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A FĀTIMID DECREE OF THE YEAR  
524/1130

By S. M. STERN

(PLATES I-X)

(1) THE ARABIC DOCUMENTS OF THE SINAI MONASTERY

For many years it was vaguely known that the monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai possessed a large collection of documents concerning its own affairs and written in Arabic and Turkish, and more especially that this collection also included a number of decrees issued by various Fāṭimid caliphs; but it was only recently that detailed information became available. It will be convenient to preface the edition of one of these Fāṭimid documents by a review of what has been written about the Sinai documents up to now.

We may well begin by recalling the labours of some early searchers of the Sinai archives. Here we encounter, however, a little problem, the means for the solution of which are not at the moment available. The first writer, so far as is known, to have used the Arabic documents of the monastery is Nectarius, to whom we shall turn soon; but it is possible that he relied on an earlier author, the monk Joasaph, who is said to have prepared a list of the bishops of Sinai 'from various works and Arabic documents which he mentions'.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately I have no access to Joasaph's list and can therefore give no further details; nor can I say how far, if at all, is Nectarius indebted to his researches. It is to be hoped that one day Joasaph's text will be examined, and we shall learn to whom the credit belongs of having been the first to use the Arabic documents of Sinai for historical purposes. Let us now turn to Nectarius, through whom information about past heads of the monastery and the history of Egypt extracted from various of the Fāṭimid, Ayyūbid, and Mamlūk decrees became widely known.

Nectarius, a native of Crete and one of the more illustrious members of the monastery, became, first, Archbishop of Mount Sinai for a short time, and subsequently Patriarch of Jerusalem (d. 1676).<sup>2</sup> He is best known for his share in the controversy concerning the relations between the Greek and Latin

<sup>1</sup> 'Nous possédons plusieurs listes des évêques du Sinai. La plus ancienne fut dressée par le moine Ioasaph, d'après divers ouvrages et documents arabes qu'il mentionne. Nectarios, choisi plus tard comme évêque du Sinai, mais qui fut presque aussitôt élu patriarche de Jérusalem, reproduisit cette liste avec quelques additions dans son *Építome de l'Histoire Sainte* en 1677' (H. L. Rabino, *Le monastère de Sainte-Catherine du Mont Sinai*, Cairo, 1938, 80). In a note Rabino gives the following reference for Joasaph's list: 'Codex sinaiticus 2715, p. 51-53'. This MS does not seem to be included among those microfilmed by the American expedition, so that it is inaccessible for me. From various references I infer that it is also quoted by K. Amantos, *Εἰσαίρικὰ μνημεῖα ἀνέκδοτα*, Athens, 1928, p. 8; in effect Rabino probably derived his information from Amantos, whose book I have not seen.

<sup>2</sup> For Nectarius and his works, see V. Grumel's article 'Nectaire' in the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*; for the 'Építome' and its sources M. I. Manousaka's article 'Η "Επιτομή τῆς ἱεροκοσμικῆς ἱστορίας" τοῦ Νεκταρίου Ἱεροσολύμων in *Κρητικά Χρονικά*, 1, 1947, 291-332.

churches and in particular for the polemical work which he wrote against the papal claim to supremacy. About the year 1659-60, however, while still a Sinaitic monk, he also wrote a historical compilation entitled 'Epitome of holy and secular history' (*Ἐπιτομή τῆς ἱεροκοσμικῆς ἱστορίας*), first published in Venice in 1677, and reprinted in the same city in the years 1758, 1783, and 1805. (Only the last named edition was available to me.) The first three of the five parts of the book deal with Sinai, its history and description; one chapter gives a list of the 'archbishops' of Sinai. (In fact the earlier dignitaries only bore the title of bishop, but Nectarius attributed the rank of archbishop to all heads of the monastery.) The last two books contain a history of Egypt and its conquest by Sultan Selim. For drawing up the list of the 'archbishops' Nectarius made use of information contained in some 'ancient Arabic books' preserved in the monastery, as well as in decrees by the rulers of Egypt, and in the part dealing with the history of the rulers of Egypt he also drew upon a number of such decrees. As we have explained above, it cannot yet be determined whether it was Nectarius himself who initiated this search in the archives, or if he was, partly or wholly, copying material assembled by a predecessor. At any rate, though it was the right method to derive information from documents of the archives, we shall see presently that in interpreting the documents he, or his predecessor, was not always successful. We shall first reproduce the passages in which Nectarius refers to Arabic documents, giving in the footnotes the necessary information about the rulers involved, and reserving to the end the discussion about the documents—a discussion which will lead to the conclusion that the documents used by Nectarius are no longer extant.

The following are the relevant sentences from the list of the 'archbishops' (ed. 1805, pp. 211-12):

Year 508 of the Muslim era, A.D. 1103. It is found in a decree of the sultan Emer Elmumni<sup>1</sup> that the archbishop of the monastery was Zacharias.

Year 538 of the Muslim era, A.D. 1133. At the time of the same sultan<sup>2</sup> George was archbishop.

Year 551 of the Muslim era, A.D. 1146. In another decree of the sultan Kaim Ibnes Reila,<sup>3</sup> Gabriel was archbishop. He was an Arabic scholar and wrote a book containing admonitions which is preserved in the monastery.

<sup>1</sup> 'Emer Elmumni', i.e. *amīr al-mu'minīn* 'Commander of the Faithful', the generic title of the caliphs, was taken as a proper name, and the title 'sultan' wrongly applied to the Fāṭimid caliph, who did not bear it. In A.H. 508 the reigning Fāṭimid caliph was al-Āmir (499-524). The conversion of the Hijra date 508 into the Christian date is erroneous, as in fact it corresponds to 1114-15.

<sup>2</sup> In 538 the reigning caliph was al-Ḥāfiẓ (525-44), and the corresponding Christian date is in fact 1143-4.

<sup>3</sup> There is no Fāṭimid caliph called al-Qā'im bi-Naṣr Allāh, which the Greek transcription is no doubt meant to reproduce; the document is certainly by al-Fā'iz bi-Naṣr Allāh (549-55), but the word *القائم* written without diacritical dots was misread as *القائم*. A.H. 551 = A.D. 1156-7.

Year 815 of the Muslim era, A.D. 1324. In a decree of the sultan Mueyadi<sup>1</sup> there is found Dorotheus.

The references to Arabic documents in the chapter on the history of Egypt (ed. 1805, pp. 290-1) are introduced by Nectarius with the remark that he has found the names of various rulers of Egypt in documents which they issued to the monastery in confirmation of the covenant granted by the Prophet Muḥammad, and that these documents are preserved in the treasury of the branch (*metochion*) of the monastery in Egypt (i.e. presumably Cairo), though some of them are in a deteriorated condition owing to their antiquity.<sup>2</sup>

In 530 (read 580?) was Melek Salekh,<sup>3</sup> from whom the slaves have received the kingdom. He gave a decree to the monastery which is still extant. In this period Isaiah, or Zacharias, was archbishop of Mount Sinai.

592. There was Melek Elmuzaffer,<sup>4</sup> who also gave a decree which is extant.

627. Melek Kamle.<sup>5</sup> There is also a decree by him. Nectarius was archbishop.

640. Melek Mansur.<sup>6</sup> There exists in the monastery a decree by him too.

641. Melek Saladin.<sup>7</sup> There is a decree also by him.

656. Melek Mansur.<sup>8</sup> At this time Macarius was archbishop.

690. Mutime baila.<sup>9</sup> Also he gave a decree which is preserved.

726. Melek Mutaffar.<sup>10</sup> Similarly.

<sup>1</sup> The Mamlūk sultan al-Mu'ayyad Sayf al-Din Shaykh reigned 815-24. A.H. 815 = A.D. 1412-13.

<sup>2</sup> '... οἱ ὁποῖοι ὅλοι εὐρίσκονται εἰς τὸ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ τοῦ Μοναστηρίου Μετόχιον ἀσφαλῶς φυλαττόμενα, εἰς τὸ Σκευοφυλάκιον, εἰ καίτινες ἐξ αὐτῶν καὶ ἐσαθρώθησαν τῷ χρόνῳ.'

<sup>3</sup> The reference is perhaps to Saladin (564-89), founder of the Ayyūbid dynasty, which preceded the rule of the 'slaves', i.e. Mamlūks; but there might be in addition a confusion with the Ayyūbid al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ (637-47).

