalon close to the wall of the Jâmiʿ al-Qiblî between the two pillars.

"It remained there from that day up to this.

"This was reported to the above-mentioned ʿAbbâs when he held the function of his Vizierate on behalf of (the Imâm) al-Ẓâfir. And in his eye the report was genuine; he authenticated it.

"He exchanged messengers with the Franks; and between all of them it was agreed that he would deliver Ascalon to them, and that he would accept the noble head.

"The head was then transported to the Qâhira of al-Muʿizz.

[52] This has already been discussed by Dr Daniel De Smet, "La translation du *ra's al-Ḥusayn* au Caire Fatimide", in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras* vol. II, editors U. Vermeulen and D. De Smet, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* Leuven 1998, p. 29-44.

[53] See also in this connection the story of al-Ḥusayn's head which is written over the door of the ancient *minbar* (pulpit) presently in the mosque at Hebron (Khalîl). See Caroline Williams, "The Cult of ʿAlid Saints in the Fatimid Monuments of Cairo Part I: The Mosque of al-Aqmar" in *Muqarnas* I (Yale University Press 1983), p. 37-52, especially p. 41:
"In 484/1091, Badr al-Jamâlî 'discovered' the head of al-Ḥusayn at Ascalon, the frontier city retained by the Fatimids along with a few other coastal cities after they had lost Syria and Palestine to the *Sunni* Seljuqs. The story of this discovery is detailed in a long Kufic inscription that adorns the beautiful *minbar* which embellished the *mashhad* in Ascalon [Later taken to the mosque of al-Ḥaram al-Khalîl in Hebron.]."

"It was interred in the mausoleum of Ḥusayn (al-Mashad al-Ḥusaynî) in the month of *Rabîʿ* I, or as some say in *Rabîʿ* II, in 544 H [*sic*]. And that is the only right thing.

"It was transported in the company of Tamîm, known as al-Amîn, the Trustworthy."[54]

The same explanation in different words is also found in the *Ittiʿâẓ,* where an additional report is given about the transport overseas of the noble head towards Cairo.

"The head was taken up... After which, in a galley (*ʿushârî*) rowed by ten men, the head was carried by the Khidma (members of the civil service) accompanied by some dignitaries, an Amîr and a Qâḍî."

Both these personages supervised the transportation of the head. After a long journey they arrived in al-Qahira.[55]

Al-Ẓâfir, who was still alive at that time, consulted with the Ahl al-Bayt, which on this occasion would have meant his influential aunts and grandmother. The big question was, what should he do with the head? He was advised that instead of giving it to the Vizier, it would be better to place it in his own palace, the palace of the Imâm.

"Thereupon it was buried in the Qubbat al-Daylam (i.e. the cupola of the Daylam) inside the palace–in the portal (*dihlîz*) of the Administrative Service (*khidma*)."

[54] Abû Bakr ibn ʿAbd Allâh ibn Aybak al-Dawâdârî, *Kanz al-durar* VI, p. 548-549.

[55] According to al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ* III, p. 207, note 3 the editor says: On a loose sheet of paper, the following text is added to the occurrences *sub anno* 548 H, "The information came in that the Franks persisted in the taking of Ascalon. Therefore he ordered the transfer of the head of al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlî ibn Abî Ṭâlib to al-Qâhira. Then, the head was dug up whilst emitting a smell like musk, whilst its blood was never dry. Thereafter it was carried in one of the *ʿushârî* s of the Service (*khidma*), and accompanied by Maknûn al-Khâdim. With the head departed also the amîr Sayf al-Mamlaka the reigning governor over Ascalon, and the qâḍî al-Mu'taman ibn Miskîn. They travelled in it (the *ʿushârî*); thereafter they laid it (the head) in camphor. Then it was transferred inside via the underground hall (*sirdâb)* to the Emerald Palace (*qaṣr al-zumurrud*). Meanwhile, the Imâm al-Ẓâfir bi-Amr Allah Abu l-Manṣûr Ismâʿîl ibn al-Ḥâfiẓ had already constructed that mosque which is known today as the Mosque of the Fruit-sellers (*jâmiʿ al-fakkâhîn)*, in order to deposit the head therein. Thereupon al-Ẓâfir gathered his *ahl al-bayt* and had a consultation with them. Then they advised him to position the head with them in the palace. So it was entered under the Cupola of the Daylam which formed part of the palace, and that was in the corridor of the Service (*bi-dihlîz al-khidma*). So it happened that everyone who entered along that corridor for the Service, used to kiss the floor in front of the tomb. They slaughtered there on each *ʿashûrâ'* festival-day both camels and cows, and goats, and used to weep and lament abundantly, while they themselves used to blame those who had murdered him. They would continue to do so, until their Dynasty and State would cease to exist. The head arrived on Sunday the 8th day of *Jumâdâ* II, in that same year [548 H]. It was positioned inside the palace on Wednesday the 10th of that month. The Qâḍî Ibn al-Zubayr recited poetical lines to the rhyme-letter *nûn* (i.e. the *abyât nûniyya*, of which the following two lines...)" [see the lines quoted in the text below.]

13.5

What follows next is interesting because it tells us about the layout of things inside the palace of the Imâm. "Anyone who entered through that portal for affairs of the administrative service used to kiss the earth just in front of the grave."[56]

Also of interest is the fact that" on each ʿÂshûrâ' day they slaughtered camels and cows and small livestock. They wept and lamented very much and reviled him who had killed him (i.e. Ḥusayn).

"All this was continued until the *Dawla* (of the Fâṭimids) ceased to exist. The arrival of the head happened on Sunday, 8 *Jumâdâ* II. Finally it came to rest in the palace on Tuesday 10th."

A *Qâḍî* [the *qâḍî* Ibn al-Zubayr] is alleged to have spoken some lines of poetry which, in translation, make something clear. However the words are not without a certain ambiguity. There may of course be an error in the precise wording. As it is, we have the following lines:

١ مـا لـنـا نـطـلـب مـا يـفـنـي ولا نـطـلـب الأمـن الـذي يـبـقـي لـنـا

٢ لـهـف قـلـبـي عـلـى رءوس نـقـلـت هـو سـواهـا هـنـا بـعـد هـنـا

1 Why do we hanker after that which destroys and why do we not search for the safe conduct which enables us to survive?

2 Oh, the sighing of my heart over the heads which have been transported, is there then happiness without a head, after a lifetime of humiliation?
[Oh, the sighing of my heart over the heads which have been transported. Can a headless person be fortunate after a lifetime of humility?].[57]

14

Although the palace of the Imâm may have gained in holiness because of this head, the behaviour of the Imâm al-Ẓâfir remained characterised by a certain amount of thoughtlessness.

In order to learn about the daily routine of this Imâm, it is necessary to take cognizance of certain details which are to be found in the annals.[58]

In the first place, however, it should be pointed out that here too there existed a certain tension in the palace. From the time when Ibn al-Salâr was still alive we receive reports which show that violent incidents–even executions–occurred outside the palace walls. There

[56] Al-Maqrîzî, *Itti'âẓ* III, page 207, note 3.
[57] Also al-Maqrîzî, *Itti'âz* III, 207.
[58] Al-Maqrîzî, *Itti'âẓ* III, 200.

is, however, mention of one execution which did not come directly from the violent yet pious Ibn al-Salâr. We read the following which refers to the year 544 *Hijra*:

"In that year the head of the Fortunate of Fortunates, the Servant (Saʿîd al-Suʿadâ' al-Khâdim[59]), was thrown from the palace. And this happened on the 17th of *Shaʿbân*. After this he was himself brought outside (i.e. without his head) and crucified upon the Bâb Zuwayla, close by al-Kharq (i.e. Bâb al-Khalq)."[60]

Obviously we are dealing here with the execution of a very highly-placed palace eunuch, a Servant or *ustâdh muḥannak* and very possibly the *ustâdh* Bayân is intended here. He was one of the servants of the palace, a freed slave dating from the time of al-Mustanṣir, one of the Imâms long since dead.[61]

This execution had been arranged by the Palace itself. But if we put this rather distasteful incident to one side for the moment and read further, we find that the Imâm Ẓâfir was able to indulge himself in many more interesting pleasures. Not only did he have the opportunity to pass the time in a splendid flower garden where on certain occasions a palace of roses was set up, but he was also able to take pleasure in the company of his white parrot, who was the possessor of great talents, such that he was able to recite part of the Koran.[62]

It appears in fact that the Imâm busied himself in the pursuit of pleasure. He took great delight in playing with young girl slaves and he was fond of listening to a certain male singer.

"In this manner", says the historian, "there appeared a certain weakening, a breach in the *Dawla*... in his days the Franks took Ascalon into their own possession." As a counterweight to all this worldly enjoyment, there was happily also "the Mosque which the Imâm had caused to be built in the lane of the meat-grillers."[63]

[59] Somebody with the title "Fortunate of Fortunates" (*Saʿîd al-suʿadâ'*) has been praised more than once by Ibn Qalâqis, a poet contemporary with ʿUmâra, but in those poems the title refers to a person with a different name: ʿAnbar instead of Bayân.

[60] The head thrown from the palace window, see al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ* III, 200; and also less detailed in Ibn Muyassar, *Akhbâr Miṣr* p. 144, note 49.

[61] About a certain official under al-Mustanṣir, entitled Saʿîd al-Suʿadâ' who in vain tried to forestall the execution of the erstwhile Vizier al-Yazûrî, see Taqî al-Dîn al-Maqrîzî (died 845 H), *Kitâb al-Muqaffâ al-kabîr*, Beirut 1991, vol. III, p. 405. According to the editor Muḥammad al-Yaʿlâwî the eunuch, the *ustâdh muḥannak*, Qanbar was intended as the Saʿîd al-Suʿadâ' who was by the Imâm al-Mustanṣir commissioned to prevent the execution. See parallel information in al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ* II, 242. Qanbar's failure is not mentioned in M. Brett, "The Execution of al-Yâzûrî", *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras* II, 15-27.

[62] In fact the parrot is said to have been able to recite by heart the two sûras al-Falaq and al-Nâs (the *muʿawwidhatâni*) which are used as a protection against superstition and evil. Thus, it appears that the parrot had been taught to say: "Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the dawn" and "Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of men." Moreover, this parrot knew the names of most of the palace eunuchs.

[63] "He caused the *jâmiʿ al-Fakkâhîn* (Mosque of the fruitsellers) to be built in the *khaṭṭ al-shawwâyîn* in al-Qâhira", thus according to al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ* III, 209.

15

One particularly dangerous aspect of the Imâm's activities was his penchant for involving himself directly in the careers of his Viziers. He seemed unable to prevent himself from meddling and frequently tried to cause his Viziers to be murdered by a third party.

We know of one earlier occasion when this had succeeded; the Imâm had encouraged the son of ʿAbbâs to murder Ibn al-Salâr while he was having his afternoon sleep. [In taking an afternoon sleep, he resembled ʿAlî, the son-in-law of Mohammad.]

Now it was the turn of the next Vizier, the *Rabîb* ʿAbbâs. For this trifling task the Imâm had to appeal once again to Naṣr's killer instincts. But on this occasion it was of course Naṣr's own father whose life was at stake.

Incidentally, at precisely this time, the aspiring murderer was commissioned by his father ʿAbbâs to take care of the Imâm's well-being. In other words, Naṣr, as son of the Vizier, had been given the task by the secular authorities [*Rabîb* ʿAbbâs] of devoting himself to the special duty of guarding the Imâm. This situation would have ominous consequences, especially for Naṣr's father ʿAbbâs.

16

We find another view of this situation in the *History of the Patriarchs*[64]:

"Nâṣir al-Dîn ibn ʿAbbâs established a friendly relationship with the Imâm al-Ẓâfir (*wa-kâna Nâṣir al-Dîn ibn ʿAbbâs qad ṣâra lahu khalṭa bi l-imâmi l-Ẓâfir*). He once came and visited him in his palace at night in order to eat and drink and spend the night until the breaking of the dawn.

"The Caliph wished to go out with him in the night to his [i.e. Naṣr's] house in the alley of the Sword-makers in order to sit with him for a part of the night and listen to songs. Then he took his leave when he had accompanied him inside his own palace once again.

"This was heavy to bear for ʿAbbâs because he feared that his son would kill him just as he (the son) had killed ʿAlî ibn al-Salâr.

"The one with whom he was associated tells us that ʿAbbâs the father of Naṣr al-Dawla received a report that the Caliph had said to Naṣr: 'kill your own father and then you shall be the vizier for you are more beautifully suited to that function than your father (*uqtul abûka wa-kun anta al-wazîr fa'innaka ajmal min abûka lahâ*)'.

[64] The History of the Patriarchs, *Târîkh baṭârikati l-kanîsa al-miṣriyya al-maʿrûf bi-siyar al-bayʿa al-muqaddasa* li-Sawîrus ibn al-Muqaffaʿ usquf al-Ashmûnîn, ed. A. Khater and O.H.E. Khs.-Burmester, Cairo 1968, vol. III, part I, p. 44-45 (Arabic text).

"Thereupon ʿAbbâs thought of a plan in order to stay alive (*al-ḥîla fî l-salâma*). But in that plan there was ruin and perdition, namely in the fact that he exhorted Naṣr al-Dawla to kill the Caliph by saying to him the following:

"The people have cheapened your reputation; and among them there is an ugly tale because of that which they have heard about your social intercourse with al-Ẓâfir (*anna l-nâs qad istabâḥû ʿirḍaka wa-ṣâra lahum fîka ḥadîth qabîḥ bimâ samiʿûhu min khalṭatika bi l-Ẓâfir*).

In what manner will be your defence against what they say?'

"And his father ʿAbbâs was laughing (while saying that) but Naṣr al-Dawla said to him: 'You laugh but I am afraid for you, for you will not laugh again.'

"Thereupon, on the basis of this, the father surmised that he (Naṣr) planned to kill him. But he did not guess what sort of disaster he (himself) would cause towards the Caliph.

"When it was the night of that day he (Naṣr) entered the palace of the Caliph as was his custom. He sat for an hour with him and then asked him to accompany him, appearing to the common people (*ʿawâmm*) in disguise.

"Thus he went out with him through the Portal (Bâb al-Zuhûma) and they stopped walking for a while in the shop which was opposite that portal, belonging to the maker of fruitbeer. With him they drank *fuqâʿ* and after that they walked on.

"Then he asked the Imâm to accompany him to his home (*dâr*) which was in the lane of the Sword-makers (*Suyûfiyyîn*), to sit for an hour and then return.

"He accompanied him again. The Caliph was disguised in a wide *burda* (cloak) in which he had wrapped himself. With him were two eunuchs (*ustâdh*-s). Then he finally arrived and sat with him in his Salon sitting in his company for an hour.

"After that he [Naṣr] ordered someone from among his own friends to strangle him with his own *mandîl* until he died."

The word *mandîl* can mean scarf or turban.[65] Either way, it would have been a long band of cloth.

