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Kinship, Camaraderie and Contestation Fatimid Relations with the Ashraf in the Fourth AH /Tenth CE century

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Abstract:

The founding of the Fatimid caliphate across the southern Mediterranean, and then in Egypt, Syria and the Hijaz at the turn of the fourth AH / tenth CE century, necessitated its negotiation with the *ashraf*, those who claimed lineal descent from the Prophet Muhammad, and who by this time had gained significant influence as a social class based on their charismatic descent. While other dynastic powers fostered relationships with various members of the *ashraf*, the Fatimid-*ashraf* dynamics were distinctive in that the Fatimids legitimised their rule as Ismaiʻli Shiʻi imam-caliphs, based on their claim of descent from the Prophet Muhammad, and as the sole successors to his authority and leadership over the Islamic world. Consequently, Fatimid-*ashraf* relations were permeated by fraternal camaraderie as well as competing contestations based on their shared claim of Prophetic lineage.

Introduction

Lineal descent from the Prophet Muhammad was among the earliest markers of charismatic authority and social distinction in the history of the Muslim world.[1] To this day, across a wide range of Muslim societies and doctrinal interpretations, blood-descent from the Prophet remains imbued with significant prestige.[2] The establishment of the Fatimid caliphate in 297 AH / 909 CE was predicated on lineal descent from the Prophet. Proclaiming their authority as Shiʻi imams, the Fatimids presented themselves as the sole designated successors to the Prophet Muhammad, and therefore the only legitimate inheritors to his authority and leadership over

the *umma*.[3] Following the establishment of their rule, the Fatimids had to continually negotiate their authority across a range of social, ethnic and religious groups in their burgeoning empire.[4] Of these groups, among the most influential and socially-cohesive were the *ashraf*, the term used to refer to those who claimed lineal descent from the Prophet Muhammad.[5] By the latter half of the fourth AH / tenth CE century the *ashraf* had settled across the breadth of the Islamic world, and had successfully established themselves as an exclusive, privileged and charismatic social group.[6] Moreover, the Fatimids' rise to power in fourth AH / tenth CE century also coincided with the heightening and consolidation of the social status of the *ashraf*. This inevitably meant that the shared claim of Prophetic descent between the Fatimid imam-caliphs and the *ashraf* provided an impetus for camaraderie as much as it did for contestation.

Notwithstanding commentary on individual episodes in Fatimid-*ashraf* relations,[7]or on the role of *ashraf* in particular instances of anti-Fatimid polemic,[8] the relationship between the Fatimids and the *ashraf* has yet to be the focus of a sustained study in contemporary scholarship. Nonetheless, the interplay of these relationships merits further attention. The considerable role played by a host of different *ashraf,* whether they were pro or anti-Fatimid, is as much a distinct feature of Fatimid history as it is in the history of the *ashraf*. This is most apparent in the decades immediately following the Fatimid entry to Egypt in 358 AH / 969 CE.

Over the last three decades, a quantum of research focusing on the *ashraf* as a social group, with studies ranging from the early Islamic to the modern periods, has provided significant analysis and schematic frameworks through which the *ashraf* can be historically approached.[9] Yet, as this paper aims to highlight, the relationship between the *ashraf* and the Fatimid imam-caliphs was rather distinctive in respect to *ashraf*-state relations in medieval Muslim history. The Fatimid polity was the only sustained Shi'i caliphate across the central heartlands of the Islamic world in this period.[10] Therefore for the *ashraf*, the Fatimids were the only major dynastic power with whom they shared the claim of blood-descent from the Prophet Muhammad, and thus who also shared the charismatic membership of the *Ahl al-Bayt* [the 'People of the Prophet's house'].[11] This article will therefore explore the distinctive dynamic engendered between the Fatimids and the *ashraf*, which had the potential

to converge on mutual interests, but also had the tendency to be fractious when their interests diverged.

A reading of the source narratives reveals that Fatimid-*ashraf* relations gained salience during the reign of the fourth Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah (r. 341-365 AH / 953-975 CE), whose reign witnessed the transference of the Fatimid polity from North Africa to Egypt. There are three principal causes that account for this shift. First, al-Mu'izz is well-known to have initiated efforts at rapprochement across different social and religious groups which had historical and doctrinal links with the Fatimids.[12] His interactions with the Qaramita of Bahrain as well as his efforts at reconciliation with non-Fatimid Isma'ilis in Iran and Iraq are cases in point.[13] The cultivation of al-Mu'izz's relations with the *ashraf*, often through reference to the notion of shared descent, provides another example of his conciliatory approach. Second, the transference of the Fatimid caliphate to Egypt necessitated the genesis of new relationships with the influential aristocracies already present in Egypt as well as in Syria and Arabia. As will be discussed below, central to these Fatimid efforts were relations with what will be referred to as the 'pro-Fatimid' *ashraf*. The third factor concerns the consequences of the Fatimid expansion into Egypt and Syria, which positioned the Fatimids as the most potent threat to the Abbasid Caliphate, their Buyid overlords and the proto-Sunni legal establishment in the eastern lands. In countering this development, the 'anti-Fatimid' *ashraf* therefore gained a unique function. Fatimid-*ashraf* relations during the reign of al-Mu'izz will thus form the principal focus of this study; while continuities during the reign of his son and successor al-'Aziz will also be noted.