<sup>4</sup> No Ayyūbid ruler bore the regnal title al-Malik al-Muzaffar. In 592, the ruler of Egypt was al-Malik al-'Aziz, Saladin's young son, at whose side stood Saladin's brother, al-Malik al-'Ādil. The document, issued either by al-'Aziz or by al-'Ādil, probably contained in its protocol among other titles that of *al-muzaffar*, 'the victorious', which was erroneously taken as the main regnal title. Cf. the protocol of the document Atiya No. 11, issued by al-'Ādil in the very year 592, which does in fact include that title: *منشور تقدم بكتبه المولى الملك العادل [في الحمد لله وبه توفيق السيد الاجل الكبير العالم المؤيد المظفر المتصور المرباط الهمام سيف الدين ناصر الاسلام] ممين الامام غياث الانام جلال الدولة تاج الملة مجير الامة سيد الملوك والسلطين سلطان جيوش المسلمين قاع الكفرة والمشركين ابو بكر بن ايوب خليل امير المؤمنين*.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Malik al-Kāmil, 615-35.

<sup>6</sup> In 640, the ruler of Egypt was al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ (637-47); in this case too we have to assume that the subsidiary title *al-mansūr*, 'the victorious', was taken as a regnal title.

<sup>7</sup> In the year 641 the reigning sultan was, as we have said in the preceding note, al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ, whose name was Najm al-Din, not Ṣalāḥ al-Din.

<sup>8</sup> The Mamlūk sultan al-Mansūr Nūr al-Din 'Alī (655-7).

<sup>9</sup> From the form of the title (composed with *billāḥ*), it is clear that the reference is not to a Mamlūk sultan, but to one of the shadow caliphs of Cairo. In the year 690 the caliph was, however, al-Ḥākim bi'llāḥ (661-701); the Greek form 'Mutime baila' could stand for al-Mu'taṣim bi'llāḥ (779-85).

<sup>10</sup> Al-Muzaffar Rukn al-Din Baybars II (708-41).

760. Melek Naseri.<sup>1</sup> He similarly gave a decree to the monastery.

815. Melek Mueyad.<sup>2</sup> At this time Dorotheus was archbishop.

863. Melek Kakher.<sup>3</sup> There is also the decree which he gave.

870. Melek Takher.<sup>4</sup> Similarly there is also a decree by him.

901. Sultan Asarafi.<sup>5</sup> There is also a decree by him.

Finally Nectarius remarks that all the rulers from Melek Salekh on were 'erkes',<sup>6</sup> the last of them to give a decree to the monastery being Sultan Asarafi. The conquest of Egypt by Selīm is then related.

It is obvious that most of the documents referred to by Nectarius are not to be found amongst those microfilmed by the American expedition, of which I have more to say later on, and even in the case of those items where a *na facie* case would seem to exist for identifying them with extant documents, there are reasons which speak against such identification. We do have one document (No. 10 in Atiya's handlist, quoted below) from the year 551 by the vizier of the caliph al-Fā'iz bi-Naṣr Allāh who is obviously meant by 'the Circassian Kaim Iabnes Reila'. Yet though the extant document contains the name of the contemporary bishop of Sinai, it is given as Anthony, not Dorotheus. We have then to conclude that in that year there was a change of bishop, and the document which Nectarius had before him and which mentioned bishop Gabriel is not identical with the extant document, which mentions bishop Anthony. The document mentioned under the year 592 could on the other hand be identical with the extant document of the same year (No. 11). The document mentioned under 690 can hardly be identical with the extant document No. 24, dated from the same year, because it is not issued by the Fatimid ḥāshimī shadow caliph, as is the one mentioned by Nectarius. Similarly, though there exists a document dated 815 and issued by al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad (No. 49), seemingly corresponding to the document mentioned by Nectarius under that year, it does not contain the name of the archbishop Dorotheus. Documents No. 53 or No. 54, both issued by al-Malik al-Zāhir in 870, could be identical with the document quoted by Nectarius; the same can be said of document No. 74, issued by al-Malik al-Ashraf Qā'itḥbāy in 901. Yet as Nectarius says that the documents used by him were preserved in the Cairo *metochion* of the monastery, and the greater part of them can in no case be identical with extant documents, we may conclude that none of the documents quoted by him are identical with the extant documents.

<sup>1</sup> Al-Nāṣir. Nāṣir al-Dīn reigned for the first time 748-52, for the second time in 755; in the second time the reigning sultan was his son, al-Ṣāliḥ Salāḥ al-Dīn Ṣāliḥ (752-62). See above, p. 441, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The reigning sultan in 863 was al-Ashraf Sayf al-Dīn Ināl (857-65), by whom was issued Atiya No. 52 (beg.

748-52, for the second time in 755; in the second time the reigning sultan was his son, al-Ṣāliḥ Salāḥ al-Dīn Ṣāliḥ (752-62). See above, p. 441, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Zāhir Sayf al-Dīn Khushqadam (865-72).

<sup>4</sup> Al-Ashraf Sayf al-Dīn Qā'itḥbāy (872-901).

<sup>5</sup> 'Tserkes', Circassian, stands for 'Mamlūk', on account of the position of supremacy which the Circassians occupied in the Mamlūk state from the end of the fourteenth century (cf. Ayalon, 'The Circassians in the Mamlūk kingdom', *JAOS*, LXIX, 1949, 135 ff.).

identical with the documents now in Mount Sinai. Though at least one author makes a reference to documents preserved in the Cairo branch of the monastery,<sup>1</sup> and the documents mentioned by Nectarius cannot be presumed to be definitely lost as long as their absence in the Cairo branch is not expressly confirmed, there is but little hope that they will turn up there.

We may add that part of Nectarius's results—his list of the bishops—was often reproduced quite apart from the various editions of his own book. It appeared in a book published in Tergovitsa in Moldavia in the year 1710 under the title of *Βιβλίον περιέχον την ακολουθίαν της αγίας Αικατερίνης, τό τε προσκυνητάριον του αγίου Όρους Σινᾶ μετά των περίξ και πάντων των εν αυτω και περι αυτό, τινά τε τάξιν της ακολουθίας του μοναστηριου, και τους εν αυτω μέχρι τουδε αρχιεπισκοπήσαντας, και εγκώμιόν τι εις τό Σινᾶ Όρος*, a kind of little handbook of Sinai, published for propaganda and the edification of pilgrims. Nectarius's list was, however, carried down to 1708.<sup>2</sup> Also in 1710 the manuscript of an Arabic version of the handbook was written, reproducing the list of the Greek version with the additional name of archbishop Joannicius of Mitylene, elected in 1710 and in office at the time of the writing of the MS. This list was published by L. Cheikho in his analysis of the contents of the MS ('Les archevêques du Sinaï', *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale, Université Saint-Joseph, Beyrouth*, II, 1907, 408-21). He did not, however, realize that the text analysed by him, and thus also the list, was simply translated from the Greek; this was pointed out in a review by L. Petit.<sup>3</sup> The Greek version was often reprinted in Venice: there are editions of the years 1727, 1768, 1773, 1778, and 1817.<sup>4</sup> Thus the contents of the list were easily available to students of the history of the monastery both in the editions of Nectarius's 'Epitome' and in those of the handbook, and were for example used in L. Eckenstein's *History of Sinai*, London, 1921 (see pp. 145, 153),<sup>5</sup> and H. L. Rabino's *Le monastère de Sainte-Catherine du Mont Sinaï*, pp. 80 ff.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Enfin un certaine quantité de manuscrits, d'imprimés et d'archives sont, paraît-il, déposés au couvent du Sinaï au Caire'; Rabino (see above, p. 439, n. 1), 52.

<sup>2</sup> There is a copy of this rare first edition in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The list is to be found on fols. 8v. and 7v. from the end (the book has no pagination).

<sup>3</sup> In *Echos d'Orient*, 1908, 127-8; see also G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, III, 158. In 1774 a Sinaite monk, Acacius, made another translation of the Greek handbook of Sinai after the edition of 1773 (autograph in the British Museum, MS Ar. Christ. 33; cf. Graf, *ibidem*).

<sup>4</sup> See the bibliographical details in L. Petit, *Bibliographie des acolythies grecques*, Bruxelles, 1926, pp. xxxiv-xxxvii. I have seen the three Venice editions—those of 1768, 1773, and 1817—which are to be found in the British Museum. The lists are on pp. 48 ff., 91 ff., and 151 ff., respectively.

<sup>5</sup> The use made of the lists is slightly erroneous. The Christian dates are followed, though it is obvious that the compiler of the list transposed the Hijra dates which he found in the documents into A.D. dates, and as we have seen transposed them wrongly. Also, in consequence of this error, Eckenstein identifies Kaim Iabnes Reila with al-Zāfir (1149-51) instead of al-Fā'iz, and for Dorotheus she gives the dates 1324-33.