"Then he (Naṣr) also killed the two eunuchs (*ustâdh*-s). He threw him (the Caliph) in the well with the two eunuchs on top of him. Then he filled in the shaft and he put a slab of stone upon it so that the hole could not be rediscovered.

"This happened on 29 *Muḥarram* in the year 549. He concealed the matter from the people but Allah made it public and took revenge for the sake of the murdered ones, because of the fact that he (Naṣr) had walked to his father and informed him of what he had done.

"Thereupon the father was afraid that the masses of the common people (*ʿawâmm*) would rebel against him and would remove him from the Kingdom (*mulk*). Because of this, he rode to the palace in the early morning and summoned the Zimâm al-Qaṣr. He besought him to obtain leave of entry for him.

[65] See al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ* III, 148, where it is stated that in 527 H in the time of the Fatimid Imâm al-Ḥâfiẓ someone was arrested and found to be in the possession of 360 gold-embroidered *mandîl*-s with matching mantles worked with gold: "for each day this person had another mantle and a *mandîl*" and the historian adds by way of explanation: "this is a turban (*ʿamâma*); each hanging on a silver peg."

"But neither the Zimâm al-Qaṣr nor anyone else had any knowledge of the excursion of the Caliph, nor about what had befallen him. So he went inside to search for him but did not find him.

"Then ʿAbbâs took hold of the Zimâm al-Qaṣr and asked him for information about him (the Imâm). With many oaths the majordomo swore that he did not know where he was.

Then ʿAbbâs said to him: 'Fetch me his brothers; I am afraid lest they be the ones who killed him.'

"Then he went inside the palace and brought the brothers, Yûsuf and Jabrîl, to him with Ṣâliḥ the son of Ḥasan; the latter had once been his brother. [Ḥasan *masmûm*, the Poisoned One, who had been poisoned some years earlier on the orders of his father the Imâm al-Ḥâfiẓ.]

"Then he enquired of them and complained to them that they were (indeed) the ones who had killed him (the Caliph). He commanded his soldiers to kill them, whereupon they killed them and they also killed the Zimâm al-Qaṣr.

"He plundered the royal appartments of the King (i.e. the Imâm) by the hand of his ruffians. And he killed all of them (i.e. the brothers and the nephew) in the hall of the Golden Portal (Bâb al-Dhahab).

"Then he took the son of the Caliph, who was a little child whose name was ʿIsâ. Then he caused him to sit on the throne as Caliph on the last day of *Muḥarram* in the year of the moon 549 (*hilâliyya*). They gave him the honorific title (*naʿt*) al-Imâm al-Fâ'iz (i.e. The Victorious One)."[66]

17

The events which led to the murder of the Imâm and several members of his family by ʿAbbâs and his bloodthirsty son Naṣr are described in detail by al-Maqrîzî.

In Maqrîzî's *Ittiʿâẓ* we find a wealth of information concerning the situation after the murder of Ibn al-Salâr, especially as to the manner in which the Imâm al-Ẓâfir cajoled Naṣr into murdering his own father, which is described in great detail. We even find an accessory moving between the Imâm and the murderer-to-be.

"When ʿAbbâs arrived in al-Qâhira, Ẓâfir vested him with the mantle of honour of the Vizier on the previously-mentioned Friday. He received the honorary title (*naʿt*) al-Afḍal Rukn al-Islâm (The Most Excellent Pillar of Islam). [The title al-Afḍal was in general use and had also been given to several Viziers in past time.]

"He set to work and made himself master of the affairs. He gave generously to the Amîrs and treated the soldiers (*al-ajnâd*) well, so that they might forget the murder of al-ʿÂdil [i.e. ʿAlî Ibn al-Salâr].

[66] My translation, see also *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church Known as the History of the Holy Church* by Sawîrus ibn al-Muqaffaʿ vol. III, part I, p. 44-46 (Arabic text) and p. 76 (English translation).

"His son Naṣr continued to guard the Caliph: he was so occupied by him that he had no attention for anyone else. This did not please his father.

"The Caliph al-Ẓâfir did not cease to grant very large presents to Naṣr [the descendant of Tamîm]. He sent him on a certain day 20 dishes of silver on which were 20,000 dînârs. After that, he did not pay any more attention to him for several days.

"Then he was given an ornamental cloth (*kiswa*) of each kind. After that, he did not pay any more attention to him for several days.

"Then he was given 50 dishes of silver on which were 50,000 dînârs. After that, he did not pay any more attention to him for several days.

"Then he was given 30 saddled mules and also 40 camels with full equipment of jute nosebags for eating, and reins (... *wa-arbaʿîn jamalan bi-ʿudadihâ wa-gharâ'irihâ wa-ḥibâlihâ*).

"Between them both, a certain Murtafiʿ ibn Faḥl went hither and thither with regard to the murder to be undertaken by Naṣr against his father ʿAbbâs, just as he had done to al-ʿÂdil Ibn al-Salâr, the husband of his grandmother (Bullâra) a short while before.

"All this reached his father via the tongue of Usâma ibn Munqidh; and so he (the father) tried to be friendly towards him (Naṣr); and he tried to induce him to be sympathetic towards himself.

"This affair proceeded from bad to worse to such an extent that the Caliph left his palace to go to the residence (*dâr*) of Naṣr ibn ʿAbbâs. (...)

"Then ʿAbbâs became afraid of the audacious rashness of his son, fearing that he would exhort the Caliph so that the latter would permit him (Naṣr) to murder him himself. Then he (Naṣr) would kill him just as he (Naṣr) had killed Ibn al-Salâr.

"Thereupon ʿAbbâs reprimanded him (? Murtafiʿ) in secret and forbade him to serve the Caliph and his son Naṣr; but his words were of no use to Murtafiʿ (*fa-ʿatabahu sirran wa-nahâhu ʿan mulâzamati l-khalîfa wa-bnihi fa-lam yufid fîhi l-qawlu)*."[67]

In his Annals *sub anno* 549 H, al-Maqrîzî tells us the following:

"In that year al-Ẓâfir [the Imâm] summoned Nâṣir al-Dawla Naṣr ibn ʿAbbâs. Subsequently he caused to be fetched for him a golden dish on which lay one thousand precious jewels, varying between pearls, and red and yellow *yâqût*, and yellow and green emerald (*zumurrud dhubâbî)*."[68]

The last-mentioned stone, the *dhubâbî* was of a value unheard of before.

[Indeed, "its beauty is enhanced by the immensity of its volume and the lines of its layering. It is vivid green, of a green colour not mixed with other colour, of a pleasing watery hue, blazing in its brilliance. It was called *dhubâbî* because its colour was like the colour of the big green flies (in the spring). In fact in a bright light it is the most beautiful kind of green. This jewel is rarer than the rarest–or no, it hardly exists at all."].[69]

[67] Al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ* III, 206.

[68] Al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ* III, 208.

[69] See *Subḥ al-Aʿshâ* II, 108, under the heading "*al-ṣanf al-sâdis al-zumurrud*" within the chapter "*al-ḍarb al-thânî, al-ṣifât al-khârija ʿani l-jasad*". See this reference in *Ittiʿâẓ* III, page 208, note 2 by M.H.M. Aḥmad, the editor of *Ittiʿâẓ*. See also Walther Björkman, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Staatskanzlei im islamischen Agypten*, Hamburg 1928, p. 92.

"What is more, al-Ẓâfir ordered for him from the ministry of Finance [*bayt al-mâl*] a sum of ten thousand Egyptian dînârs.

"But after this, six days after this gift, Naṣr killed him."

In al-Dawâdârî, we find a report in the same vein, albeit much shorter.[70]

18

It is clear that al-Ẓâfir's plans totally misfired. He had consistently tried to rid himself of any Vizier whom he did not like by arranging for him to be eliminated. On one occasion he had been successful, when Ibn al-Salâr had been murdered in his bed. The murderer on that occasion who had made all the arrangements with a crowd of "drinking companions"–or rather, the special guard of the Caliph–was none other than Naṣr, the son of Ibn al-Salâr's *Rabîb*.

Now Naṣr had to be incited to murder once again. The Imâm tried to put pressure on Naṣr by giving him costly presents and thus putting him in a position of obligation towards him.

Naṣr did indeed perform a second murder, but his father ʿAbbâs was able to deflect his son's destructive energy and turn it upon the Imâm himself. This unexpected result was in part due to the intrigues of Usâma ibn Munqidh the aforementioned friend and companion of the *Rabîb*. It is from Usâma that the *Rabîb* is alleged to have heard about the unusual activities of his son.

The sources are clear in their elucidation of events–so clear that it seems there must always have been someone else present during the secret and dangerous conversations, and the plan-making sessions between father and son.

Certain remarks played a crucial role in turning around the intentions of Naṣr as he embarked upon the murder of his father. And these same remarks were the cause of the murderous attack upon the Imâm.

Usâma is alleged to have held a small conversation with ʿAbbâs:

"How can you tolerate what the people are saying about the reputation of your son? And that they suspect the Caliph of doing to him what is done to women?"

"ʿAbbâs took offence at this and he reprimanded his son, but the latter did not heed his reprimand. Then however al-Ẓâfir gave to Naṣr as a present the estate (*nâḥiyat*) of Qalyûb. And after that, Naṣr came to his father and informed him about it.

"Then Usâma [who again happened to be present] said the following to Naṣr:

"As a bridal gift for you, that present is not so very expensive (*mâ hiya bi-mahrika ghâliya)*."

[70] See al-Dawâdârî, *Kanz* VI, p. 557ff.

ʿAbbâs was angered by this and he said to Usâma the following:

"What way out is there to be invented, in order to escape from that by which we are put to trial?"

"Usâma answered: 'That is easy, for this Caliph comes to your son in his house every time in secret. Command him then to murder him when he comes.'

"'Abbâs invited his son into his presence and said: 'My dear Son, you have given much company to the Caliph. The people are speaking ill of you with words which cause pain to my heart. Perhaps this will come to the ears of our enemies which will result in something which will not be stopped.'

"Thereupon Naṣr became very angry and said the following: 'Would killing perhaps make you content?"'

"'Abbâs answered: 'For the sake of your good reputation, make an end to these suspicions in whatever way you wish."'[71]

19

As a result of these conversations at the palace of the Vizier, the palace of the Imâm and the residence of his son Naṣr who resided in one wing of the Vizier's palace, things developed which show a high measure of hypocrisy. Intrigues were unceasingly woven with the result that not only did the Imâm become the victim of a murder plot, but two of his brothers and one of his nephews also came to be murdered, as it were *en passant*.

There is much more to be said about this. We have the hindsight of the anti-*Shîʿite* al-Dawâdârî in *Kanz al-Durar*[72]:

"Mentioning of the Caliphate of al-Ẓâfir ibn al-Ḥâfiẓ and a résumé of his biography. He is Abu l-Manṣûr Ismâʿîl ibn Abi l-Maymûn ʿAbd al-Majîd al-Ḥâfiẓ and the rest of his genealogy (*nasab*) has already been mentioned. His mother was an *umm walad*, whose name was Sitt al-Wafâ'. He was born in the month of *al-Muḥarram* in the year 527 H. He was inaugurated (*bayʿa*) on Sunday 5 *Jumâdâ* II of that year [543 H]. On that day he was 17 years and 5 months.

"His Caliphate lasted 4 years and 8 months.

"His Regent [*mudabbir dawla*, the organiser of the State] was ʿAbbâs al-Muẓaffar, and Naṣr who was the son of the former's wife.

"His Chancellor (*kâtib*) was al-Shaykh al-Muwaffaq.

"He took pleasure in loving Naṣr, the son of the wife of ʿAbbâs al-Muẓaffar, and so he had no patience when this man was absent, neither by night nor by day.

[71] Al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ* III, 208-209.

[72] Al-Dawâdârî, *Kanz al-durar* VI, ed. Ṣalâḥ al-Dîn al-Munajjid, Cairo Wiesbaden 1961, p. 557ff. Also see ʿUmâra's Elegies and the Lamp of Loyalty, *AnIsl* 34 (2000), p. 470, note 9.

"He paid him money and granted him benefactions, which is impossible to count. So much it was! Included in this total is what has been mentioned by Shaykh Shams al-Dîn Ibn Khallikân–may God have mercy upon him–in his History (*Târîkh*), namely that he entered into his presence on the day of *al-ʿadas* (the lentils). Thereupon he presented him with Qalyûb, with all sorts of stock, and various lands for market gardening, and also the ground rent *kharâj* from them.

"And he said: 'This is Thursday's present but it is too little in comparison to what you are entitled, oh Naṣr!'

"The love increased so much that horrible things were heard about them both. And al-Ẓâfir customarily used to say at the council meetings–and in private–''ʿAbbâs and Naṣr belong to the Ahl al-Bayt (the people of the household).'

"He meant that they belonged to the innermost circle i.e. the women and children. But he [the Imâm] took it as an offence if by that it was meant that they belonged in reality to the Clan of the Prophet, so much so that the Devil played with the reason of both of them.

"Thereafter they killed him, according to what will be mentioned in its own year."[73]

The historian al-Dawâdârî connects the evil reasoning of the plotters (father and son) and the third person (the intriguer Usâma) with the double entendre implied by the "Ahl al-Bayt" in this instance. However we ought to remember that al-Dawâdârî was *Sunnî* and –apparently–extremely anti-*Shîʿa*. In the *Kanz* we hear more about the plot as al-Dawâdârî informs us of his own particular view of events.

"In the year 9, al-Ẓâfir, Caliph of Egypt is murdered. That happened when the Devil played with the minds of ʿAbbâs and of Naṣr, both of whom have already been mentioned. He painted for them a pretty picture which would have far-reaching consequences.

"'ʿAbbâs was alone with Naṣr, the son of his wife and said to him: 'You know what is being said and what is fixed in the minds of the people about our business, and that we are the [only] ones who belong to the Ahl al-Bayt. The best idea is that we should act craftily in the assassination of this Caliph for his comprehension, opinion and counsel are juvenile. And we should possess this Caliphate. For only through ambitions can things be made to happen (*wa-innamâ l-ashyâ'u himam*)."

"Naṣr answered this in a positive way and both of them were in agreement. Therefore he made an effort to compose an elevated invitation (*fa-htamma fî ʿamali daʿwa sanîya*). Then he asked for admittance to al-Ẓâfir; and he asked him to come in secret to his own house without anyone knowing.

[73] According to al-Dawâdârî, *Kanz al-durar* VI, 557-558: "*wa-kâna l-Ẓâfir yaqûlu dâ'iban fi l-mala' wa l-khalâ: 'Abbâs wa-Naṣr min ahli l-bayt wa-huwa yaʿnî ʿani l-taqarrubi, fa-shanaʿa ʿanhu annahu min ahli l-bayt ḥaqqan ḥattâ laʿiba l-shayṭânu bi-ʿuqûlihimâ fa-qatalâhu.*"

"The latter agreed, overcome by love and the dawning of the moment of Death. (...)

"When al-Ẓâfir arrived disguised beneath the trailing seams of the night, ʿAbbâs came outside to meet him with a drawn sword in his hand and said: 'Woe to you, oh Caliph who accepts the orders of boys.'

"After that, he grabbed hold of him and cut his throat and buried him in the air shaft (*bâdhhanj*) in the Dâr al-Ma'mûnî (in the Lane of the Sword-makers, *al-Suyûfiyyîn*).

"After that, ʿAbbâs immediately rode quickly towards the Palace and said: 'Ask admittance for me to al-Ẓâfir our Master regarding an important matter.'

"The eunuchs (*ustâdhûna*) and the chamberlains (*ḥujjâb*) sought al-Ẓâfir but did not find him. Then al-ʿAbbâs said: 'Fetch the sons of al-Ḥâfiẓ for me.'–and there were Abu l-Amâna Jabrîl and Abu l-Ḥajjâj Yûsuf. Then he commanded that they both should be killed by the sword.

"A large group of them were killed, among whom was Abu l-Tuqâ Ṣâliḥ son of Ḥasan, and the Zimâm al-Qaṣr (the majordomo) together with a group of people whose wickedness he feared, namely the notables of the Dawla and the leaders of the Kingdom.[74]

"Thereafter he summoned the *qâḍî l-quḍâh* (the chief Qâdî) and the other *qâḍî*-s. On that day these were Yûnus al-Iṭfîḥî and the *qâḍî* Mujallî the author of the book *al-Dhakhâ'ir*. He inaugurated (gave the *bayʿa* to) al-Fâ'iz as will be mentioned later.

"The murder of al-Ẓâfir was on the night of the Thursday at the end of *Muḥarram* of this year.

"His (al-Ẓâfir's) Caliphate was 4 years and 8 months. The judges (*qâḍî*-s) of al-Ẓâfir Billâh were the following persons: Abu l-Faḍâ'il Yûnus al-Iṭfîḥî and the *faqîh* Mujallî Abu l-Maʿâlî ibn Jumayʿ Ibn Najâ al-Makhzûmî.

"He assumed the Caliphate when he was 17 years and 5 months old, and he was murdered when he was 22. And Allah knows best."[75]

20

What is interesting for us as readers is that the *ahl al-bayt*–in the sense of the people of the palace, the *ahl al-qaṣr*–did not wish to acquiesce to the grievous situation which was to be unleashed by these murders. In fact, they despatched letters calling for assistance.

At this point in time the Governor Ṭalâ'iʿ ibn Ruzzîk and his clan were living in the South of Egypt, which was Ṭalâ'iʿ's own province. They received letters and sentimental poems composed by al-Qâḍî al-Jalîs who was tutor to the children (*jalîs*) of the Imâm, but also employed as a dignitary in the Chancellery of the Imâm. This implies that he was a responsible functionary. In the letters, the women of the palace had enclosed the severed locks of their own hair in order to give emphasis to their state of mourning and lamentation.

[74] Al-Dawâdârî, *Kanz al-durar* VI, 563-564.

[75] Al-Dawâdârî, *Kanz al-durar* VI, 564-565.

In the poetry itself we read something of the mood prevailing at court. At the same time we are fortunate to have a view of the situation seen from a contemporary angle in another fragment of poetry written with hindsight by the same person, Qâḍî Jalîs. The person destined to receive all this must have been none other than the Governor Ṭalâ'iʿ himself.

Speaking of ʿAbbâs and his son, the Qâḍî says[76]:

ا	أصادفُهمْ قولاً وغيباً ومشْهَداً	نَحْوَهمْ على عمدٍ بِفعْلِ أعادي
ب	فأينَ بَنو رزّيكَ عنها ونصرُهُمْ	وما لهُمُ من منعةٍ وذِيادِ
ج	فلو عايَنَتْ عيناكَ بالقَصْرِ يومهمْ	ومَصْرَعَهُمْ لم تَكْتَحِلْ بِرُقادِ
د	فَمَزّقْ جموعَ المارقينَ فإنَّها	بقايا زُرُوعٍ آذَنَتْ بحصادِ

a I encounter them as enemies (of the Fâṭimids) in intention and in deed whenever they speak (ill), whether they (the Fâṭimids) are present or absent.

b Where then are the Banû Ruzzîk? So far from here with their support and with what they have of safety and defence.

c Suppose Your eyes had seen their fateful day and their destruction in the palace, then those eyes would not have been anointed with the kohl of sleep.

d Tear apart the crowds of rebels, for they are but straggling seedlings who announce their readiness for plucking.

20.1

Another fragment exists by the same poet which is as it were a second draft for the description of these events.[77]

١	دهتني عن نظم القريض عوادي	وشفّ فؤادي شجُوه المتمادي
٢	وأرّقَ عيني والعيونُ هواجعٌ	هُمومٌ أقضّت مَضْجَعي ووِسادي
٣	بمَصْرَع أبناء الوَصِيِّ وعِترة النـ	ـبيّ وآل الذاريات وصادِ
٤	فأين بنو رُزِّيك عنهم ونصرهُم	وما لَهمُ من مَنْعَةٍ وذِيادِ
٥	أولئك أنصارُ الهُدى وبنو الرَّدى	وسمّ العِدا من حاضرين وبادِ

[76] From a poem composed by Qâḍî al-Jalîs to the rhyme *al-mutamâdî*, see al-ʿImâd al-Iṣfahânî al-Kâtib, *Kharîdat al-qaṣr wa-jarîdat al-ʿaṣr qism shuʿarâ' Miṣr*, editors Aḥmad Amîn, Shawqî Ḍayf and Iḥsân ʿAbbâs, Cairo 1951, vol. I, 190. This is also quoted in Shihâb al-Dîn ʿAbd al-Raḥmân Ismâʿîl b. Ibrâhîm al-Muqaddasî al-Dimashqî *al-maʿrûf bi* Abî Shâma (599-665 H), *Akhbâr al-dawlatayni al-Nûriyya wa l-Ṣalâḥiyya*, ed. Ibrâhîm al-Zîbaq, Bayrut 1997, vol. II, 7-8 (old edition Cairo 1288 H, vol. I, 141-142).

[77] Jamâl al-Dîn Abû l-Maḥâsin Yûsuf b Taghrî Bardî al-Atâbakî (813-874H.), *al-Nujûm al-zâhira fî mulûk Miṣr wa l-Qâhira*, edition Dâr al-kutub vol. V, 292-293. For verse 1 see the text vol. V, 292, note 4.

٦ لـقـد هـدّ ركـن الـدِّيـن لـيـلـةَ قـتـلـه بـخـيـر دلـيـلٍ لـلـنَّـجـاة وهـادِ
٧ تَـدارَكْ مـن إيمـان قـبـل دُثُـوره حُـشـاشـةَ نـفـس آذنـت بـنـفـادِ
٨ وقـد كـاد يُـطْـفِـي تَـأَلُّـقُ نـورِه عـلـى الحـقِّ عـادٍ مـن بـقـيـة عـادِ
٩ فـلـو عـايـنـتْ عـيـنـاك بـالـقَـصْـرِ يـومَـهـم ومَـصْـرَعَـهـم لـم تـكـتـحـل بـرُقـادِ

1 Disasters struck me so severely that I could not compose poetry. Torn continuously by grief, my heart has become transparent.
2 Whilst other eyes were sleeping, cares kept my eye awake, causing my bed and my pillows to harden
3 through the destruction of the sons of the *Waṣî* (ʿAlî) those descendants of the Prophet, people of the Koranic *sûra*-s al-Dhâriyât and Ṣâd.
4 Where are the Banû Ruzzîk and their support? How far away from those who have no longer protection nor defence.
5 They are the helpers (*Anṣâr*) of Right Guidance [the Caliph] but also the sons of Perdition: poison for their enemies, both the settled and wandering ones.
6 In the night of his assassination, the corner-stone of Religion which had represented the best indicator of Salvation and the Best Guide was destroyed.
7 Repair for the Belief the remnants of a soul which threatens evanescence before it is wiped out.
8 An enemy of the Truth originating from the remainder of (the wicked tribe of) ʿÂd has almost extinguished his light.
9 Suppose your eyes had witnessed that day in the palace, and the destruction there, then they would not have been anointed with the kohl of sleep.
10 Tear apart the crowds of rebels, for they are but straggling seedlings who announce their readiness for plucking.[78]

20.2

In a view which must have been composed with hindsight by the same tutor and chancellor, we find mentioned the courage and benefaction of Ṭalâ'iʿ in the midst of his own clan, the Banû Ruzzîk. At the same time it appears from the wording of line 6 that certain of the Amîrs had less courage than Ṭalâ'iʿ and would have been willing to accept the fact that the Imâm was going to be murdered. They felt powerless and would have preferred to acquiesce in the awful situation caused by the horrible murders perpetrated upon the Imâm and his brothers.

[78] Lines 1-9 are quoted from Ibn Taghrî Bardî, *al-Nujûm al-zâhira*, line 10 is in al-ʿImâd al-Iṣfahânî, *Kharîdat al-qaṣr, qism shuʿarâ' Miṣr* I, 190.

This appears in the fragment to rhyme *râ'imu*[79] where we hear the Chancellor al-Jalîs saying the following:

١ ولما تَرامَى البَرْبَري بجهله إلى فَتْكَةٍ ما رامَها قَطُّ رائمُ
٢ رَكِبْتَ إليه مَتْنَ عَزمَتِكَ التي بأمثالها تُلْقَى الخطوبُ العظائمُ
٣ وقُدْتَ له الجُرْدَ الخِفافَ كأنما قوائمُها عند الطِرادِ قوادمُ
٤ وتنصُلُ منها والعَجاجُ خضابُها هوادٍ لأركانِ البِلادِ هوادمُ
٥ تجافتْ عن الماءِ القَراحِ فريُّها دماءُ العِدا فهي الصوادئُ الصوادمُ
٦ وقمتَ بحقِّ الطالبيِّينَ طالباً وغيرُكَ يُغْضِي دونه ويُسالِمُ
٧ أَعدتَ إليهمْ مُلْكَهُمْ بعد ما لوى به غاصبٌ حقَّ الأمانةِ ظالِمُ
٨ فما غالبٌ إلا بنصركَ غالبٌ وما هاشمٌ إلا بسَيْفِكَ هاشمُ
٩ فأدْرِكْ بثأرِ الدينِ منهُ ولم تزَلْ عن الحقِّ بالبيضِ الرِقاقِ تُخاصِمُ

1 When the Berber [the *Rabîb* ʿAbbâs], in his ignorance, involved himself in a murder, something which no ambitious person had ever aspired to until then,
2 You rode to him on the back of Your decision, which is so effective that enormous disasters shall be confronted.
3 You have spurred on the short-haired horses as if their pursuing legs were wings.
4 From them the foremost horses break loose, whilst the thrown-up dust colours them, destroyers of the foundation stones of the regions.
5 They avoided the pure water for their drinking consisted of the blood of their enemies; they were thirsty and tenacious.
6 You set up the Rights due to the Ṭâlibî family; others than you shut their eyes and tried to resign themselves to him (ʿAbbâs), however to
7 them you have returned their Kingdom, after an unjust usurper had turned away what was entrusted.
8 There is no conqueror other than he who conquers with your support; there is no Hâshim [an ancestor of Mohammad] other than he who destroys (*hâshim*) by your sword.
9 Thus shall the vengeance of Religion catch up with him; for in defence of the (*Shîʿite*) truth you will not cease your opposition with razor-sharp swords.

[79] In this poetical reflection (to rhyme *râ'imu*) on the misdeeds of ʿAbbâs and his son Naṣr, which is addressed to Ṭalâ'iʿ, we can hear the words of the Palace Chancellor al-Qâḍî al-Jalîs. He emphasises the fact that the evil Vizier ʿAbbâs is not descended from any Arabic line.
See al-ʿImâd al-Iṣfahânî al-Kâtib, *Kharîdat al-qaṣr, qism shuʿarâ' Miṣr* I, 190; Shihâb al-Dîn ʿAbd al-Raḥmân ibn Ismâʿîl ibn Ibrâhîm al-Maqdisî al-Dimashqî known as Abû Shâma, *Kitâb al-Rawḍatayni fî akhbâr al-dawlatayni l-Nûriyya wa l-Ṣalâḥiyya*, edition Ibrâhîm al-Zaybaq, Beirut 1997, II, 8 (ed. Cairo 1288 H., vol. I, 141).

21

The image of the Vizierate presented here as it is taken away from the *Rabîb* and his murderous son, and the action of the Governor coming from the South, may perhaps seem surprising to us. Moreover Ṭalâ'iʿ ibn Ruzzîk will become the new Vizier. The next fragment of poetry was written by someone anonymous; possibly it is by Ṭalâ'iʿ himself, or by a chancellor at the time when the new Vizier from the Banû Ruzzîk had been confirmed in his appointment by the child Imâm al-Fâ'iz.

The anonymous author even personifies the Vizierate for us as a very beautiful woman who first marries into a relationship which is beneath her, and then after being repudiated by her husband, takes a better man in marriage at the end of her month of impurity.

In other words, she has a divorce behind her just as the Vizierate has a divorce behind it (i.e. ʿAbbâs has been got rid of) and there is now room for a better husband, i.e. Ṭalâ'iʿ.

In the *Kharîdat Miṣr*, ʿImâd refers to Ṭalâ'iʿ in the following way:

"I, ʿImâd, saw a fragment of his own words in the preface to the bundle of his poems, namely in the *Khuṭbat al-Dîwân* by al-Ṣâliḥ ibn Ruzzîk [Ṭalâ'iʿ] as follows.

"He is a Vizier who is adequate, and he is the Vizier who is Regent, and the King through whose reputation army lines are confounded, through whose name armies are defeated. He is the One who has revived the remains of the kingdom; for those remains had almost disappeared through being wiped away.

"Through him their sheen and their light have returned once more."[80]

In the *Rawḍatayn* and in the *Kharîdat Miṣr*, al-Jalîs makes an allusion to the poet Surrdurr in his Dîwân and to a passage from a *qaṣîda* where Surrdurr praises the Vizier of the Caliph in Baghdad, namely Fakhr al-Dawla Abû Naṣr Muḥammad b Muḥammad b Jahîr, and congratulates this Fakhr upon his return to the Vizierate.[81]

In the lines of verse by al-Jalîs we read:

[to rhyme *kafûruhâ*]

١ وقد خَفِيَتْ من قبْلِه مُعْجزاتُها فأظْهرها حتّى أقَرَّ كَفورُها

٢ أعَدْتَ إلى جسمِ الوزارةِ روحَها وما كان يُرْجى بَعْثُها ونُشورُها

٣ أقامتْ زماناً عند غيرِكَ طامثاً فهذا الأوانُ قَرؤُها وطُهورُها

٤ من العدلِ أنْ يجتابها مُسْتَحِقُّها ويخلَعَها مردودةً مُسْتَعيرُها

٥ إذا مَلَكَ الحسناءَ مَنْ ليْسَ كُفْأها أشارَ عليهِ بالطَلاقِ مُشيرُها

[80] ʿImâd al-Iṣfahânî, *Kharîdat al-qaṣr, qism shuʿarâ' Miṣr* I, 193.