<sup>6</sup> Rabino's list is based on the Greek handbook, Cheikho's article, K. Papamikalopoulos's 'Η μονή του Όρους Σινᾶ', Athens, 1932 (not seen by me; he obviously derived his list from Nectarius or the handbook), and the book of Amantos, quoted above, p. 439, n. 1.

Between Nectarius and the more recent students of the Sinai archives there is a large gap. There is no mention of Arabic documents—as far as I can see—in the accounts of the various visitors of the monastery who came to study its Greek and Oriental MSS in the course of the eighteenth, and more especially the nineteenth century,<sup>1</sup> nor does Nectarius's list in its different forms seem to have inspired any of its readers to try to find out if the documents mentioned in it were still extant. It was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that the existence of Arabic documents was rediscovered, and news of them brought back to Europe, by the orientalist B. Moritz. The first Fāṭimid document was discovered by Moritz not in the monastery in Sinai itself, but in its Istanbul branch, where he found a decree by al-Ḥāfiẓ in 1910, dated according to him A.D. 1134, i.e. A.H. 528. Moritz refers to this document in his study of 1918 (see below), p. 5 ('I found it in the summer of 1910 in the branch of the monastery situated in the quarter of Balat') and gives a few details about it in the course of that study. One of these details (p. 4), which he had already mentioned in an earlier article ('Sur les antiquités arabes du Sinai', *Bulletin de l'Institut Égyptien*, 1910, p. 91), is that the document contains an order to the governor of Ayla to observe the ancient treaties accorded to the Christians (*an tuhfaz lahum al-'uhūd al-qadīma*). On p. 39 of the study of 1918, he states that the scroll containing the decree of 1134 is more than 9 metres long. Following these clues given by Moritz I rediscovered this document in the spring of 1959, in the *metochion* of the Sinai monastery in the Balat quarter in Istanbul.<sup>2</sup> It is true that the Fāṭimid document which I saw there is only 5·36 metres long (and 0·42 broad), and also that it contains neither the name of the reigning caliph nor a date (its beginning and end being missing); nor does either the mention of the governor of Ayla, or the phrase quoted by Moritz appear in the surviving portion. The most likely explanation is, however, that it is identical with the document seen by Moritz, but that it has lost its beginning and end since his visit,<sup>3</sup> the mention of the governor of Ayla and the phrase *an tuhfaz* . . . being in the missing parts. This seems more probable than the alternative that there was more than one Fāṭimid

<sup>1</sup> For the history of the study of the Sinai MSS, see V. N. Bénéchévitch, *Les manuscrits grecs du Mont Sinai et le monde savant de l'Europe depuis le xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'à 1927* (in the series 'Texte und Forschungen zur Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Philologie'), Athens, 1937. The alleged Covenant of the Prophet is an exception: it has been repeatedly quoted since R. Pococke, *A description of the East*, London, 1743, I, 148, 268–70, mentioned it and even gave a translation of it.

<sup>2</sup> For the history of the church of St. John in the Balat, which has belonged to the monks of Mount Sinai since the seventeenth century, see A. M. Schneider, in *Oriens*, IV, 1, 1951, 93. There are also preserved in the *metochion* a number of Ottoman documents (c. 30 pieces), at which I have looked in a perfunctory manner only. The earliest is a document from the *qāḍī's* court dated 981/1573–4; there are other documents from the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth Islamic centuries. I am much indebted to Archimandrite Damiyanos Papakonstantinu for his great kindness in allowing me to see the documents and to take photographs of the Fāṭimid decree.

<sup>3</sup> The collection of documents was damaged by rioters some years ago.

document in the *metochion*, that seen by Moritz having since disappeared, whilst the one I saw had not been shown to him.

In 1914, Moritz, accompanied by C. Schmidt (an expert on patristic literature), paid a long visit to the monastery in Sinai and photographed—together with a great number of MSS—about a hundred documents. Owing to the outbreak of the world war, the photographs could not be brought back to Europe and perished; but on the basis of notes taken during the expedition Moritz published in 1918 his *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Sinaiklosters im Mittelalter nach arabischen Quellen* (in 'Abhandlungen der königlichen Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften', 1918), in which he published a copy of the treaty alleged to have been granted by the Prophet to the Christians in A.H. 2, two decrees by the Mamlūk sultan Qā'itbāy,<sup>1</sup> and some Fāṭimid inscriptions; all these accompanied by valuable commentaries. A short account of the expedition was published later (C. Schmidt and B. Moritz, 'Die Sinai-Expedition im Frühjahr 1914', *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1926, 26–34). In the course of the study of 1918, the only Fāṭimid document mentioned is the one dated 1134, discovered in Istanbul, but in the article of 1926 (p. 31) there is mentioned a document dated 524/1130, described as the earliest of the decrees—this is the document which bears in Atiya's list the number 962 and which is published in the present article—and another document said to be dated 540/1145 of which the dimensions are given as 10 metres long and 0·41 broad. As there is no document dated 540 among those listed by Atiya, the document is either now lost, or else it escaped the attention of the American expedition; unless, of course, the date was misread by Moritz, and he is in fact referring to Atiya's No. 9, dated 548 (the dimensions of which are, however, given as 3·05 metres long and 0·41 broad).

One of the Sinai documents, belonging to the Ottoman period, was published in 1933 by A. Saaristo ('A *waqf*-document from Sinai', *Studia Orientalia* (Helsinki), v, 1): it is a document of sale referring to a property in al-Ṭūr, with a second document written on the margin, constituting the property into *waqf*; both are dated 4 Jumādā II 988/18 July 1580. The document is obviously identical with Atiya's No. 441.

The American expedition of 1950, which has also microfilmed about one-half of the library's manuscripts in various languages (such as Greek, Arabic, Syriac, Georgian, and Slavonic), brought back microfilms of the entire collection of Arabic and Turkish documents, including six belonging to the Fāṭimid period. A handlist of the Arabic material was published by A. S. Atiya under the title of *The Arabic manuscripts of Mount Sinai: a hand-list of the Arabic*

<sup>1</sup> One is dated 9 Rajab 892, the other 23 Sha'bān 896; no documents bearing these dates occur in Atiya's list, and I had no opportunity to examine personally whether the documents edited by Moritz are included in the microfilms or not. In addition to the documents which he edited, Moritz alludes not only to the Fāṭimid documents mentioned below, but also to documents by Ināl, Khushqadam, Qānshuh, Khā'ir Beg, and Süleymān, and mentions that there are altogether

manuscripts and scrolls microfilmed at the library of the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai, Baltimore, 1955. The Manchester University Library possesses a duplicate set of the whole collection of microfilms and I had the opportunity of studying the Fāṭimid documents thanks to the courtesy of the authorities of that library (to whom I am also indebted for the photographs reproduced in the present article).<sup>1</sup>

## (2) THE FĀṬIMID DOCUMENTS

The following is the list of the Fāṭimid decrees preserved in the monastery and in its Istanbul branch :

1. Decree by the regent 'Abd al-Majīd (the future al-Ḥāfiẓ), A.H. 524 (Atiya No. 962)—this is the document published in the present article.
2. Decree by al-Ḥāfiẓ, A.H. 528, preserved in the Istanbul branch of the monastery.
3. Decree by al-Ḥāfiẓ, A.H. 529 (Atiya No. 8).
4. Decree by al-Ḥāfiẓ, A.H. 530 (Atiya No. 6). Atiya wrongly gives the date as 502.<sup>2</sup>
5. Decree by al-'Abbās, vizier of al-Zāfir, A.H. 548 (Atiya No. 9).
6. Decree by Ṭalā'i', vizier of al-Fā'iz, A.H. 551 (Atiya No. 10).
7. Decree by Ṭalā'i', vizier of al-Fā'iz, A.H. 553 (Atiya No. 963).

These documents form a group of outstanding importance for the study of Fāṭimid diplomatic. At a later date, I hope to consider them from that point of view in a volume which I plan to devote to a collected edition ; here I wish to publish only one document (the oldest extant document of the group), and to use it to illustrate an episode in Fāṭimid history.