[81] Abû Shâma, *Rawḍatayn*[2] II, 8 (old edition *Rawḍatayn* I, 142) and in the *Kharîdat al-qaṣr, qism shuʿarâ' Miṣr* I, 193 note 3.

1 Already before his (Ṭalâ'iʿ's) accession there were wondrous signs [i.e. of Fatimid Egypt] which had become concealed; but he made them manifest again and so confirmed for them again their (Ideal Regent) Kafûr.
2 You [Ṭalâ'iʿ] have again transported the spirit into the body of the Vizierate although there had been no hope left for its resurgence and resurrection.
3 She [the Vizirate] remained for some time with another, all the time in menstruation. But now is the time for her menstruation to be purified.
4 It is right that the one who is entitled to her will be clothed in her and that the one who borrowed her will cast her off as a woman (*mardûda*).
5 When a beautiful woman (*al-ḥasnâ'*) is possessed by someone who is not suitable for her, then her counsellor (*mushîruhâ*) gives an indication that he should divorce her.

22

In the *Nuzhat al-muqlatayni* we find the historian Ibn al-Ṭuwayr making subtle references to the hypocritical attitude of ʿAbbâs the *Rabîb* when he went to the inauguration of the successor to the murdered al-Ẓâfir. We are told by several historians that this successor was a young child who was probably between two and five years old. His young age would make it easy for the *Rabîb* to reign as Vizier in the years to come, despite the various murders that he and his son had arranged in the meantime. In fact both the Vizier Ibn al-Salâr (died 548 H) and the Imâm al-Ẓâfir (died 549 H) had fallen victim to the *Rabîb*'s murderous son Naṣr with the full compliance of his father.

The circumstances surrounding the inauguration of the child Imâm al-Fâ'iz ʿIsâ ibn al-Ẓâfir were extremely shocking even for such an arch-intriguer as Usâma ibn Munqidh, who wrote a report about the event in his *Kitâb al-Iʿtibâr* (to be compared with *Rawḍatayn* I, 97-99, by Abû Shâma).

In Usâma's report we read the following:

"When Ibn al-Salâr had been killed by him [Naṣr] and when his father ʿAbbâs had become Vizier, Naṣr was accustomed to enjoying the companionship with the Caliph al-Ẓâfir and he became involved with him.[82]

"But ʿAbbâs had an abhorrence of this and was desolated (*mustawḥish*) with his son's involvement in this matter, because he knew about the inclinations of those people, and the intriguing by some people against other people in order to destroy them.

"Al-Ẓâfir began to incite the son of ʿAbbâs against his own father, and began to show friendship towards him by means of many presents. Thereupon he [Naṣr] began to have conversations with me [Usâma] about that. But I discouraged him.

"Thereupon his father was informed of the affair. Then his father persuaded him and was friendly towards him and decided to kill al-Ẓâfir together with him."

[82] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, p. 66: *wa-stamarra waladuhu ʿalâ mukhâlaṭati l-Ẓâfir bi-Amr Allâh fa-shtaghala l-Ẓâfir ʿan kulli aḥadin bi-bni ʿAbbâs.*

According to this account there is a *volte face*: it is not the Imâm al-Ẓâfir but the Vizier ʿAbbâs who takes the initiative to commit murder.

"They were both used to going out in disguise. They were of the same peer group; that is why they were the same age.

"Thereupon he (Naṣr) invited him to his residence (*dâr*). He placed his usual companions at the side of the house. When the party was at its height, they suddenly appeared before him and murdered him. That was at the end of *Muḥarram* 549 H.

"They threw him with his two servants into a pit (*jubb*) inside the residence. Over this pit–now filled with people–a marble tile of a suitable color was placed so that this nicely matched with the interior. So the bodies remained in the house of the *Rabîb*, to be discovered later.

"The next day ʿAbbâs came to the palace for the official audience. He sat down in the salon, waiting for the moment when al-Ẓâfir would hold his audience. But when the time for the audience had passed without anyone coming, ʿAbbâs summoned the majordomo (*zimâm al-qaṣr*) and said: 'Why is our master (*mawlânâ*) not holding the audience for the special greeting?'

"The Ustâdh hesitated with his answer. Thereupon ʿAbbâs shouted at him and said: 'What prevents you from answering me?'

"He said: 'Oh my Master, as to our Master, we do not know where he is.'

"'ʿAbbâs said: 'Would someone like our Master become lost? Go back and solve this matter.'

"Thereupon he went away; he returned later and said: 'We have not found our Master.'

"He [ʿAbbâs] said: 'Should people remain without a Caliph? Go inside to the brothers of our Master. Cause one of them to appear so that we may give him the inaugural oath.'[83]

"He went away; and he returned and said: 'The Masters [by which he meant the two brothers] say to you: 'We have nothing to do with the matter. Our father has kept him apart from us and positioned him in the topmost place. Thus the command should go to his child after his death.'

"He [ʿAbbâs] said: 'Let that child come outside so that we may give him the inaugural oath.'

"But ʿAbbâs had already killed al-Ẓâfir and had decided to say to his brothers: 'You have killed him' in order to put an end to them.

"Thereafter the child al-Fâ'iz came forward. Perhaps his age at that time was five years. The eunuch (*ustâdh*) carried him. Thereupon ʿAbbâs picked him up and also carried him. He [ʿAbbâs] was weeping all the time and the people wept with him.

"Then he accompanied him inside the salon of his father, still carrying him.

[83] This report is found with some variation also in Jamâl al-Dîn ʿAlî Ibn Ẓâfir, *Akhbâr al-duwal al-munqaṭiʿa*, edition André Ferré, Ifao du Caire, 1972, p. 106.

"Inside were the sons of al-Ḥâfiẓ [i.e. the uncles and the nephew who had been murdered already].

"Ibn Munqidh also said: 'Whilst we were in the Hall of Pillars and whilst there were more than one thousand Egyptians in the palace, we were not terrified by anyone except some people who came out of the salon in order to assemble in a group in the hall where we were.'

"And behold! the swords encountered a human being again and again. Thereupon I said to an Armenian servant (*ghulâm*) of mine: 'Go and see who is being killed there!'

"He went into the palace and returned, saying: 'Are they not then Muslims? This murdered man is our master (*mawlânâ)* Abu l-Amâna Jabrîl, the son of al-Ḥâfiẓ whom they have killed. Then there is yet another one whose belly is torn open. He is dragging himself along with his intestines.'

"After that, ʿAbbâs came outside, holding beneath his arm the head of the Amîr Yûsuf [the father of the future Imâm al-ʿÂḍid], whilst there was visible upon the head a wound from the blow of a sword from which blood bubbled with much noise.

"And Abu l-Baqâ' [Abû l-Tuqâ] the son of their brother (*ibn akhîhim*) was with his [ʿAbbâs'] son Naṣr. After that, they brought the two of them inside the storeroom (*khizâna*) within the palace. Then they killed the two, whilst in that storeroom there were one thousand drawn swords. He [Usâma ibn Munqidh] said: 'That day belonged to the worst of the days, which overwhelmed me because I saw so much of corruption and revolution that Allah, the Praised One, and all his creation would condemn it.'"[84]

23

Ibn al-Ṭuwayr expressively points to the call for revenge uttered by ʿAbbâs who, it should be remembered, was himself responsible for the murder of al-Ẓâfir. Regarding this situation, we see how Ibn al-Ṭuwayr makes use of it as he manages to insert a point in connection with a prayer to Allâh, which is fulfilled in a most unexpected manner.

"Al-Ẓâfir had a little son with the name ʿIsâ and his age was five years. They say that his age on that day was two years; and they say three years. The Vizier ʿAbbâs caused the majordomo (*zimâm al-qaṣr*) to come to him and said: 'Bring to me the child of our master,'

[84] Usâma ibn Munqidh, *Kitâb al-Iʿtibâr*, ed. Qâsim al-Sâmarrâ'î, Riyad 1987, p. 43-44; *Memoirs of an Arab-Syrian Gentleman or An Arab Knight in the Crusades, Memoirs of Usâma ibn Munqidh*, transl. Philip K. Hitti, (Princeton 1929) Beirut 1964, p. 45-47.
In Ibn al-Qalânisî, quoted by Abu l-Maḥâsin ibn Taghrî Bardî in *al-Nujûm al-zâhira* V, 291, however the matter is turned around completely. This historian (Ibn Q.) reports that two brothers and one nephew of al-Ẓâfir intended to kill, and indeed did so. But Ibn Taghrî Bardî *al-Nujûm* V, 292, quotes an ode by Chancellor Jalîs where the help of Ṭalâ'iʿ as the most influential leader of the Ruzzîk clan is invoked. According to Ibn Taghrî Bardî *al-Nujûm al-zâhira* V, 296-297, this is proof of the inaccuracy of Ibn al-Qalânisî.

"In the meantime he wept and showed sorrow. Then the eunuch came with the child of al-Ẓâfir, and subsequently ʿAbbâs took him from him, carried him upon his shoulder and kissed him, saying: 'May Allâh kill the murderer of your father!'

"The historian remarks pointedly: 'And his prayer was answered, both with regard to himself and to his own son, as we will relate if Allah the Most High wills it.'"[85]

24

After the Imâm al-Ẓâfir had been murdered and after his little son had been installed as Imâm by the Vizier ʿAbbâs and his clique of cronies, the people of the palace reacted by writing a letter requesting help from a governor in the south of Egypt.

Perhaps they had also called for help elsewhere. At any rate, they received a positive reaction from the governor just mentioned (Ṭalâ'iʿ). In fact it was the Chancellor al-Qâḍî al-Jalîs who had written the letters.[86]

There was a happy ending, however. The Chancellor was not the only one in the circles around the palace, both near and far, who was to express his joy at the successful outcome of the help granted by Ṭalâ'iʿ.

In this context there is another poet, al-Muhadhdhab, who must not remain unnoticed.[87] This poet, who is incidentally the same person who had earlier composed a laudatory poem in connection with the noble head of Ḥusayn when it arrived in al-Qâhira by boat from Ascalon, was a member of the direct circle around the palace. The incident with the head had occurred at a time when the Imâm al-Ẓâfir was still alive.

[85] Cf. Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha,* p. 69.

[86] See *supra*, under 20-20.1.

[87] See al-Ṣafadî, *al-Wâfî bi l-wafayât, Das biographische Lexikon des Salâḥaddîn Ḫalîl ibn Aibak aṣ-Ṣafadî* vol. 12, ed. Ramaḍân ʿAbd at-Tawwâb, Wiesbaden 1979, p. 131-138.
His full name as follows: Abū Muḥammad, al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlî ibn Ibrâhîm ibn al-Zubayr, the Qâḍî al-Muhadhdhab. He died in Egypt in the month of *Rabîʿ* II in the year 561 H. As a Chancellor and laudatory poet he occupied an influential position at the Vizieral court of Ṭalâ'iʿ ibn Ruzzîk. He may well have been involved in creating poems on behalf of this Vizier since he was his (Muhadhdhab's) *mamdūḥ*. These poems were subsequently included in the *Dîwân* of Ṭalâ'iʿ.
Later on, during the two Vizieral reigns of Shâwar and the intervening one of Ḍirghâm, al-Muhadhdhab had already fallen into disgrace together with his brother the Qâḍî al-Rashîd ibn al-Zubayr who was executed in 562 or 563 H. The Qâḍî arrived at the court of Vizier Ṭalâ'iʿ just after the murder of Imâm al-Ẓâfir and the succession to the throne of the child Imâm al-Fâ'iz. The Qâḍî started his career as a poet with the recitation of the following mournful verses:

١ ما للرياضِ تميل سكرا هلْ سُقّيت بالمُزْنِ خمرا
٢ أفكربَلاءُ بالعرا قِ وكربلاء بمصر أخْرى

"1 What then is amiss with the gardens, that they incline in a soporific glow? Have they then been drenched with wine because of the rainclouds?... and so on till the following line:
2 Does there exist one Karbalâ' in ʿIrâq and another one in Egypt?

At this the eyes (at Court) were streaming and the palace reverberated with weeping and lamentation. Gifts rained upon him (the poet) from every side, coming both from the Amîrs and from the preachers (*al-khuṭabâ'*). The Vizier caused a certain amount of money to be transported to his dwelling place."
Thus, according to al-Ṣafadî, *al-Wâfî bi l-wafayât*, vol.7, ed. Ihsan Abbas, Stuttgart 1992, p. 222; and Abû ʿAbd Allâh Yâqût ibn ʿAbd Allâh al-Rûmî al-Ḥamawî, *Muʿjam al-udabâ' aw Irshâd al-arîb ilâ maʿrifat al-adîb*, Beirut 1991, p. 517-526, No.124, *sub voce* Aḥmad ibn ʿAlî ibn Ibrâhîm ibn al-Zubayr al-Ghassânî.
In another manuscript we read the following:
"Gifts rained upon him from every side, coming both from the Amîrs and from the gentlewomen of the court (*al-ḥaẓâyâ*)."
Note the *ḥaẓâyâ* were specially favoured high-ranking women

Now al-Muhadhdhab ibn al-Zubayr has the chance to dedicate his later laudatory poem to someone who has risked his governorial position to help this dynasty of descendants from ʿAlî, who descend from Fâṭima in the same way as the noble head.

In his laudatory poem dedicated to the Pious One, Ṣâliḥ Ṭalâ'iʿ, al-Muhadhdhab inserts the name Ṣâliḥ not only in connection with this new Vizier, but also as an allusion to the Prophet Ṣâliḥ in the Koran, who arranged for a miracle to occur, when a camel came forth from a rock in order to convince the unbelievers. One must ask: was the Imâm like the Prophet Ṣâliḥ? Or was the Vizier like a camel? Unfortunately the questions must remain unanswered.

24.1

In the following poem in praise of Ṭalâ'iʿ ibn Ruzzîk, al-Muhadhdhab said:

(Poem to rhyme *malaku* composed by al-Muhadhdhab ibn al-Zubayr, as quoted by ʿImâd al-Dîn al-Iṣfahânî.[88] ʿImâd states that a certain *Sharîf* called Idrîs al-Ḥasanî had recited this fragment to him, informing him that it came originally from al-Muhadhdhab Ibn al-Zubayr himself, a poem in praise of Ibn Ruzzîk. Also in the *Kharîda*, we find ʿImâd commenting on the style of this poem.)

١ أَمَجلسٌ في محلِّ العِزِّ أمْ فَلَكُ هذا وهلْ مَلِكٌ في الدَّسْتِ أمْ مَلَكُ
٢ أغْنَى عِيانُ معانيهِ النواظرَ عنْ قولٍ يُلَفَّقُ في قومٍ ويؤْتَفَكُ
٣ يا واحدَ الدهرِ لا ردٌّ عليَّ إذا ما قلتُ ذلك في قولي ولا دَرَكُ
٤ ما كان بعدَ أميرِ المؤمنين فتىً فيه الشجاعةُ إلاّ أنتَ والنُّسُكُ
٥ فالفعلُ منه ومنك اليوم مُتّفِقٌ والنعتُ منه ومنك اليومَ مُشْتَرَكُ
٦ يُدْعَى بصالح أهل الدين كلِّهِمُ وأنت صالحُ مَنْ بالدين يَمْتَسِكُ
٧ لم ترضَ أسماءَ قومٍ أصبحوا رِمماً كأنَّ ألْقابَهُمْ من بعدهم تُرُكُ
٨ وافَى فأرْدَى رجالاً بعد ما نَعِموا دَهْراً وأحْيا رجالاً بعد ما هَلَكوا

who lived at court. They were of impeccable moral standing, and not at all like the courtesans who graced the palaces of Europe. They were preferred in the same way as ʿÂ'isha, the wife whom the Prophet favoured most.

The Zubayr clan had originally founded its power base in the city of Qûṣ in Upper Egypt, and that during the reign of the Fâṭimid Imâm al-Ḥâfiẓ (reigned 524-544 H). For more information on the Qâḍî Rashîd Aḥmad ibn al-Zubayr and the Qâḍî al-Muhadhdhab Ḥasan ibn al-Zubayr, see Jean-Claude Garcin, *Un centre musulman de la Haute Égypte médiévale: Qûṣ*, Ifao, 1976, p. 96, 105-106, 117-118, 152.

On later developments when the Dynasty of the Ruzzîk Viziers had disappeared and the Zubayr clan had fallen into disgrace, see P. Smoor, "'Umâra's Poetical Views of Shâwar, Ḍirghâm, Shîrkûh and Ṣalâḥ al-Dîn, as Viziers of the Fatimid Caliphs" in *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madelung*, eds. F. Daftary and J.W. Meri, London 2003, p. 411-433.

[88] Al-Kâtib al-ʿImâd al-Iṣfahânî, *Kharîdat al-qaṣr, qism shuʿarâ' Miṣr* I, 212-214.

ʿImâd says the following:

"The Sharîf Idrîs al-Ḥasanî recited in my presence a qaṣîda in praise of Ibn Ruzzîk, whilst he assured me that the poem was originally written by al-Muhadhdhab Ibn al-Zubayr. Its opening line is as follows:

1 Is this a Salon in the place of Glory or is it a sphere of heaven? Is it a king on the dais of the throne, or is it an angel?

Note the rhetorical question at the onset of this poem and compare this device with the start of some of the poems by ʿUmâra [see "ʿUmara's Elegies and the Lamp of Loyalty", *AnIsl* 34 (2000) pp. 468-469].

The literary historian al-ʿImâd al-Kâtib said: "the following fragment belongs to this poem."

2 Seeing the features of him (the Praised One) with one's own eyes makes it superfluous for the onlookers to utter out loud that which has been made both beautiful and deceptive concerning a certain clan.

3 Oh Unique One of the *Dahr*! There is no contradiction of me and no correction when I utter my statement.

4 After the Amîr al-Mu'minîn's death there has been no hero (*fatâ)* in whom there was courage and piety, except in you.

5 For the effect from him (the Imâm) and you today is harmonious; and the honorific title (*naʿt*) of him and you today is a shared possession.

6 He is called Ṣâliḥ, the prophet of the people of the religion, but you are Ṣâliḥ the Vizier of those who are taking hold of religion.

7 You were not content with the names of a clan of people who have become desiccated bones, as though their honorifics (*alqâb*) had become inheritance portions (*turuk)* in their wake.

8 He was generous to some people; afterwards when they had been comfortable for some time (*dahran*), he destroyed them; he brought others to life again after they had perished.

Turuk singular *tarîka,* frequently means "inheritance portion" but the word has a second meaning: "ostrich eggshell" which is almost certainly implied here.

Referring to line 7, al-ʿImâd says: "The *tawriya* (double entendre) in this line is obvious."[89]

However according to the present author, line 8 provides an explanation of the figure of style applied in line 7, which could better be defined as the *istikhdâm*, compare what Ibn Abi l-Iṣbaʿ says when defining the difference between the style figures of *tawriya* and *istikhdâm*: *tawriya* depends on "the use of one of the meanings and the neglect of the other" while *istikhdâm* depends on "the use of two meanings together".[90]

[89] See al-ʿImâd, *Kharîdat al-qaṣr, qism shuʿarâ' Miṣr* I, p. 213, note 4.

[90] See the discussion of both style figures by Ibn Abi l-Iṣbaʿ in his books *Taḥrîr al-taḥbîr* and *Badîʿ al-Qur'ân* as described by S.A. Bonebakker in *Some Early Definitions of the Tawriya and Ṣafadî's Faḍḍ al-Xitâm ʿan at-Tawriya wa 'l-Istixdâm,* The Hague-Paris 1966, p. 51.

Using the latter definition, the ambiguity in line 7 can be explained by taking the line in conjunction with line 8. In other words, *turuk* singular *tarîka*, with the meaning 'inheritance portion' or 'a woman who has been left behind as a widow after her husband had died, as though she were part of the inheritance' in line 7 links with the idea of death implicit in "he destroyed them" in line 8; and *turuk* with the meaning 'ostrich eggshells' in line 7 links with the idea of resurrection implied by the words "he brought others to life again" in line 8. [Provided of course that we remind ourselves of the custom of burying the dead with broken eggshells inscribed with sacred writings, see Dionisius Agius, "Ostrich eggs in a burial site: Quṣeir al-Qadîm in the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods" This article is to be found in the *OLA* volume *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras* IV, edited by U. Vermeulen and J. van Steenbergen, Leuven, presumably in 2003.]

The commentary on the above line 8 by ʿImâd al-Kâtib in the *Kharîdat Miṣr* reads as follows:

"There is in this line neither praise nor reprimand; and the line has no part in praise nor in the giving of more details. For 'just as he shows generosity through the act of giving life, so too does he show anger by destroying it.' For by the destruction of the latter he has paid a ransom for the lives of the former. Suppose he had said: 'He destroyed despicable people after they had lived in a comfortable way,' then he would have satisfied the requirements of Art with a suitable creation. Then he would have offered the fruits of poetry upon the platter of the style figure of antithesis (*taṭbîq)*."

In the same poem we hear al-Muhadhdhab praising the timely support from the remote region in southern Egypt, where Ṭalâ'iʿ used to reside as Governor,

٩ طلعْتَ والبدرَ نصف الشهر في قَرَنٍ فَأشْرقتْ بكما أرَضُونَ والفَلَكُ
١٠ وأسفَرَ الجوُّ حتى ظَنَّ مُبْصِرُهُ بأنَّ لَمْعَ السنا في أفْقِهِ ضَحِكُ
١١ يقودُ كلَّ مُجِنٍّ ضِغْنَ ذي تِرَةٍ يكادُ من حَرِّهِ الماذيُّ يَنْسَبِكُ
١٢ حتى أعادَ مجدُ السيفِ مُلْكَ بني الزهـ ـراءِ واستُرْجِعَ الحقُّ الذي تَرَكوا
١٣ فلو يكونُ لهم أمثالُهُ عَضُداً فيما مضى ما غدتْ مغْصوبةً فَدَكُ

9 You appeared with the full moon in the middle of the month, together in one yoke. Thereafter, all the lands of the world and the heavenly sphere were illuminated by the pair of you.

10 The air let a veil fall away, so whoever saw it surmised that the flashing of the lightning was a laugh on the far horizon.

11 To each person full of the hidden anger of revenge, he gave direction; through his heat honey almost melted.

12 The Glory of the sword brought back the Kingship of the sons of the Shining Lady (*Banû l-Zahrâ'* i.e. the Fâṭimids); moreover the rights due to them which they had already surrendered were exacted for them again [the *Shîʿa* are called *ahl al-ḥaqq*, meaning 'people of the rights due to them'.]

13 If in the past his mirror images had been a support to them, then Fadak would never have been taken by force.

At this point in the text ʿImâd al-Kâtib gives a comment in *Kharîdat Miṣr*: "In this prettily-composed wording he has said something utterly pointless; he has neglected the secret of the *sharîʿa* in connection with Fadak; and he has given precedence in honour to the *mamdûḥ* (the Praised One) over the *salaf* (the Pious Forefathers). The hyperbole has brought him into error."

The editor also says: "he (ʿImâd) refers to what has occurred as a result of the opinion of Abû Bakr and ʿUmar, that Fâṭima should not inherit Fadak because the Prophet had already given up his, and her, right to it, since he had said 'we, the group of the prophets, do not cause to be inherited that which we have already given as alms (*ṣadaqa*).'"[91]

In other words, the oasis had been given as alms and was not a possession of the Prophet to be given away as an inheritance.

"But the *Shîʿa* were of the opinion that Abû Bakr and ʿUmar had been wrong, and that there was nevertheless an obligation upon them to hand it over to Fâṭima."

25

From a totally different corner of the Arab World, namely Mesopotamia and Syria, we are informed again by means of fragments of poetry about these particularly sorrowful occurrences. These fragments are moreover full of praise for Ṭalâ'iʿ who is seen as al-Malik al-Ṣâliḥ (the Pious King).

٨ وزائرةٍ بعدَ الهدوِّ وبَيْنَنا مَهامِهُ تُنْضِي ركْبَها وسمالِقُ
٩ تَعَجَّبُ من شَيبٍ رأتْ بمَفارِقي وهل عَجَبٌ من أن تَشيب المَفارقُ
١٠ وقالتْ وفَرْطُ الضَّمِّ قد هَدَّ مِرْطَها ولُزَّتْ ثُدِيٌّ تحتَها ومَخانق
١١ أتُسليك عنّا كاذِباتٌ من المُنَى وما خِلْتُ تُسليك الأماني الصوادقُ
١٢ متى نلتقي في غير نومٍ ويشتكي مَشُوقٌ ويُشْكى من جوى البَيْنِ الشائقُ
١٣ ثِقي بإيابي عن قريبٍ فئنّني بجُود ابنِ رُزِّيكٍ على القُرْبِ واثقُ
١٤ هو البحرُ فيه دُرُّه وعُبابُهُ وصوبُ الحَيا فيه النَّدى والصَّواعقُ
١٥ أَخُو الحربِ ربُّ المكرمات أبو النَّدى حَليفُ العُلى صَبٌّ إلى العُرْف تائقُ
١٦ يُنالُ الحَيا من بحره وهو نازِحٌ ويدْنُو الجَنى من فَرْعِهِ وهو باسقُ

8 After the calmness had returned, a lady came to visit though between us there were deserts and dry plains which emaciated the riders.

[91] The comment of the editor, see note 1, *Kharîdat al-qaṣr, qism shuʿarâ' Miṣr* I, 214.

9 She was amazed by the greyness which she saw on the top of my head; is there then amazement because of someone whose head has grown grey?
10 While the strength of the embrace had crushed her silken gown and under it her breasts were sticking to her necklaces, she said:
11 'Do deceitful wishes make you inattentive towards us? I thought that even honest wishes would not distract you.'
12 When shall we meet each other outside of sleep? And will there be a complaint about someone for whom people long, while the one who longs is pitied because of the pain of parting?
13 Trust that I will return within a short time, for I trust that Ibn Ruzzîk will be bountiful within a short time.
14 He is the sea in which there are pearls and waves of benefaction; there are also flashes of lightning.
15 He is a brother of War, Lord of noble deeds, father of benificent dew, ally of elevation, and a friend who is desirous of propriety (*al-ʿurf*).
16 Though he himself is far away, the rain showers are acquired from his sea. Though he is very tall, they approach the fruit of his branch.[92]

Another fragment also describes the unjust deeds which ʿAbbâs perpetrated against the people of the Palace:

١٧ ولّما رأى عَبّاسُ للغدْرِ مَذْهَباً وأظهر ما قد كان عنه ينافقُ
١٨ وأنْفق من إنعامهم في هلاكهم جزاءً به عَمْري خَليقٌ ولائق
١٩ ومدَّ يداً هُمْ طوَّلوها إليهمُ وحَلَّتْ بأهل القصر منه البوائقُ
٢٠ دَعَوكَ فلبَّيتَ الدُعاءَ مُسارِعا وفرَّجتَ عنهم كَرْبَهُمْ وهو خانِقُ
٢١ وجاوَبْتَهم عن كُتْبهم بكتائبٍ تمرُّ بها مرَّ السحابِ السوابِق
٢٢ وفرَّ رجاءً أن يفوتَ شَبا الظُّبَى فعاجَلَهُ حَيْنٌ إليهنّ سائق
٢٣ وقدَّرَ أنْ قد خلَّفَ الحتفَ خَلْفَه وقُدّامَهُ الحتفُ المُوافي الموافق
٢٤ سقَى ربَّه كأسَ المنايا وما انْقضَى له الشهرُ إلاّ وهو للكأس ذائق

[92] From a poem to rhyme *tufâriqu*, composed by the teacher and *faqîh* Abu l-Faraj ʿAbd Allâh ibn Asʿad ibn ʿAlî ibn ʿIsâ ibn Dahhân al-Mawṣilî first, al-Ḥimṣî later. He came originally from the region of Mawṣil, but due to some problems he had to move towards another town, namely Ḥimṣ, where he earned his living as a teacher. Thereupon he travelled to Egypt in order there to compose poems of praise for both Nûr al-Dîn and Ṣalâḥ al-Dîn. See al-ʿImâd al-Iṣfahânî al-Kâtib, *Kharîdat al-qaṣr wa-jarîdat al-ʿaṣr qism shuʿarâʾ al-Shâm*, ed. Shukrî Fayṣal, Damascus 1959, vol. II, 293-294; and *Dîwân ibn al-Dahhân al-Mawṣilî Abu l-Faraj Muhadhdhab al-Dîn ʿAbd Allâh ibn Asʿad al-Mawṣilî al-Shâfiʿî al-Ḥimṣî* (died 581 H), ed. ʿAbd Allâh al-Jabbûrî, Baghdad 1968, p. 226-229.

17 When ʿAbbâs saw a way to treachery and showed what he had concealed through hypocrisy
18 and when he, having abandoned benificence, expended money in order to destroy them, he himself was–by my life!–more suitable and more apt as compensation
19 And when he stretched out against them the hand which they had made long and powerful so that injustices descended upon the palace through his deeds
20 then they invoked you, whereupon you quickly answered that prayer. For them you brought salvation from their suffering when it was almost choking (them).
21 You reacted to their letters by army groups, of which the fastest hurried forward like racing clouds.
22 He [the Rabîb with his son] took flight in the hope that he would escape from the sharp edges of the swords; but a moment of death commanding the swords caught up with him.
23 He assumed that he had left death as a legacy behind him, but in front of him was death, fulfilling and suitable.
24 He let his master (al-Ẓâfir) drink from the beaker of death's destinies–but scarcely had a month passed him by than he tasted also from the same beaker.