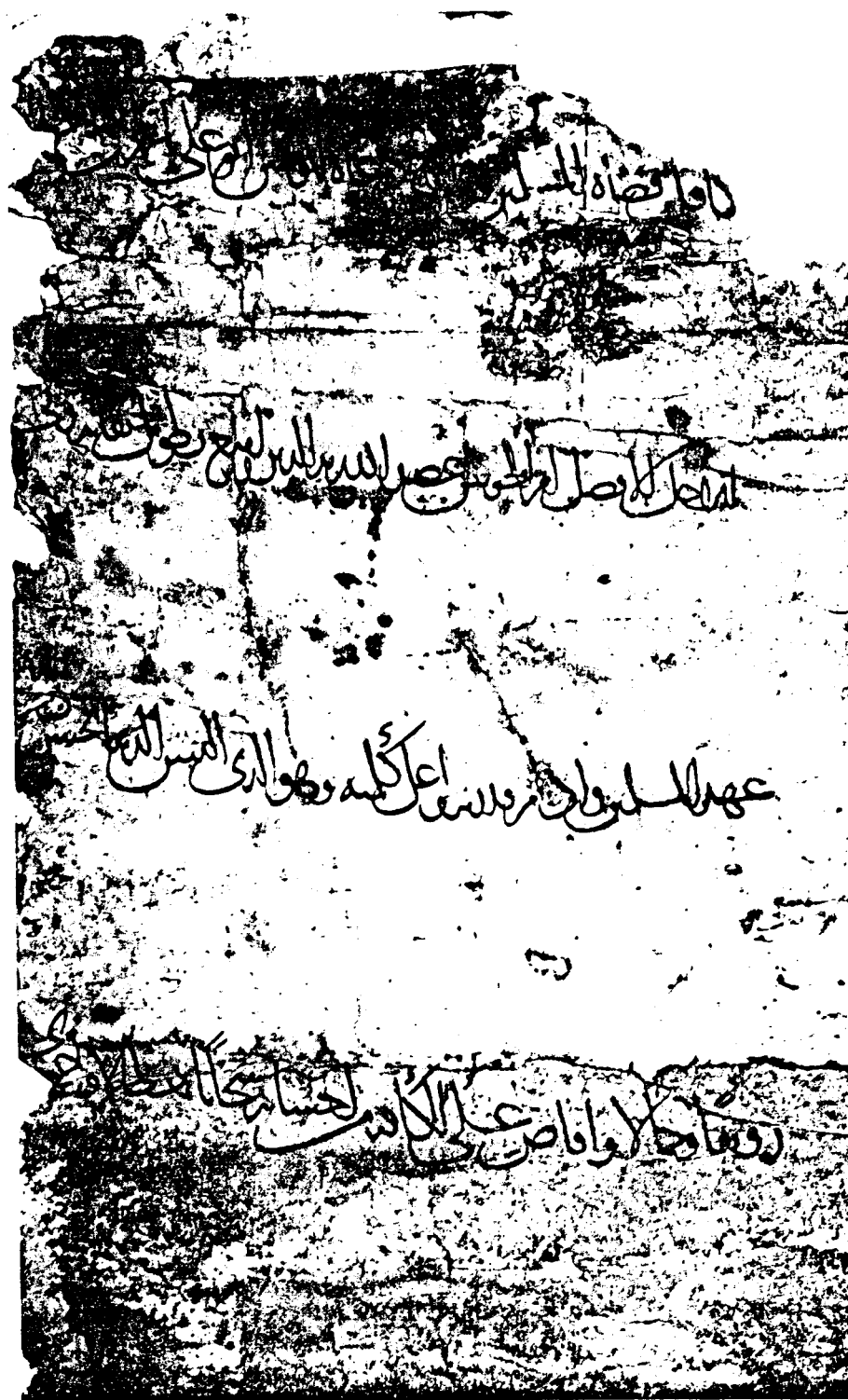
## (3) THE DECREE FROM 524/1130

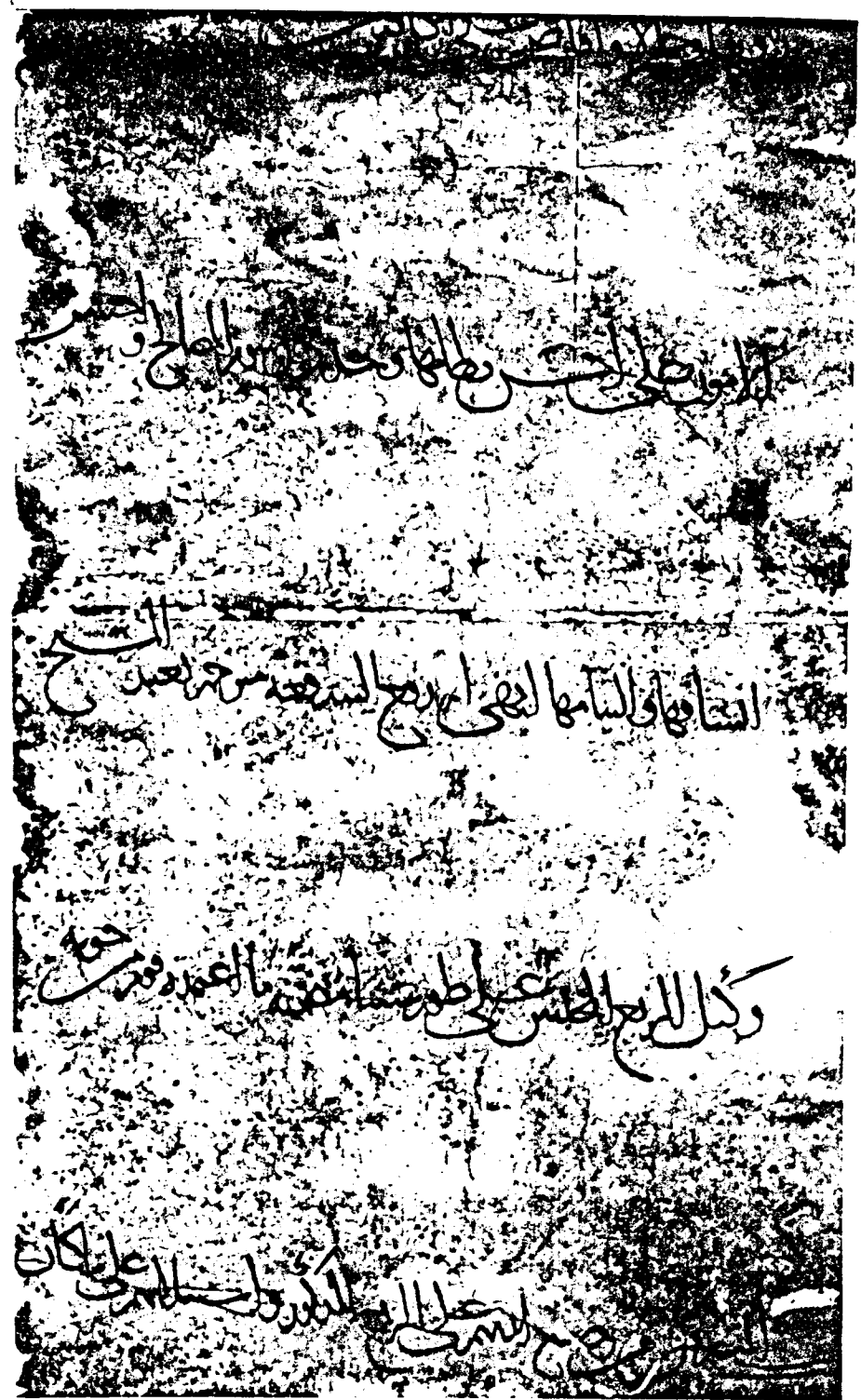
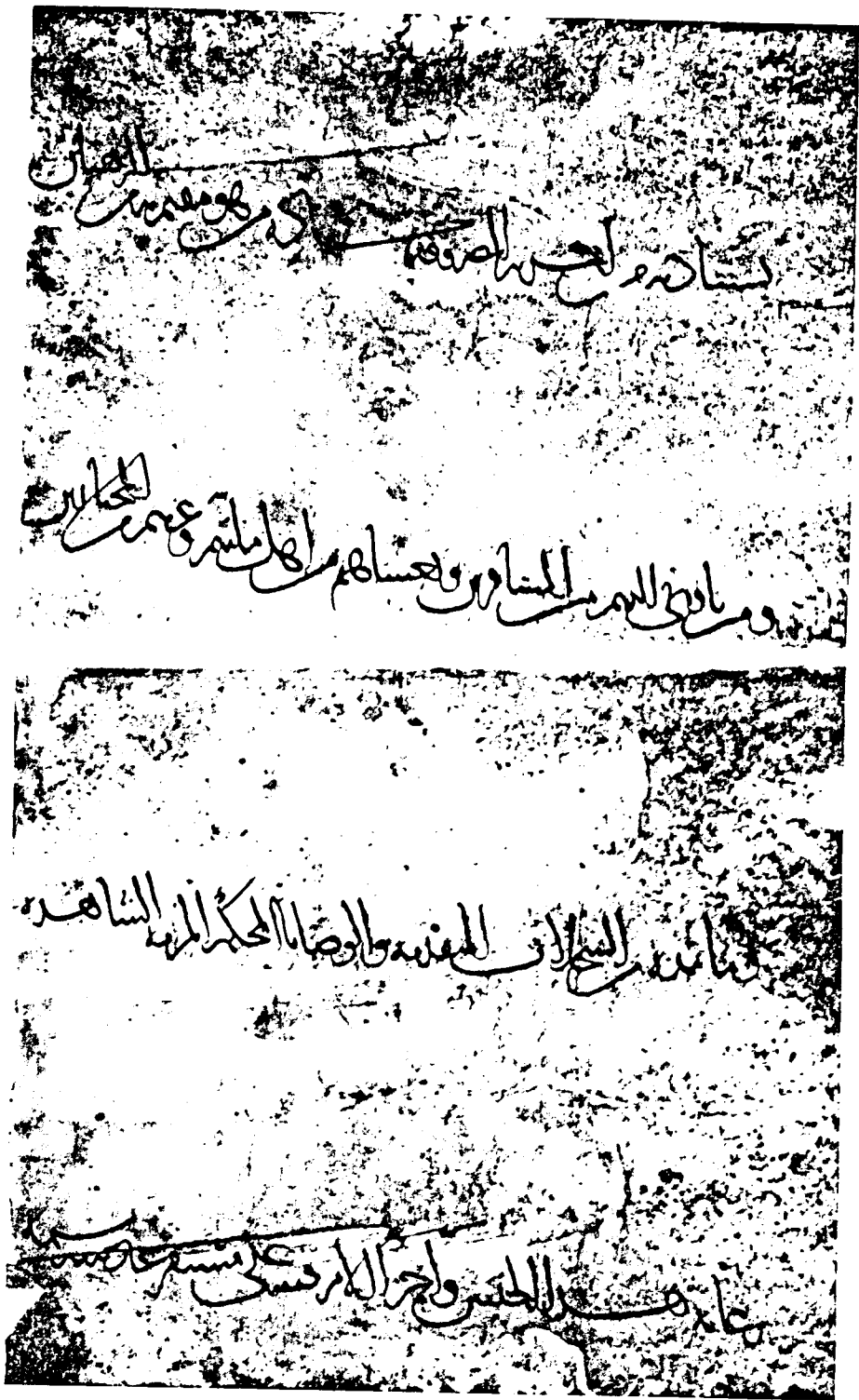
In an article published some years ago ('The succession to the Fāṭimid Imam al-Āmir . . .', *Oriens*, iv, 2, 1951, 193 ff.), I reconstructed the chequered succession of events which followed al-Āmir's assassination on 2 Dhū'l-Qa'da 524/8 October 1130, which it will suffice briefly to summarize as follows.

In the absence of a direct heir (as I explained in the study referred to, it is uncertain what happened to al-Ṭayyib, the son born to al-Āmir a few months before), power was assumed by the late caliph's cousin, 'Abd al-Majīd, or rather by the favourite of al-Āmir, Hazārmard, and his colleague Bargash, who put forward 'Abd al-Majīd as the nominal ruler. 'Abd al-Majīd, however, was not proclaimed as caliph, but as one of al-Āmir's wives was pregnant, he assumed the regency pending her expected delivery. Hazārmard's rule, however, proved

<sup>1</sup> I am most grateful to Dr. J. D. Latham, who pointed out to me some years ago (when he was in charge of the oriental department of the Manchester University Library) the existence of the duplicate set of microfilms. Mr. E. Khedoori made a selection of the documents in a thesis submitted to the University of Manchester in 1958 (*Charters of privileges granted by the Fatimids and Mamluks to St. Catherine's Monastery of Tur Sinai*). It is hoped that he will publish some of the documents which he included in his thesis.

<sup>2</sup> Atiya's No. 7 does not belong to the Fāṭimid period (as stated by Atiya), but to the





الشاهد في هذه الحال  
 علم على امر الامير الباق اوصى ذلك ما  
 امر به في عهد المسلمين وامراءه وطلبه السيد الاجل  
 امر الحسن في ارضه التي للعباد في هذا الحال  
 الشاهد في هذه الحال  
 الشاهد في هذه الحال  
 الشاهد في هذه الحال

الشاهد في هذه الحال  
 علم على امر الامير الباق اوصى ذلك ما  
 امر به في عهد المسلمين وامراءه وطلبه السيد الاجل  
 امر الحسن في ارضه التي للعباد في هذا الحال  
 الشاهد في هذه الحال  
 الشاهد في هذه الحال  
 الشاهد في هذه الحال



الأول من حرف الخس جمع أعمال الملكة السعيدة

سليح عرس حسن بايع واجد الأمانة على

الملك والملك الذي لم يترك شيئاً

الأول من حرف الخس جمع أعمال الملكة السعيدة

وكف استاء الخاضع من حياض الخس والملك

لدينا واعياننا ذلك الذي عليه يطالبون الخصال

وسائر الكف المكون من سائر الخس

وعهد السلطنة فانه ليل السد الاحكام

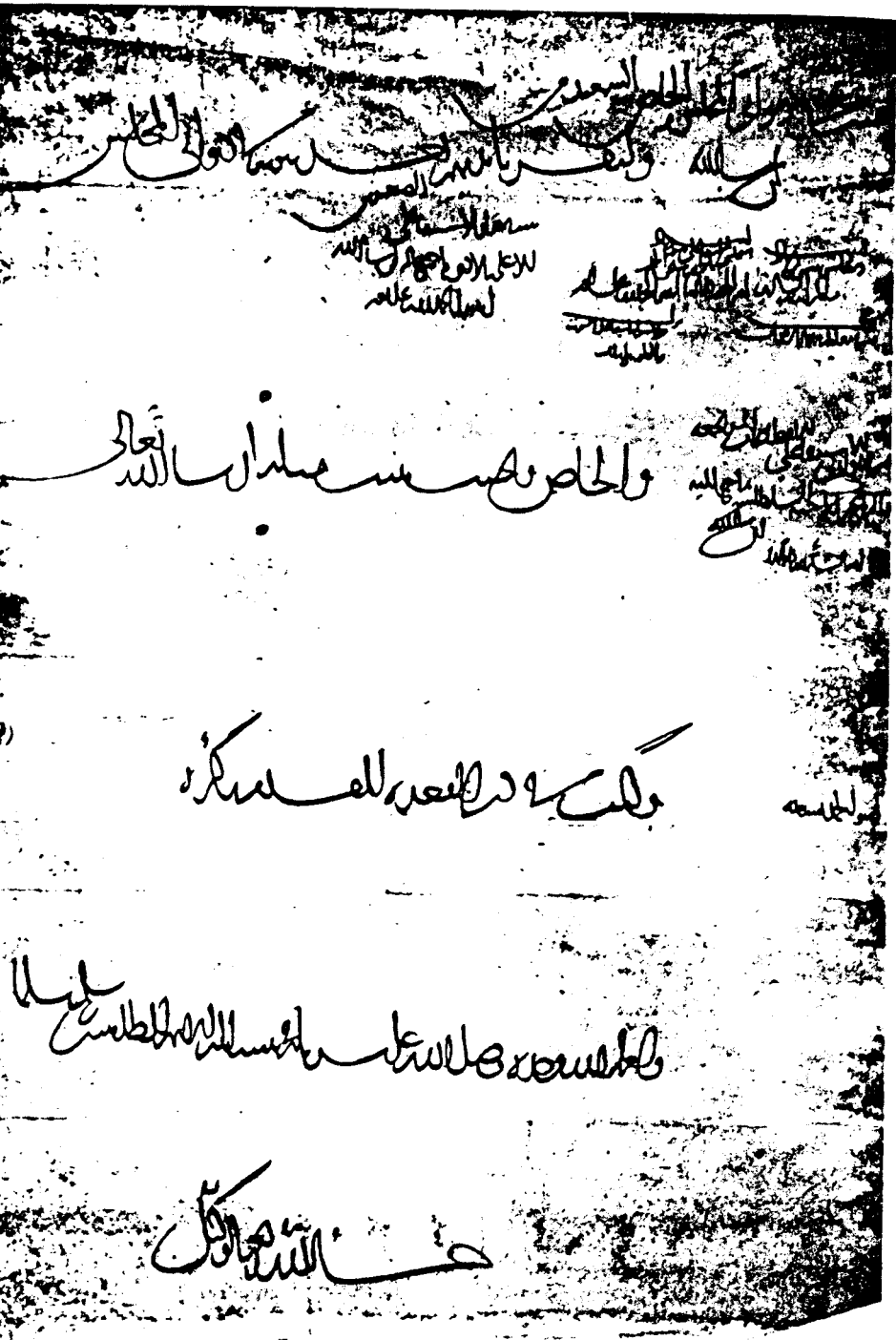
أعين السليم فانه  
 أمير الحسن و أمير المؤمنين  
 علي بن أبي طالب  
 صلوات الله  
 عليهما  
 و آلهما  
 الطيبين  
 الطاهرين  
 صلوات الله  
 عليهم  
 أجمعين