26

We also possess a poem by someone from Aleppo, the then capital of northern Syria, from which a certain Qâḍî Thiqat al-Mulk Abû ʿAlî al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlî ibn ʿAbd Allâh Ibn Abî Jarâda travelled to Egypt to pursue his career.

But before turning to this poem itself, it is important to remember that Ibn Abî Jarâda alludes to an older work by an earlier poet, ʿAmr ibn Maʿdîkarib al-Zubaydî. In the earlier poem to rhyme *al-qiyâdi* (which is also called the "primary" poem)[93], ʿAmr refers to an example of a one-sided feeling of serious animosity between an uncle and his nephew.

The later writer of the secondary poem, Ibn Abî Jarâda also makes use of this theme as he describes a situation involving serious conflict. The only way he can justify the fact that the position of one vizier is above that of another vizier is to ascribe it to a conflict between Ṭalâ'iʿ and ʿAbbâs al-Ṣanhâjî and their subsequent fight to the death. The question was: who would deal the first blow?

In the eleventh line of the primary poem according to the *ʿIqd al-farîd*, we read:

أريـــدُ حـــيَـــاتـــهُ ويُـــريـــدُ قـــتْـــلِـــي عَـــذِيـــرَكَ مِـــن خـــلـــيـــلـــك مِـــن مُـــرَادِ

[93] See M.M. Badawi, "From primary to secondary *qaṣîda*-s Thoughts on the Development of Classical Arabic Poetry" in *Journal of Arabic Literature* XI (Leiden 1980), p. 1-31.

11 I want him to stay alive, while he desires my death; who is pleading to your companion of [the tribe] Murâd on your behalf?

[i.e. the poet is ʿAmr ibn Maʿdîkarib al-Zubaydî, an uncle of Qays ibn Makshûḥ al-Murâdî, and is almost certainly describing his own situation.][94]

There is another version of ʿAmr's (primary) poem, however it is addressed to another personage, namely Ubayy al-Murâdî. The fifth line according to the *Kitâb al-Aghânî*, reads differently as follows.

أريـــدُ حِـــبـــاءَهُ ويُـــريـــدُ قـــتْـــلِـــي عَـــذِيـــرَكَ مِـــن خـــلـــيـــلـــك مِـــن مُـــرَادِ

5 I want to offer him a gift, while he desires my death; …[95]

Line 5 was said to have been recited recited by ʿAlî ibn Abî Ṭâlib when he was standing face to face with his "companion" Abd al-Raḥmân ibn Muljam (by whom he was later to be killed). On this occasion Ibn Muljam had arrived in order to render his oath of loyalty to ʿAlî and ʿAlî was supposed to give him a present in return. However, ʿAlî foreseeing his own death by the sword of Ibn Muljam, intended ʿAmr ibn Maʿdîkarib's line to be understood as a proverb and thus ʿAlî gave evidence of his possession of prognostic knowledge:

I want to offer him a gift, while he desires my death; who is pleading to your companion of Murâd on your behalf?

[Incidentally according to the *Maqâtil al-Ṭâlibiyyîn*, Ibn Muljam also originated from the tribe of Murâd.]

After his quotation of ʿAmr's line, ʿAlî is said to have alluded to a Koranic text, Sura 91 verses 11-15:

"Thamûd counted (it) false in their presumption;
When their most miserable one (*ashqâhâ*) was sent,
And the messenger of Allah said to them: "The she-camel of Allah, and her drink!"
But they counted it false, and hamstrung her; so their Lord overwhelmed them for their sin and made it even,
Not fearing the consequence of it."[96]

[94] For the primary poem, the text is based on Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih al-Andalusî, *al-ʿIqd al-farîd*, edition Aḥmad Amîn, Aḥmad al-Zayn and Ibrâhîm al-Abyârî, Cairo 1965, vol. I, 120-121. For the secondary poems, see for example Abû ʿAlî Ismâʿîl ibn al-Qâsim al-Qâlî al-Baghdâdî, *Kitâb al-Amâlî* I, 14 (Cairo 1925, reprint Beyrut no date) and Abû ʿUbayd al-Bakrî, *Kitâb al-Tanbîh ʿalâ awhâm Abî ʿAlî fî amâlîhi*, p. 23-24; and *al-Iṣâba fî tamyîz al-ṣaḥâba*, *sub voce* "ʿAmr" and "Qays". Here is an allusion to a line by ʿAmr ibn Maʿdîkarib al-Zubaydî, the Companion of the Prophet, which describes his *ibn ukht*, a certain Qays ibn Makshûḥ al-Murâdî. They were deadly enemies, although they belonged to the same tribal conglomerate Madhḥij. For ʿAmr and Qays, see also W.M. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, Oxford 1956, p. 119-120 and 130.

[95] This second version of ʿAmr's (primary) poem is based on Abû l-Faraj al-Iṣfahânî, *Kitâb al-Aghânî* (14, 34) second printing 15, 226-227.

[96] According to the translation by Richard Bell, *The Qur'an Translated, with a Critical Rearrangement of the Surahs*, Edinburgh (1937) 1960.

[This concerns Qudâr's killing of the she-camel and her young who had appeared so miraculously from a rock, at the time of the prophet Ṣâliḥ.]

In addition to this, ʿAlî would have predicted his own death when being confronted by Ibn Muljam, referring at the same time to the killing of the she-camel in the following words:

"What is holding back their most miserable one (*ashqâhâ*)? By Him Who preserves my soul in His hand, this (she-camel) will certainly be slaughtered by this one." [I.e. Ibn Muljam.][97]

26.1

In the secondary poem by Ibn Abî Jarâda there is the following reference to the person who will be the first to kill, when the poem begins enigmatically with the rhetorical question: "Who will be my guardian on the day that I visit a certain Murâdî?"

١ مَنْ عذيري مِنْ خليلي من مُراد مَنْ خفيري يومَ أرتادُ مُرادي
٢ حاملَ الأعْباء عن أهلِ العَبا آخذٌ بالثأْر مِن باغٍ وعادِ
٣ من عُصاةٍ أضمروا الغدر فهمْ أهل نَصْبٍ ونِفاقٍ وعِنادِ
٤ قتلوا الظافر ظُلْماً وانتحَوْا لبني الحافظ بالبيضِ الحِدادِ
٥ واعْتدى عبّاس فيهم وابْنُهُ فوق عُدْوان يزيدٍ وزِياد
٦ مثل سَفْرٍ قتلوا هاديَهُمْ ثم ضَلُّوا ما لَهُمْ من بعد هادِ
٧ جاءهم في مِثلِ ريحٍ صرصر فتولَّوْا مثلَ رَجْلٍ من جَراد
٨ بعد ما غرَّهُمُ إملاؤه ولهيبُ الجَمْرِ من تحت الرِمادِ
٩ وتظنَّوْا أن سترتاعُ بهم هل تُراعُ الأُسد يوماً بالنِقادِ

1 Who is pleading to my companion of Murâd on my behalf? Who then, will be my guardian on the day that I visit somebody of Murâd?
2 Oh you who lift up the loads which burden the People of the Mantle (*ahl al-ʿabâ*), and who take revenge upon the rebel and the fiend.
3 They are disobedient people harbouring treachery; they are a people of sickness, stubbornness and hypocrisy.
4 They have killed al-Ẓâfir unjustly; they have set themselves against the sons of al-Ḥâfiẓ with their sharp white swords.

[97] See Abû l-Faraj al-Iṣfahânî, *Kitâb al-Aghânî* 15, 228-229; for all the reference, see *Shiʿr ʿAmr ibn Maʿdîkarib al-Zubaydî*, collected and edited by Muṭâʿ al-Ṭarâbîshî, Damascus 1974, p. 88-96, where the two versions of ʿAmr ibn Maʿdîkarib's poem to rhyme *al-qiyâdi* can be found. Concerning Ibn Muljam's descendance from the Murâd tribe, see Abû l-Faraj al-Iṣfahânî, *Maqâtil al-Ṭâlibiyyîn*, edition al-Sayyid Aḥmad Ṣaqr, Beyrut no date, p. 31-32.

[The Imâm previous to al-Ẓâfir was his father ʿAbd al-Majîd al-Ḥâfiẓ]
5 ʿAbbâs went as an enemy against them with his son, more fiendish than the fiends Yazîd and Ziyâd.
6 Like travellers whose guide has been killed and who later wander lost and leaderless,
7 whom he (Ṭalâ'iʿ) approached like a huge howling gust of wind and they fled from him like swarming locusts.
8 His tolerance led them astray; but glowing coals flamed forth from under the ashes, and afterwards
9 they supposed that you would fear them; but is there ever a day when lions are afraid of weakling sheep?[98]

At the centre of the group who organised the terrible murder in al-Qâhira were ʿAbbâs and his son Naṣr. Their actions did not go unnoticed in the wider Arab World; and indeed echoes of their deeds were to be heard as far away as Syria, as we saw earlier. Their victim, the Imâm al-Ẓâfir, was much mourned, as we shall soon learn.

27

In the poetry of the diplomat and poet ʿUmâra, we find allusions to the *Rabîb* ʿAbbâs. As ʿUmâra did not reach the courts of the Imâms and of the Viziers until after the death of the Imâm al-Ẓâfir, it is remarkable that he uses the name Ẓâfir as the name of the personage to whom his poem to rhyme *jimâli*[99] is addressed. But the cohesion of the Arabic text leads us to surmise that ʿUmâra intended to refer only to the meaning of the name Ẓâfir (the Victorious One) and not to the Imâm himself. If this is so, he may well have intended the name to refer to the Vizier Ṭalâ'iʿ.

At the same time ʿUmâra does allude to the circumstances connected to the murdered Imâm in this poem to rhyme *jimâli*. In it we find a description of the removal of the *Rabîb* and his murdering son from their government functions in al-Qâhira.

The use of the name al-Ẓâfir to refer to a person other than the Imâm is in itself not particularly strange. An allusion of the same type appears to occur in the first line of the poem. In this case the name of an important Vizier from days gone by (Badr al-Jamâlî)

[98] This particular secondary poem to rhyme *murâdî* is quoted by al-ʿImâd al-Iṣfahânî, who (in 571 H) had heard it recited to him by the *Sharîf* Idrîs ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlî ibn Yaḥyâ al-Ḥasanî al-Idrîsî al-Miṣrî. This poem had been composed by the Qâḍî Thiqat al-Mulk Abû ʿAlî al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlî ibn ʿAbd Allah Ibn Abî Jarâda who died in the month of *Jumâdâ* First, year 551 H in Egypt. In this poem there is praise for al-Ṣâliḥ ibn Ruzzîk and a description of all he did to support the people of the Palace. See al-ʿImâd al-Iṣfahânî, *Kharîdat al-qaṣr, qism shuʿarâ' al-Shâm* II, Damascus 1959, 197-200.

[99] The edition Derenbourg, *Nukat-Diwan* [= Hartwig Derenbourg, *ʿOumâra du Yémen sa vie et son œuvre*, vol. I (Autobiographie et récits sur les vizirs d'Égypte. Choix de poésies: *fihi al-Nukat al-ʿaṣriyya fî akhbâri l-wuzarâ'i l-Miṣriyya* Paris 1897)] does not contain the poem to rhyme *jimâli*. Ms. D, on which this edition is largely based, does not contain this poem either. However, the poem does appear in Ms. Rabat, p. 171-173! The poem to rhyme *ḥanînu jimâli* consists of 52 lines. The following lines of prose form an introduction, Ms. Rabat: "In honour of al-Ẓâfir and his Vizier al-Ṣâliḥ, he also said the following:..." See also *AnIsl* 35 (2001), p. 617-619.

could be intended in line 1, whilst in line 23 it seems that the name Ẓâfir is casually dropped as ʿUmâra speaks about the punishment of the dastardly ʿAbbâs and his even more dastardly son Naṣr.

وقال أيضاً يمْدحُ الظافر ووزيرَهُ الصالحَ

١ أسماءُ قَدْرٍ أمْ سماءُ جلال وضياء بدرٍ أم حنينُ جمال

٢ ومَقَرُّ مُلكٍ أمْ قَرارةُ رحمةٍ سُقيَ الوحْيُ منها بِنوء شَوّالِ

Translation of the poem to rhyme *jimâli*

Ms. Rabat: In honour of al-Ẓâfir and his Vizier al-Ṣâliḥ, he also said the following:

1 Is it a heaven determined by fate or a heaven of majesty? And the glow of a full moon or the desires of camels? (... *wa-ḍiyâ'u badrin am ḥanînu jimâli)*

2 Is it the establishment of a kingdom or the foundation of Compassion, from which the Revelation was watered by rain clouds from *Shawwâl*?

(. . .)

٢٣ للظّافرِ الشَرَفُ الذي لمْ يفْتخرْ بِنَظيرِهِ أهلُ الزمانِ الخالي

٢٤ الصالحِ الملكِ الذي عضدَ الهدى بِتحَمُّلِ الأعباءِ والأثْقال

٢٥ قامتْ عيونُ الخَلْقِ ملْؤ جفونِها مُذْ باتَ يكْلَؤها ونِعْمَ الكالي

٢٦ زَحَفَتْ سحابُ ثوابٍ وعِقابٍ بسَحائبِ الأرْزاقِ والآجال

٢٧ وأغاثَ دولةَ آلِ أحمدَ بَعْدَما اضْطربَتْ وآذَنَ ظِلُّها بزوال

٢٨ لولا طُلوعُ طلايعِ ودفاعُهُ بِجِلادِ أعدائكمْ وجدال

٢٩ لم يَبْقَ في أعْمالِ مِصْرَ كلِّها أحَدٌ لأبناءِ النبيِّ مُوالِي

٣٠ للّهِ عزمتُهُ التي لم تَثْنِها خوفُ الرَّدى وَمَشورةُ العُذّالِ

٣١ نَصْرُ الأئمَّةِ غيرُ مُنقَلبٍ إلى عَدَمِ النصْرِ وكَثْرةِ الخُذّال

٣٢ مُسْتَنْصِحاً صِدْقَ النُفُوسِ حتّى آلَتْ بِعبّاسٍ لِشَرٍّ مَئالِ

٣٣ ضاقتْ عليه بِها مذاهبُ رايِهِ والحوْلُ يُظلُّ حشيلَةَ الخِتالِ

٣٤ تركْتَهُ مِنْ بعْدِ الكرامةِ وابْنَهُ وهما حَليفا ذِلَّةٍ ونَكالِ

٣٥ جادتْهُما منْهُ سحائبُ نِقْمَةٍ مُحَمَّرةٍ تَهمِي بِوَيْلٍ وَبَال

23 The Victorious One [*al-Ẓâfir*] has so much honour that no other person from a bygone age could boast of such honour.

24 He is the Pious One of the Monarchy (*al-ṣâliḥ al-mulki*) who supports the Just Leadership by bearing both burdens and heavy things.