صلوات الله  
 عليهما  
 و آلهما  
 الطيبين  
 الطاهرين  
 صلوات الله  
 عليهم  
 أجمعين

صلوات الله  
 عليهما  
 و آلهما  
 الطيبين  
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 أجمعين

صلوات الله  
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 الطيبين  
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 صلوات الله  
 عليهم  
 أجمعين

صلوات الله  
 عليهما  
 و آلهما  
 الطيبين  
 الطاهرين  
 صلوات الله  
 عليهم  
 أجمعين



to be of short duration. Abū 'Alī Aḥmad (nicknamed Kutayfāt), the son of al-Afḍal, the famous minister of the caliphs al-Musta'li and al-Āmir, was raised to the vizierate by the army—according to the historian Ibn al-Muyassar on 16 Dhū'l-Qa'da, i.e. two weeks after the death of al-Āmir. I added: 'We may assume that, for some time at least, the arrangements concerning the status of 'Abd al-Majīd were continued as before'. For the assumption that for some time after the accession of Abū 'Alī Kutayfāt 'Abd al-Majīd continued to act as regent with Abū 'Alī as his vizier, I had at that time no direct proof, but concluded so on grounds of the general historical probability and a piece of circumstantial evidence: that in the Yaman the public prayer was said in the name of al-Ṭayyib as caliph—whose inclusion was due to the special position of the Yaman, explained in detail in my article, 'Abd al-Majīd as regent, and Abū 'Alī as vizier. The Sinai document published here is valuable evidence confirming that conclusion. Before discussing this document, however, we may as well add the rest of the story. It was probably at the moment when the expectation of the birth of a male heir proved false that the new vizier made a radical change which affected the very foundations of the régime. He declared the Fāṭimid dynasty deposed and placed the empire under the ideal sovereignty of the Expected Imam, the Mahdī of the Imamite Twelver Shi'a.<sup>1</sup> 'Abd al-Majīd was, of course, removed from the regency and put into custody.

<sup>1</sup> I take this opportunity to complete the list of the coins issued by Abū 'Alī Kutayfāt in the name of the Expected Imam which I have given on p. 205 of my article in *Oriens*, iv, 2, 1951. I have given in a note the references to the dinārs and dirhams of the year 525 (for the dirham Miṣr 525 add the specimen described by F. Soret, *Revue Archéologique*, 1856, 134-6); in the very year in which my article appeared, P. Balog published four specimens of the dinārs: three struck in Cairo, a.h. 525 (to be added under No. 2 in my list), one Miṣr, a.h. 525 (no dinār of this mint was known before). The reference is: P. Balog, 'Quatre dinars du Khalife fatimide Al-Mountazar li-amr-illah ou bi-amr-illah (525-526 a.h.)', *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte*, xxxiii, 1950-1, 375-8. My reference to the coinage of the year a.h. 526 is not quite accurate; I have written 'Other coins (Alexandria, 526) give greater prominence . . .', while in fact there is only one specimen known of this type, London, S. Lane-Poole, *Catalogue of oriental coins in the British Museum*, iv, No. 230 (pp. 55-6). M. Jungfleisch published in the same volume of the *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* which contains Balog's article (pp. 359-74) a study (entitled 'Jetons (ou poids ?) en verre de l'Imam El Mountazar') in which he describes glass weights bearing inscriptions in the name of the Expected Imam. The historical commentary given by the author is not quite correct and is superseded by the detailed account given in my article in *Oriens*, which appeared simultaneously. Moreover, the decipherment of some of the inscriptions seems to me unsatisfactory. As the author gives no photographs, but only drawings, I can only guess at what one would expect, stressing that my readings are not always compatible with the drawings, which, however, cannot claim documentary authority. A obv.—there can be hardly any doubt that the correct reading is: *al-Imām (or al-Qā'im) al-Mahdī Abū'l-Qāsim Muḥammad al-Muntazar* (instead of *استلم الهدى ودل القاسم محمد المنتظر*, which gives no sense). I have also little doubt that lines 2 and 3 of the rev. of B and D must be read *al-Sayyid al-Ajall al-Afdal* instead of *لا لبث عند الاجل الاظمى*, which again is quite impossible. In E rev., we probably have to read *bi-Amr Allāh*, as in F and G, and assume that the word *amr* has been repeated by an error. (The author's reading: *al-Muntazar Amran min Allāh* is most improbable.) I have for the moment no solutions to offer for the remaining puzzles: *hujjat Allāh* ومعه ?, B and C obv.; اصع با معطى, B and D rev., line 1, lines 3 and 4 of H obv. It is hoped that further specimens of this interesting series will come to light and make a definitive decipherment possible.

This solution secured the maximum amount of power to Abū 'Alī Kutayfāt who ruled henceforth as a dictator responsible to no one either in theory or in practice. His reign lasted about a year. On 16 Muḥarram 526/8 December 1131 Abū 'Alī was killed by the adherents of the Fātimid dynasty and 'Abd al-Majīd was fetched from his prison. At first, this restoration meant a return to the *status quo*, 'Abd al-Majīd bearing the title of regent. This is confirmed by a coin struck in Alexandria in 526 which bears the title: *Abū'l-Maymūn 'Abd al-Majīd walī 'ahd al-Muslimīn*. On 3 Rabi' II, however, a few months after his restoration as regent, 'Abd al-Majīd was proclaimed caliph under the title of al-Ḥāfiẓ li-Dīn Allāh.

The document to which this article is devoted dates from the month of Dhū'l-Qa'da of the year 524 and was issued in the names of the 'regent' (*walī 'ahd al-Muslimīn*) and the vizier Abū 'Alī Aḥmad.<sup>1</sup> The regent is of course 'Abd al-Majīd, though his name does not occur in that part of the document which has been preserved; it was no doubt mentioned in the missing lines at the beginning. Abū 'Alī became vizier on 16 Dhū'l-Qa'da, so that the document must have been issued during the second half of the month; it is a unique example of the protocol employed in the course of the few weeks that the conjunction of 'Abd al-Majīd as regent and Abū 'Alī as vizier endured.

Though a fuller study of the document from the diplomatic and palaeographic points of view must be reserved for a later occasion, on which it will have to be considered together with the rest of the Fātimid documents of Mount Sinai, it is convenient to give at least as much of a commentary as is indispensable for its proper understanding.

The document was issued in consequence of a petition, the contents of which can be deduced from the text of the document itself. It was presented by 'Abd al-Masīḥ, the agent of the monastery in charge of its properties in Egypt in complaint against some officials who usurped their revenues. We possess now enough materials to be able to form a sufficiently clear picture of the style and the material form of the petitions addressed to the Fātimid government. In a forthcoming article I shall publish three such petitions addressed to the caliphs al-Mustansīr and al-Āmir, and the caliph al-Āqid and his vizier, respectively; these documents will serve as samples of the Fātimid petitions and the photographs which are to accompany that article will make its readers familiar with their outward form. In the meantime, those who wish to visualize such a petition may refer to the document which I have published—together with a photograph—in my article 'An original document from the Fātimid chancery concerning Italian merchants', *Studi orientalistici*

<sup>1</sup> The words which survive of Abū 'Alī's protocol (lines 1–2) suffice to show that it followed the normal protocol of the viziers as introduced by Badr al-Jamālī. After the elimination of 'Abd al-Majīd and the proclamation of the sovereignty of the Expected Imam, a new protocol (which still preserves a similarity to the old one) was introduced by him; see the article in *Oriens* IV. 2, 1951, 205.

in *onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida*, Roma, 1956, II, 529 ff. Though that document does not seem to be a petition, but rather a report, its outward form corresponds closely to that of the petitions. In the article on the three petitions I shall devote a special section to the analysis of the Fātimid document of petition (*qiṣṣa* or *ruq'a*); in the following paragraphs, such of those results as can serve to clarify our decree are anticipated.