25 The eyes of the people have been plunged into deep sleep since he started guarding them by night; and how pleasant is this Guardian!
26 The clouds of reward and punishment carry with them clouds of sustenance and preordained death.
27 He helped the Dynasty of the clan of Aḥmad, after it had been brought into confusion, and after its shadow had acknowledged that it would soon end.
28 If the emergence (*ṭulûʿ*) of Ṭalâ'iʿ had not taken place, and if he had not defended You by fighting and disputing with your enemies,
29 then there would not have been one person left in all the districts of Egypt who would have remained loyal to the sons of the Prophet.
30 What marvelous powers of decision he has, neither bowed down by fear of ruin, nor by the council meeting of censors!
31 The Victory of the Imâms does not change into a Defeat or a multitude of deserting people.
32 Thus he sought advice from the truthfulness of the souls, until they had brought ʿAbbâs to the most terrible of ends.
33 Because of the souls, the directions of his banners were narrow, while the sly-eyed people continually practised the deceit of the stealthy hunter.

As concerns the expression of *al-ḥûlu*, the sly-eyed: this is assuredly a reference to the Crusaders.

34 After they had been elevated, since they both became allies of low behaviour and underwent exemplary punishment and You abandoned him and his son
35 His (scil., the Vizier's) clouds of Red Revenge throw themselves against the pair of them, filled with Woe and Disaster.

28

Although the Imâmate remained undamaged after the elimination of ʿAbbâs and his blood-thirsty son, the precarious health of the little child al-Fâ'iz who had now been promoted to Imâm gave cause for concern. By the time he was installed as Imâm, al-Fâ'iz had already seen a considerable number of disasters with his own eyes. In the hall where the actual installation took place he had seen the bodies of his two uncles; and not far away in the Vizieral palace, although unknown to him, his father's remains had been thrown down a shaft by the wicked pair ʿAbbâs and Naṣr.

At the installation itself, the thousand people present showed their support of him by uttering a great shout, crying: "We hear and obey!" According to historians the little Imâm collapsed when he heard them; and the fright which seized him had far-reaching consequences, for he was seen to weep and cry for the rest of his short life. He is also said to have urinated in fright when carried upon the shoulders of the traitrous Vizier ʿAbbâs, but this story may have been inspired by an example from the history of the Prophet's family: tradition has it that, as a child, Ḥasan also urinated upon the lap of (his grandfather

Abu l-Qâsim) Mohammed. This coincidence would have made a great impression upon the mind of a well-brought-up believer[100]. The child also appears to have suffered from regular epileptic attacks.

The historian Ibn al-Ṭuwayr describes the incident as follows:

"They say that he urinated upon the shoulder of the Vizier, ʿAbbâs. The crowd saw the fluid from him flowing over the chest of ʿAbbâs. Al-Fâ'iz was so much unsettled by that shout that he encountered regular attacks of epilepsy, thus becoming confused.

"After that, Vizier ʿAbbâs gave ʿIsâ ibn al-Ẓâfir the honorific title 'The Conqueror through the Support of Allah' and appointed a guardian for him, someone who was in awe of him (ʿAbbâs). And he gave him (the child) to the Zimâm al-Qaṣr and caused him to be transferred to his mother or, as some say, his grandmother."[101]

The affairs of the State and the Dynasty greatly improved with the arrival of Ṭalâ'iʿ who received the honorific title al-Malik al-Ṣâliḥ (the Pious King) from the Imâm al-Fâ'iz –or rather, from the Imâm's aunt who acted as Regent for her young nephew.

A period of stability now seemed to have dawned. However in 555 H an important change occurred: the child Imâm, who had always been in a state of precarious health, now died and his successor, al-ʿÂḍid, came to the throne.

Al-ʿÂḍid was to reign for a period of more than ten years and at first all appeared to be going smoothly. However the Vizier Ṭalâ'iʿ was unable to enhance the solidity of the reign of the Ruzzîk Dynasty which he himself had started. Indeed, he died, the victim of a murderous plot, shortly after the installation of al-ʿÂḍid.

It should be noted that the *Rabîb* and his son had died some years earlier in 550 H. The *Rabîb* himself had died when Ṭalâ'iʿ took office: fleeing from Cairo he became involved in a fight with Frankish Crusaders on the way to Syria. His son Naṣr had been taken captive by the Franks and transferred to al-Qâhira in exchange for money, as part of a deal arranged by the Imâm's aunt, and he had been tortured to death by this same woman.

[100] As to the earlier incident, we are enlightened by Henri Lammens, whom we will quote here:
"Peu après la naissance de Ḥasan, Omm al-Faḍl – on ignore comment elle se trouvait à Médine – l'avait apporté au Prophète. Placé sur ses genoux, le bébé, avec l'inconscience propre à cet âge, s'oublia. L'épouse de ʿAbbâs se précipitant lui donna des coups entre les deux épaules. "Doucement, cria le grand-père, ne va pas causer de mal à mon fils." Dans ces circonstances, il se contentait de réparer l'incident avec quelques gouttes d'eau et redemandait ses enfants. Scène attendrissante! Jusque dans les détails les plus intimes, Abou'l Qâsim demeurait pour la postérité "le beau modèle, *uswa ḥasana*". De l'air le plus convaincu, la Tradition continue à lui prêter la pleine conscience de ce rôle et l'amène à poser comme devant un objectif. (On lui fait choisir les pratiques les plus faciles; il craint incessamment de «créer une *sonna*»)." See for further reference, H. Lammens, *Fāṭima et les filles de Mahomet, notes critiques pour l'étude de la Sīra,* Rome 1912, p. 96.

[101] Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha,* p. 67ff.

29

Even though he had also taken flight to Syria with his co-conspirators ʿAbbâs and Naṣr, the arch-intriguer Usâma ibn al-Munqidh had remained on very friendly terms with the Vizier Ṭalâ'iʿ.

For instance, we find a poem composed by the new Vizier al-Malik al-Ṣâliḥ Ṭalâ'iʿ quoted in Usâma's collected works. In this poem, which is in fact a letter written in verse, Ṭalâ'iʿ states that he regrets Usâma's departure from Egypt. It seems as if Ṭalâ'iʿ longs for the companionship of Usâma whom he appears to consider as an old friend who will now remain for ever out of reach in far-off Shayzar (the home town of the Usâma clan) in Northern Syria. Ṭalâ'iʿ's poem is as follows:

٥ أخـلاّيـي لـو رُمْـتـم دنُـوّاً لمـا أبـى سُـرَى الـعِـيـسِ بَـلْ ركـضُ المطـهَّـمـةِ الـقُـبِّ
٦ ولـكـنـكـم بِـعْـتُـم وفـاءً بِـغَـدرَةٍ غَـداةَ اشـتـريـتُـم وَحْـشـةَ الـبُـعْـد بـالـقُـرْبِ
٧ عـلـيـكـم سـلامُ الـلـه إنَّ بِـعـادكُـم لأعْـظَـمُ مـا قـد كـان مـن ذَلِـكَ الخَـطـبِ
٨ ولـو أنّـنـا كُـنّـا ظَـنـنّـاهُ لـم نـكُـنْ نُـظـاهِـرُ دُونَ الـنـاسِ عـبّـاسَ بـالحَـربِ
٩ عـلـى أنّـهُ قـد نـالَ بـالـغـدْرِ مـن بـنـي نَـبِـيِّ الـهُـدَى مـا لـم يَـنَـلـه بـنـو حـربِ
١٠ وهـل نـالَ مـنـهـم آلُ حـربٍ وغـيـرُهـم مـن الـنّـاسِ فـوقَ الـقَـتـلِ والـسَّـبـيِ والـنَـهـبِ
١١ غـدا والِـغـاً كـالـكـلـبِ ظُـلـمـاً وحـزبُـهُ دمـاءَهُـمُ لا حـاطَـهُ الـلـهُ مـن حِـزْبِ
١٢ ويـا لـيـتَـهُ لـو كـان فـيـه مـن الـوفـا لِـمـالِـكـه بـعـضُ الـذي هـو فـي الـكَـلـبِ
١٣ وحـاشـاكُـم مـا خُـنْـتُـم الـعـهـدَ مَـثـلَـه ولا لـكُـمُ فـيـمـا جَـرى مـنـه مـن ذَنـبِ
١٤ ومـن مـثـل مـا قَـد نـالـكـمْ مـن دُنُـوِّهِ يُـحـاذَرُ أن تَـدنُـو الـصِـحـاحُ مـن الجُـرْبِ

5 Oh my friends! If you wished to approach us, neither approaching by white camels at night, nor even travelling by caparisoned horses by day would be denied you.

6 But on the morning that you bought the loneliness of a remote land in exchange for closeness, you sold trust in exchange for treachery.

7 May the Peace of Allah be upon you! Your absence is the greatest of all possible disasters.

8 Had we foreseen it, we would not have supported ʿAbbâs in the heat of war at the expense of other people.

Here Ṭalâ'iʿ ibn Ruzzîk is expressing his regret that during a much earlier period in his life when he was merely an *Amîr muqaddam* (commanding officer) during the regime of Vizier ʿAlî Ibn al-Salâr, he had as a subordinate taken the side of ʿAbbâs al-Ṣanhâjî al-Rabîb on the battlefield when the latter was serving as a general under Ibn al-Salâr. The expedition was led by ʿAbbâs and Ṭalâ'iʿ against the Bedouins and Ibn Maṣâl. The latter was later to become yet another Vizier deposed by violence.

9 Because he had betrayed the Sons of the Prophet of Right Guidance, he acquired something which the Banû Ḥarb (the Umayyads) had never managed to acquire.
The Umayyads had wrongfully seized the Caliphate after the first four rightly guided Caliphs, thus putting an end to the line of *Shiʿite* Imâms upon the Caliphal throne.

10 Have the clan of Ḥarb and those others then acquired from them something more than murder and the taking of prisoners and plunder?

11 He (ʿAbbâs) arrived in the morning with his co-conspiritors with heavy-handed injustice, lapping up blood like dogs. May God not preserve such a man as he!

12 Oh, if only he had shown towards his owner even part of the fidelity found in the dog!
Compare Ibn al-Salâr and the question which he addressed to Naṣr son of ʿAbbâs, 'Oh You (miserable) cur! Where are you?' Compare also the later strangling of the Imâm al-Ẓâfir within the residence of Naṣr and his father ʿAbbâs.

13 But this should be no concern of yours, (oh clan of Usâma), for you have not betrayed the bond and have committed no sin in the matter which he instigated.

14 You should be on your guard, (oh clan of Usâma), against the contamination of approaching him, for 'a healthy man should beware of approaching those suffering from scabies.'[102]

30

The above passage from a poem originating from the pen of Vizier Ṭalâ'iʿ himself, gives the impression that because of his conciliatory attitude, Ṭalâ'iʿ did not cause much enmity against himself. However webs of intrigue between Imâm and Vizier continued to be woven, and once again the conspiracies germinating within the palace bore fruit. In all probability the aunt acting as Regent was involved, for she was soon executed by Ruzzîk, the son of Ṭalâ'iʿ, when he followed his father upon the Vizieral throne and instigated punitive measures against those who had taken part in the murder plot.

On the other hand the relationship between Ṭalâ'iʿ and Usâma was allowed no further chance to affect the political affairs of Egypt. The connection between arch-intriguer and Vizier continued, but now the physical distance between them prevented new intrigues from being instigated by the wily Usâma.

Only in 555 H when Usâma was informed that al-Fâ'iz had died was there at last justification for the poet, that is Usâma, to send a very simple poem offering condolences to Ṭalâ'iʿ in connection with the sad loss of the Imâm:

١ هناءٌ بنِعْمَى قلّ عنْ قَدْرها الشُكرُ وصبْرُ الرُزءِ لا يقومُ بهِ الصَّبْرُ

٢ مضى الفائزُ الطهْرُ الإمامُ وقامَ بـ ـالإمامةِ فينا بعْدهُ العاضِدُ الطهرُ

[102] *Dîwân Usâma ibn Munqidh*, ed. Ḥâmid ʿAbd al-Majîd and Aḥmad Aḥmad Badawî, ed. Qushûr, *muqaddima* 45 p. and text 362 p., Cairo no date, p. 112-113: poem to the rhyme *bi l-ʿatbi*.

٣ إمـامـا هُـدىً لـلّـهِ فـي نـقْـلِ ذا إلـى كـرامـتـهِ وفـي إقـامـةِ ذاسِـرُّ
٤ فـعِـشْ أبَـداً واسْـلَـمْ يـا كَـفـيـلَـهُـم تُـدافِـعُ عـنـهـم كـلَّ حـادثـةٍ تـعْـرُو

1 Congratulations on a benefaction for which every form of gratitude is small, and upon enduring a disaster which cannot bear perseverance.
2 The Pure al-Fâ'iz, the Imâm, has departed; and following his death the Pure al-ʿÂḍid has taken the Imamate upon himself in our midst.
3 Allah has a secret: Two Imâms of Just Leadership. He transfers one to His generosity and He allows the other to survive.
4 Oh Regent of them both, live forever and remain safe! Then You will be able to stave off every impending disaster.[103]

Like his immediate predecessor, the newly-installed Imâm al-ʿÂḍid was very young and inexperienced. As his Regent, Ṭalâ'iʿ apparently entertained the idea of overruling him. But Ṭalâ'iʿ had not taken into account the opposition coming from the new Imâm's aunts whose own brothers had been murdered.

Viziers often died prematurely, either as a result of violence exerted by rival competitors for the Vizierate or as a result of discontent prevailing in the circles around the palace.

In 556 H, death came to al-Malik al-Ṣâliḥ, Fâris al-Muslimîn, Nâṣir al-Dîn, Abû l-Ghârât Ṭalâ'iʿ b Ruzzîk when he was no longer considered capable of fulfilling the position indicated by his honorific titles. Thus this Pious King, this Mounted Knight of the Muslims and Supporter of Religion who in previous times had defended the Imâms as a Father of Military Expeditions, was now and for all time lost to the Dynasty of the Imâms.

And finally, of course, there is something else for us to consider: what was ʿUmâra's own opinion of the murders in Cairo? What did he himself say about all these killings? What can we deduce from his surviving words?

Obviously we should remember that ʿUmâra had first encountered the Vizier Ṭalâ'iʿ when he arrived in Egypt as an ambassador from Yemen. Not long before their meeting, Ṭalâ'iʿ had been prepared to offer his support to the aunts of al-Fâ'iz when these ladies were seeking revenge upon ʿAbbâs and his son Naṣr. The aunts–who were the sisters of the murdered Imâm al-Ẓâfir–were thus clearly able to re-instate the Imâmate more or less as they pleased.