The name of the petitioner preceded by the word 'the slave' is usually written in the upper left corner of his petition (thus in two of the three petitions to be published in the above-mentioned article; and cf. al-Qalqashandī, *Subḥ al-a'shā*, VI, 203, lines 11–12: 'Often the words "the slave so-and-so" are written on the margin of the petition, outside (= above) the position of the *basmala*'). This custom explains the terms by which the petition is referred to in our document (ll. 5–6): 'there was submitted to him a document super-scribed (*mutarjama*) "'Abd al-Masīḥ . . ."' ; the petition obviously bore in the appropriate (upper left) corner the words 'The slave 'Abd al-Masīḥ, the agent of the property endowed upon Mount Sinai'.

The *basmala* is followed in the Fātimid petitions by the stereotyped formula of blessing upon the caliph and the dynasty. If 'Abd al-Masīḥ's petition was presented before the death of al-Āmir, the formula was identical with that which we read in the document about the Italian merchants referred to above; if, however, it was submitted under the regency of 'Abd al-Majīd, we cannot be sure how the formula was adapted to the circumstances of the regency. After the formula of blessing there follows the body of the petition beginning with the phrase: 'The slave so-and-so kisses the earth in front of the prophetic presence of the Imam and reports that . . .' (see the document about the Italian merchants and also cf. al-Qalqashandī, VI, 203, ll. 5–6: 'There should be written under the *basmala* "the slave so-and-so kisses the earth and reports"'—al-Qalqashandī describes the Mamlūk practice where no formula of blessing seems to have been used, so that the introductory words followed immediately after the *basmala*). The words 'and reports that' introduced the subject of the petition—in our case the complaints of 'Abd al-Masīḥ, the substance of which is reproduced in our document, ll. 7–14. The petitions end with the request for an order to grant the petitioner's wish and the final formulas.

'Abd al-Masīḥ's petition, which we have thus reconstructed in our imagination, was duly presented, and finding a favourable reception, the regent and the vizier—in fact probably the vizier in the name of the regent and of himself—gave the order (no doubt in the form of an endorsement, *tauqī'*, on the petition itself<sup>1</sup>) that a decree should accordingly be drawn up in the *dīwān al-inshā'*; our document was then issued in compliance with that order.

As to the document itself, the few missing lines at the beginning can easily

<sup>1</sup> On the back of No. 3 of the three petitions to be published by me the *tauqī'* of the vizier is actually preserved.

be restored: their text no doubt said that the order to write the present decree was given by 'Abd al-Majīd, *kalī 'ahd al-Muslimīn*, because his vizier—here starts the extant text of the document—Abū 'Alī al-Afdal (whose full titles are given) had reported that a petition had reached him from 'Abd al-Masīh, the agent of the *ḥabs* (= *waqf*, endowed property) belonging to the monastery of Mount Sinai. In his petition, 'Abd al-Masīh complained that some dishonest administrators (*mutaṣarrifūn*; probably government officials are meant) had laid hands upon the income of the *ḥabs* property belonging to the monastery, which should have served for the upkeep of the monks and their guests. (Unfortunately the indications both about the property and the usurpation of its income are very vague; it is obviously a question of matters well-known at the time and of which no specification was thought to be necessary.) The agent also produced earlier decrees (*siyillāt*) and 'definitive admonishments' (by the caliphs?) which enjoined respect for this property. In view of all this, an order had been directed by the regent and the vizier conjointly to the *dīwān al-inshā'* to issue the present decree: that from the beginning of Dhū'l-Qa'da 524 these *ḥabs* properties should be 'released'—i.e. probably the income restored to the agent of the monastery—and the old privileges observed, that no harm should be done to the monastery and no fines and taxes imposed upon it. There follow the final formulas, which are of course regulated by strict conventions; thus, for example, the praise of God and the blessing upon the Prophet are all in one line, while the customary end: 'God is sufficient for us, and He is a good guardian', begins not in line with the rest of the document but indented by more than one-third of the length of the previous lines. We are not, however, going into further details about Fātimid diplomatic; yet it is necessary to say something about the registration entries which appear in the document. The present decree, like the others, ends with an order that the original shall be kept by the interested party, i.e. the monastery; and indeed it did survive in the monastery's archives. Before reaching its ultimate destination, it was, however, registered in various government offices. I assume that the registration was done by including a copy, or an abstract, of the document in the books of the office concerned; for this purpose the document, before being delivered to the person or the institution with whose affairs it dealt, was circulated among the various government offices which had to take notice of it. In the body of our document (ll. 29–30) it is expressly stated that it should be registered in two offices: the Office of the Audience-Chamber (*dīwān al-majlis*)<sup>1</sup> and the Office of the Privy Purse (*dīwān al-khāṣṣ*).<sup>2</sup> In addition we find between lines 29 and 30 an

<sup>1</sup> This was the central office of the administration; Ibn al-Ṭuwayr (quoted by al-Qalqashandī and al-Maqrīzī) calls it *aqḥ al-dawāwīn*. See al-Qalqashandī, *Suḥb al-a'shā*, III, 493–4; al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭat*, I, 397–400. Abū Šāliḥ, *The churches and monasteries of Egypt*, ed. and transl. B. T. A. Evetts, fol. 33b, mentions a 'scribe of the salaries of the *dīwān al-majlis*'.

<sup>2</sup> This Fātimid office is not mentioned by al-Qalqashandī and al-Maqrīzī, but Abū Šāliḥ (fol. 42b) mentions its head (*mutawallī dīwān al-khāṣṣ*) under al-Āmir.

entry by a clerk drawing further attention to the necessity of registration in these two offices (note 1). Furthermore we find orders that the document should be registered in the Audience-Chamber (*majlis*) of Tinnis and Damietta (note 2a),<sup>1</sup> that of the Inspection of Tinnis and Damietta (*majlis al-istifā'* 'alā Tinnis wa-Dimyāt, note 3a),<sup>2</sup> in the Office of the Inspection of the Two Ša'ids, Upper and Lower Ša'id, and what appertains to it (*majlis al-istifā'* 'alā'l-Ša'idayn al-A'lā wa'l-Asfal wa-mā jumī'a ilayh, note 4a)<sup>3</sup>; finally in the Office of the Inspection of the Reclaimed Fiefs and Government Estates and what appertains to it (*dīwān al-istifā'* 'alā'l-aqtā' al-murtaja'a wa'l-ribā' wa'l... (?) *al-sullāniyya wa-mā jumī'a ilayh*, note 7a).<sup>4</sup> After each order, there is an entry recording that the registration has been carried out (notes marked with the addition of b).<sup>5</sup> It is not clear why the two offices under 5 and 6—the first of which could not yet be identified—only noted that the document had 'come in' (if that is the meaning of *nazal*) without recording its registration. From the long list of the offices which had to be informed, it seems clear that various properties in different provinces were involved.

In editing the document, the original division of the lines is retained. Diacritical points, of which only a few appear in the original, have been added; moreover, in order to facilitate reading, in passages in rhymed prose commas are put in to mark the rhymes. The dimensions of the scroll on which the document is written are according to Atiya 4.47 × 0.38 m. It has been microfilmed by the American expedition in ten partly overlapping sections; the plates accompanying this article are based on enlargements of these ten microfilm frames. It is regretted that for technical reasons the margins of the original prints had to be cut, so that the characteristic edges of the scroll do not always appear on the plates.

<sup>1</sup> This office is not mentioned by al-Qalqashandī and al-Maqrīzī; the former mentions (III, 494) the office of the textile workshops (*tirāz*) situated in Tinnis and Damietta.

<sup>2</sup> As we shall see in the next note, the duty, or one of the duties of these offices of inspection was to avoid delays in the accountancy.

<sup>3</sup> For the Office of Upper Egypt (al-Ša'id, which was divided into the Lower and the Upper Ša'id), see al-Qalqashandī, III, 495, who writes: 'In it there were several secondary secretaries, who shared the task of inspection and whose duty was to send reminders about accounts which were delayed'. A garden rented from the *dīwān* of Upper Egypt is mentioned by Abū Šāliḥ, fol. 40a. I cannot say why in the preceding instance both the 'Office', and the 'Office of Inspection' are named separately, while here only the 'Office of Inspection' is referred to.

<sup>4</sup> This office probably dealt with confiscated estates in particular, and with government lands in general. Though the office is not mentioned in the lists of the Fātimid offices, al-Qalqashandī quotes (X, 357–9) the diploma of appointment of a head of the *dīwān al-murtaja'a*, which no doubt designates the same office. (As in the diploma the duties of the office are described as the administration of estates 'recovered from Bahrām and others', and by Bahrām the famous minister of al-Ḥāfiẓ is doubtless meant, we may date it from the reign of that caliph.)