We should also remember that Ṭalâ'iʿ had been able to chase away ʿAbbâs and his son, both of them criminals; and in fact this had served as a kind of official termination of employment.

[103] Al-Maqrîzî, *Ittiʿâẓ* III, 243; see *AnIsl* 35 (2001), p. 569-570, where the poem is also quoted.

It was not the vengeance of the Imâm which had led to this dismissal, but rather the anger of only one man, Governor Ṭalâ'iʿ, who had himself come from a remote region in the south of Egypt.

After this, Ṭalâ'iʿ became Vizier instead of ʿAbbâs.

It may have been this ability of Ṭalâ'iʿ and his clan, to give quick and successful help which made an impression on the mind of the poet ʿUmâra, for we hear the poet comparing this action of the leader of the Ruzzîk family to the movement of a chess piece, the so-called Rukh–which is known as the "rook" or "castle" in English.

According to the poet, this Rook had come from a remote region in order to offer his strength to the tottering Fatimid Dynasty:

"His noble racehorses came to you at the farthest bounds of the frontiers, just like the *rukh* (Rook) which comes to you along the edges of the chessboard."

In this poem to rhyme *naskhu* the poet addresses a gathering of Fatimid *Shiʿite* friends as follows[104]:

قال في رجب وقد اقتُرح عليه ذلك هو وغيره

١ أأحبابَنا كم تبخلون وكم تسخو ببذْلِ وِدادٍ لا يغيّرُه نَسْخُ
٢ وهل مُنْكَرٌ فعلُ القطيعة منكمُ وما دارُكم إلاّ القطيعةُ والكَرْخُ
٣ رميتُمْ نشاطي في الوداد بقِتْرةٍ شردتُ بها حبل الوفاءِ فلا تَرْخُوا
٤ ناقضتمُ في الحب فعلي بضدّه فمِنِّي له عَقْدٌ ومنكمْ له نَسْخُ
٥ خَشُنتم ولانتْ في هواكم معاطِفي وما يستوي يوماً قتادٌ ولا مَرْخُ
٦ لقد جُرتمْ في دولةٍ عادليةٍ يحبّرُ في أيّامها المدح والمدخُ
٧ سما قدرُها فوق السماكَيْنِ باذخاً ولم يخْتَلجْ في صدر مالكها البَذْخُ
٨ وألْبَسَها ذُخْرُ الأئمّة بهجةً لِشَيْب الليالي في شبيبتها شَرْخُ
٩ تأمَّلْ تجدْ في دسته الفضل كلّه إذا ابتسمَتْ عن وجههِ الرُتَبُ البُذْخُ
١٠ ففي تاجِهِ بدرٌ وفي كفِّهِ حيا وفي سرجِهِ ليثٌ وفي دَسْتِهِ مَدْخُ
١١ لك الجُرْد كالفُتْح الكواسِرِ لم يزَلْ يلوحُ على راياتها الفتْح والفتْخُ
١٢ تجيؤُكَ بأطراف الثغورِ جيادُهُ كما جاك في أطراف رقعته الرُّخُّ
١٣ تَرَى طائرَ النسْرَيْنِ أوّلَ واقِعٍ تمرّ به في كلّ فجٍّ له فَخُّ

[104] ʿUmâra's poem to rhyme *naskhu*, dedicated to an unknown personage, but possibly addressed to Ruzzîk ibn Ṭalâ'iʿ. The poem is found in Ms. D folio 37 recto - 38 recto, but it is lacking in Ms. Rabat; in the edition Derenbourg *Nukat Diwan*, p. 195-196, there are only lines 1-7, 19-25, 31-32. In total, this poem consists of 32 lines.

١٤ وتُـزْجـى رِيـاحُ الـنـصْـرِ مُـزْنَـةَ بـاسـهـا فَـيُـرْجَـى لـهـا نـفـحٌ ويُـخْـشَـى لـهـا نَـفْـخُ
١٥ إذا فَـرَّخـتْ فـي راس طـاغٍ بـكَـيْـدِه فـصـارمُـه فـي وكـر هـامـتِـه فـدحُ
١٦ وكـم عـنـقٍ رامَ الـشـقـاقَ وصـورة أبـادهـا عـن رَوْمِـه المـسْـحُ والمـسـخُ
١٧ ولـلّـهِ فـي يـوم الـشـهـيـد طـلائـع ثـبـاتُـكَ والإقْـدامُ مـوطـنُـهـا رَنْـخُ
١٨ رسـخـتَ فـقـد خـفّـت حـلـومٌ كـثـيـرة وأنـتُـمْ حِـبـالٌ مـن جـبـلّـتـهـا الـرَّسْـخُ
١٩ ولّـمـا رأيـتَ المـلـكَ مـال عـمـودُهُ وكـادت عُـراهُ ان يـلـيـنَ وأنْ تَـرْخـو
٢٠ قَـسَـمْـتَ الـوطـايـا والـرزايـا عـلـى الـورى فـبـاغٍ لـه رضـخٌ وبـاع لـه رضْـخُ
٢١ وأكّـدت فـيـنـا بـيـعـةً عـاضِـديّـةً وذلـك عـقـد لا يـلـمّ بـه الـفَـسْـخُ
٢٢ لـكـم يـا بـنـي رُزّيـكَ فـضـلٌ مـخـلَّـدٌ يـخـلّـده فـي صـحْـف مـجـدكـمُ الـنَـسْـخُ
٢٣ تـبـارك مَـنْ أجـرى المـكـارِمَ فـيـكـم إلـى أن نمـا فـرعٌ بـهـا وزكـا سِـنْـخُ
٢٤ حـلـومٌ كـأمـثـال الـرواسـي شـوامـخُ وشُـمٌّ أنـوفٍ لـيـس مـن شـانـهـا الـشَـمْـخُ
٢٥ بـكـم أصـبـح الـفـسـطـاطُ داري ولـم تـكـن سَـمَـرْقَـنْـدُ مـن مـثـوَى ركـابـي ولا بَـلْـخُ
٢٦ لـك الـصـامـتُ المـذخـورُ مـن حـلـبـة الـعُـلَـى ولـلـمـتـعـاطـي شـأوَك الـرُّزْءُ والـلَّـطْـخُ
٢٧ فـديً لـك أمـلاكٌ بـلا شـوبِـيَّـةٍ عـلـى أوجُـه الأشـعـار مـن مـدحـهـم نَـبْـخُ
٢٨ إذا نـضـحـوا نَـزْراً نـضـخْـتَ سـمـاحـةً ومـا يـسـتـوي فـي الـنـائِـلِ الـنـضـحُ والـنَّـضْـخُ
٢٩ وإنْ قَـنَـعُـوا بـالـقِـشـر والـعـظـم فـي الـعـلـى غَـدَا لـك فـي أسـرارهـا المُـجُّ والمـخُّ
٣٠ مـآثِـرُ فـي عـيـن الـعـدوِّ بـهـا قَـذًى وفـي أذنـيـهِ مـن وقـائـعـهـا صَـمْـخُ
٣١ تـذوب لـهـا الأكـبـادُ غـيـظـاً وحَـسْـرَةً بـنـارٍ لـهـا فـي قـلـب حـاسـدِك طَـبْـخُ
٣٢ فـمُـتّـعـت الـدنـيـا بـدولـتـك الـتـي يُـقـال لـشـعـرِي حـين يـذكـرهـا بَـخٌّ

"He said in the month *Rajab* the following lines, when this theme was offered to himself and other poets:"

1 Oh friends of ours! How frequently will you be miserly in the granting of love which can never be rescinded (*naskh*)?

This is a play on words in relation to the abrogation of a Koranic verse, which procedure is also called *naskh*. In the following line is a pun: the Baghdad neighbourhoods al-Qaṭîʿa and al-Karkh are traditionally known for their opposition against the *Sunnitic* Caliphate, because their inhabitants were mainly adhering to the *Shîʿa* persuasion:

2 Shall you then be blamed for the act of breaking off the relationship (*fiʿl al-qaṭîʿa*) whilst your dwelling place is none other than the vicinity of al-Qaṭîʿa and al-Karkh?

3 My action concerning this love you have scolded for being an act of weakness whereby I have loosened the cord of faithfulness; but as for you, don't release it.
4 In this love you have nullified my actions by acting contrarily; for I have made a contract with love but you have arranged for its cancellation (*naskhu*).
5 You were rough, whilst my feelings of love for you were finely polished; similarly there is never a day when the thorny *qatâd* plant resembles the stem of the soft woody *markh*.
6 You have been unjust towards a *Dawla* ʿÂdiliyya; both Praise and Power had composed well-embellished words about its days.
7 Its standing has surpassed the level of the constellation of Simâk, but in the heart of its owner there are no stirrings of haughtiness.
8 The Treasure Chest of the Imâms decked her (i.e. the renewed Dynasty) with brilliance; on account of her youth, the grey of the nights bloomed afresh.
9 Look! For you will find every kind of excellence upon his throne whenever the highest of ranks reveal themselves upon the Face-of-the-Throne through a smile.
10 Encircled by his crown (turban) there is a Full Moon (i.e. his face), and in his hand there is healing rain; upon his saddle is a Lion and upon his throne is Power.
11 You have short-haired horses like ravening lions; Victory always appears upon their banners and Paws, still supple with their claws retracted.
12 His noble racehorses came to you at the farthest bounds of the frontiers, just like the *rukh* (Rook) which comes to you along the edges of the chessboard.
13 You see a bird from the constellation of Twin Eagles, the first to swoop down upon the enemy, whom you will find in every abyss hissing with snakes.
14 The winds of Victory drove their cloud of severity forward; and afterwards people hoped for an exhalation of perfume and the strong blast of the bugle.
15 Whenever they alight upon the crown of the head of a proud tyrant in all his guile, then a sword striking the crown of his head will feel like a heavy weight.
16 How many necks desired *shiqâq* [i.e. both severing and rebellion]; how many a beautiful object was destroyed by the caress of a sword, being deformed into the exact opposite of what was desired.
17 On the Day that Ṭalâ'iʿ became a martyr–by God!–how good your persistence and courage were, even though the terrain offered little room to manoeuvre.
18 Where many clear-sighted people were undecided, You stood Your ground; You and Your people were Cords whose very nature was steadfast.
19 When You saw that the pillars of the Kingdom were beginning to fall, and that its handholds were weakened and almost bent,
20 You divided both benefactions and disasters among mortal men: there was a smash on the head for a rebel, and a gift for the one who swore the (inaugural) oath.
21 Thus You have established a ʿÂḍidic installation (*bayʿa)* amongst us; and that is a binding Contract.
22 Oh Banu Ruzzîk, you possess an excellence which shall be made eternal; the copying of it on the Sheets of Your Fame in this fashion will perpetuate that fame.

23 Blessed may he be (here ʿUmâra is again obliquely referring to himself) who establishes your deeds in his poetry to bear fruit, so that by these deeds a Branch grows forth and a Root grows deeper.

24 Their insight was patient, like steep mountains; their noses were high, yet they were not interested in flaunting themselves.

25 Fusṭâṭ (Old Cairo) has now become my residence because of you; but neither Samarqand nor Balkh will ever be a resting place for my riding-camel.

26 Saved from amongst the racehorses of the Elevation, the silent one (*al-ṣâmit)* stands before you; but only misfortune and defilement await the one who reaches out towards your aspirations.

27 Let kings stand ransom for you, with no one holding back (*bilâ shawîya*); when praising them, the countenances of these verses have swelled with pride.

On the use of *shawîya* in the wording of line 27, "Let kings stand ransom for you, with no one holding back (*bilâ shawîya*)", a comment is found in the dictionary *Lisân al-ʿArab*, where we read as follows: "and *al-shawîya* signifies the remains of some undefined people who have perished. This forms in plural: *shawâyâ*. And it is alleged that those people "are the remains of the worst among the wicked tribe of Thamûd."[105]

28 Where they have sprinkled (*nadaḥû*), you have watered in abundance (*naḍakhta*); and this one sort of sprinkling (*al-naḍḥu*) does not resemble the other outpouring (*al-naḍkhu*).

29 Though they are content with the rind and the bone of the Elevation, yet you have its secrets: sap and marrow are at your disposal.

30 These are the results through which a beam has been inserted into the eye of the enemy; and in his ears they have caused a blockage;

31 and they have caused livers to melt from rage and sorrow in a fire, through which there is a seething without end in the heart of anyone jealous of him.

32 May the World enjoy your *Dawla*; whenever it is mentioned in my poetry, people will say of it, 'Bravo!'.

Clearly the Vizier Ṭalâ'iʿ has made a great impression on our poet. ʿUmâra sees the Vizier as a saviour in line 12 when he compares him to a powerful piece in the game of chess, a Rook who swoops in from the sidelines and saves the game.

The poet remarks that by his action, the "*Dawla* ʿÂdiliyya" has been saved. Here it seems that the *Dawla* intended is the Dynasty originally founded by Talaiʿi'.

As the poet uses the expression "Dawla ʿÂdiliyya" we can conclude that this poem was written afterwards, in hindsight, to describe the time when Ruzzîk, the son of Ṭalâ'iʿ with the honorific title al-ʿÂdil, was on the throne. The poet speaks of the courageous conduct of this son who tried to defend his father at the moment when the latter, as Vizier, was being attacked by murderous villains just as all those other Viziers had been attacked.

[105] See the *Lisân al-ʿArab*, vol.14, p. 447, s.v.*shawâ*, where we find the following: *wa l-shawîya: baqîyatu qawmin halakû, wa l-jamʿu: shawâyâ wa-qâla: fa-hum sharru l-shawâyâ min Thamûdin.*

Despite the son and his bravery, the father Ṭalâ'iʿ became a martyr (*shahîd*), as the poet acknowledges in line 17:

ولـلّـهِ فـي يـوم الـشـهـيـد طـلائـع ثـبـاتُـكَ والإِقْـدامُ مـوطـنُـهـا رَنْـخُ

On the Day that Ṭalâ'iʿ became a martyr–by God!–how good your persistence and courage were even though the terrain offered little room to manoeuvre.

Although the poet is addressing the son Ruzzîk ibn Ṭalâ'iʿ, he is obviously still grateful for the manner in which he was welcomed in Egypt, long ago, when Ruzzîk's father was alive. This Ruzzîk clan which saved the Imâmitic *Dawla* was also the reason why the poet had preferred to live for all time in al-Fusṭâṭ, i.e. in Old Cairo, in Egypt.

Clearly ʿUmâra preferred Egypt to living in a remote town such as Samarqand or a far-flung region such as Balkh. It is interesting however to note that some hundred years earlier another poet (Nâṣiri Khosraw) had completed the long journey between Balkh and Old Cairo in the reverse direction, travelling by stages from the Egypt of an earlier Imâm to his home in Balkh.