<sup>5</sup> The pious mottoes at the end of these entries, which vary from office to office, presumably formed the signs manual ('*alāma*) of the different clerks. (Cf. Abū Šāliḥ, fol. 40a, where the '*alāma* of an official under al-Hākīm is given as *al-ḥamd li'llāh 'alā mā yastahiqq*. The translation 'his sobriquet was' is erroneous; read 'his motto was'.)

Text

كافل قضاة المسلمين، وهادى دعاة المؤمنين، ابو على احمد السيد  
الاجل الافضل امير الجيوش عضد الله به الدين، وامتع بطول بقائه ولى  
عهد المسلمين، وادام قدرته، واعلى كلمته، وهو الذى البس الدنيا بحسن نظره  
رونقا وجمالا، وافاض على الكافة من إحسانه سحابا هطالا، واجرى  
الامور على احسن نظامها، وجدد رسوم المصالح واحسن  
اتساقها والتنامها، انهى انه رفع اليه رقعة مترجمة بعبد المسيح  
وكيل الربع المحبس على طور سينا مضمّنة ما اعتمده قوم من خونة  
المتصرفين من وضع ايديهم على الربع المذكور واستيلائهم على ما كان  
يستاديه من اجرتهم المصروفة فى مادة من هو مقيم به من الرهبان  
ومن يابى اليهم من المسافرين ويغشاهم من اهل ملتهم وغيرهم من المحتاجين  
وما بيده من السجلات المتقدمة والوصايا المحكمة المبرمة الشاهدة  
برعاية هذا الحبس واجراء الامر فيه على مستقر عاداته ورسومه  
وان ذلك قد اضر بهم غاية الاضرار، وقطع عنهم المادة التى  
كانت مستمرة عليهم احسن استمرار، واحضر السجلات  
الشاهدة لهم بهذه الحال، الناطقة باستمرار هذا الحبس  
عليهم على ممر الايام والليال، اقتضى ذلك ما خرج به  
امر ولى عهد المسلمين وامر فتاه وخليه السيد الاجل الافضل  
امير الجيوش الى ديوان الانشاء المعمور، بكتب هذا السجل المنشور،  
بالافراج عن هذا الحبس بجميع اعمال المملكة لاستقبال ذى القعدة  
سنة اربع وعشرين وخمس مائة واجراء الامر فيه على  
الرسم المعهود قديما، والنظام الذى لم يزل مستمرا مستقيما،  
وكف اسباب المضار عنهم وقصر ايدى الحاضرة والبادية عن  
اذيتهم واعفائهم من كلما يكرهون عليه ويطالبون به من المغارم  
وسائر الكلف الماخوذة منهم فيما سلف احسانا من  
ولى عهد المسلمين ومن فتاه وخليه السيد الاجل الافضل  
امير الجيوش واجراء للامور على قانون العدل  
المشهور المعروف  
فليعلم هذا من الامر وليعمل به  
وليقر بأيديهم بعد ثبوته فى ديوانى المجلس

30  
والخاص بحيث يثبت مثله ان شاء الله تعالى

وكتب فى ذى القعدة المقدم ذكره

والحمد لله وحده وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد نبيه واله الأئمة الطاهرين وسلم تسليما  
حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل

[Notes of registration :]

[In larger script above line 29 beginning on the right margin ; the last three words on the margin in front of line 29 :]

[1] يثبت فى ديوانى المجلس والخاص السعيدين | ان شاء الله

[The following entries are written between lines 29 and 30, beginning on the right margin ; first row :]

[2a] ليثبت | فى مجلس تئيس ودمياط | والحمد لله حمد الشاكرين

[b] اثبت الحمد لله رب العالمين

[3a] ليثبت | فى مجلس الاستيفاء على تئيس ودمياط | والحمد لله مستحق الحمد

[b] اثبت الحمد لله على نعمه

[4a] يثبت فى ديوان الاستيفاء على الصعيدين | الاعلى والادنى وما جمع اليه ان شاء الله

[b] اثبت الحمد لله على نعمه

[under 2 and 3 :]

[5] نزل | فى معاملة (?) . . . . . (?)

[6] نزل | فى مجلس الاستيفاء على الشرقية | والطور وما جمع اليه

[On the right margin, in front of line 30 :]

[7a] يثبت فى ديوان الاستيفاء على الاقطاعات المترجمة | والرباع والاحه (?)

[b] السلطانية وما جمع اليه | ان شاء الله

[b] اثبت الشكر لله رب العالمين

[On the right margin, in front of line 31 :]

[8] اثبت الحمد لله وحده

Translation

[The contents of the missing lines can be reconstructed as follows :

The order to issue the present decree was given by Abū'l-Maymūn 'Abd al-Majīd, son of the amīr Abū'l-Qāsim, Owner of the Homage of the Muslims (*walī 'ahd al-Muslimīn*), because his vizier] Protector of the Qādis of the Muslims, Guide of the Dā'is of the Believers, Abū 'Alī Ahmad, the Most Honoured and Most Excellent Lord, Commander of the Armies, may God support religion through him and gladden by his long life the Owner of the Homage of the Muslims, may He make his power last and enhance his prestige—he who covered the world by

his careful administration with splendour and beauty, and poured out over all and sundry the heavy clouds of his bounty, and put affairs into the best order, and restored the traces of welfare and set them aright and regulated them—had reported that a petition had been submitted to him, bearing the name of 'Abd al-Masīh, agent of the property endowed upon Mount Sinai, and containing the following :

Some treacherous administrators have laid hands upon the aforementioned property and grasped the rents which he used to collect and spend on the support of the monks who stay there, the travellers who take refuge there, and the members of their religion and other needy persons who frequent them ; he also has in his hands earlier decrees and definitive admonishments which attest the protection given to this endowment and ordered that the old-established customs and habits should be followed concerning it ; that this caused them heavy damage and deprived them of the support which had been forthcoming in a regular fashion. He also presented the decrees which bore witness to the truth of their statement and told that this endowment was theirs continuously since many a day and night.

All this made it necessary that an order should be issued by the Owner of the Homage of the Muslims and by his servant and friend, the Most Honoured and Most Excellent Lord, Commander of the Armies, to the Office of the Correspondence, may it flourish, to write this patent decree about the release of this endowment in all financial departments of the kingdom from the beginning of Dhū'l-Qa'da of the year five hundred twenty-five, and about it being treated in accordance with the old-established custom and the order which had been continuously observed, and about keeping harm away from them and restraining the hands of city-dwellers as well as Bedouins from damaging them, and about freeing them of all imposts and other dues which they are constrained to and which are imposed upon them and which used to be taken from them in the past—this being an act of favour on the part of the Owner of the Homage of the Muslims and his servant and friend, the Most Honoured and Most Excellent Lord, Commander of the Armies, and one which has as its aim the execution of the norms of publicly known justice.

Let this order be known and acted upon, and let it be kept by them after registration—by way of the registration of a copy—in the two Offices, that of the Audience-Chamber and that of the Private Purse, if God wills.

Written in Dhū'l-Qa'da of the aforementioned year.

Praise be to God alone and may God bless our lord Muḥammad and his family the pure Imams and may He give them peace.

God is sufficient for us and He is a good guardian

[Notes of registration :]

- [1] Let it be registered in the two blessed Offices, that of the Audience-Chamber and that of the Privy Purse, if God wills.
- [2a] Let it be registered in the Audience-Chamber of Tinnīs and Damietta. [b] It has been registered, praise be to God, the Master of the universe.
- [3a] Let it be registered in the Audience-Chamber of the Inspection of Tinnīs and Damietta, praise be to God, Who deserves praise. [b] It has been registered, praise be to God for His bounties.
- [4a] Let it be registered in the Office of the Inspection of the two Ṣa'īds, Upper and Lower Ṣa'īd, and what appertains to it, if God wills. [b] It has been registered, praise be to God for His bounties.
- [5] It has come in at the . . . (?).
- [6] It has come in at the Office of Inspection of the Eastern Province and al-Ṭūr and what appertains to it.
- [7a] Let it be registered in the Office of the Inspection of the Reclaimed Fiefs and Government Estates and . . . (?) and what appertains to it, if God wills. [b] It has been registered, thanks be to God, the Master of the universe.
- [8] It has been registered, praise be to God alone.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This note stands alone and there is no indication from which office it emanates.