A Note on the Sources

Morimoto notes that it is "important to keep in mind that the functions of the *sayyid*/*sharif* pedigree should be interpreted in terms of its legitimising capacity."[14] Similarly, in explaining the prominent position given to Alid families in the fifth AH/ eleventh CE century in 'local histories' of the various eastern Muslim regions, Bernheimer notes that "the presence of members of the Prophet's family became almost part of the *fada'il* (virtues) of a place: It linked the locality genealogically with the earliest period of Islam."[15] This 'legitimising power' of the *ashraf* denotes a distinct historiographical concern

for the study of Fatimid-*ashraf* relations, namely the function of the *ashraf* to promote Fatimid lineage, and more critically, to act as 'literary-foils' with a function of rejecting the Fatimid lineage as part of the broader anti-Fatimid polemic.

The fact that the Fatimid genealogical link to the Prophet Muhammad was integral to their legitimisation of authority, meant that their lineage became a central target of attack by their detractors.[16] The *ashraf* therefore came to feature prominently in anti-Fatimid polemic. First, some *ashraf* used their prerogative as 'guardians of the Prophet's lineage' to fuel anti-Fatimid propaganda in the fourth AH / tenth CE century, most notably, the polemicist *sharif* Akhu Muhsin. The *ashraf* were similarly also deployed by the Abbasid Caliphs to delegitimise the Fatimid lineage as evidenced in the so-called 'Baghdad Manifesto' of 402 AH / 1011 CE. Subsequently, the writings of Akhu Muhsin and the signatories of the Baghdad Manifesto became embedded in pro-Abbasid historiography. The use of the *ashraf* as tools in the delegitimising discourse against the Fatimids is further evident in the central positioning of the *ashraf* in the chronicles that attest to the signing of the Manifesto.[17]

Most accounts relating to Fatimid-*ashraf* relations are found in post sixth AH / twelfth CE century literature concerned either with the histories of North Africa and Egypt in general, or that of the Fatimids in particular.[18] Among these are the works of the ninth AH / fifteenth CE century Egyptian Sunni Mamluk historian Taqi al-Din al-Maqrizi (d. 845 AH / 1449 CE) and his contemporary Yemeni Isma'ili author Idris 'Imad al-Din (d. 872 AH / 1468 CE), both of whom report extensively from primary sources which are no longer extant.[19] Al-Maqrizi draws extensively from Ibn Zulaq (d. 386 AH / 996 CE), an eyewitness source on the Fatimid conquest of Egypt and, seemingly, is in close contact with the leading *sharif* of Egypt.[20] The preservation of Fatimid sources in Idris' writings has made his works among of the vital sources for this period.[21]

The chronicles usually mention the *ashraf* in the Fatimid realms in relation to their political or literary activity, either as allies to the Fatimids, or as rebels or polemicists against them. The Egyptian *ashraf* under the Fatimids also appear in the longer biographical dictionaries on the notables of Egypt, such as Ibn Khallikan's *Wafayat al-a'yan* and al-Maqrizi's *Kitab al-muqaffa al-kabir*.[22]

Historical Backdrop

The emergence of the *ashraf* as a distinct social group in the early medieval period, the involvement of its members in different dynastic administrations, and their dispersal across Islamic lands more broadly, has received scholarly attention from Arendonk, Bulliet, Mottahedeh, Morimoto, Bernheimer and Amoretti, among others.[23] Their findings indicate that by the fifth AH / eleventh CE century, the descendants of the Prophet had proliferated across the Islamic world and had successfully established themselves as a charismatic and influential social group with defined membership criteria.[24] By the late fourth AH / tenth CE century, in the Abbasid administration as well as in other regional principalities, the *ashraf* often held public welfare and civic roles, functioning as heads of the pilgrimage caravans, market overseers and inspectors, diplomats and judges.[25] Their collective group identity was reinforced by the institutionalisation of the position of the *naqib*, attested as early as the third AH / ninth CE century, and generally translated as 'martial' or 'overseer' of the *ashraf*.[26] The *naqib*s functioned essentially as leaders of the *ashraf* in a given region. Their principal functions included the maintenance of the genealogical registers of the *ashraf*, recording their births and deaths, and regulating marriages. The *naqib*s also ensured that the *ashraf* benefited from distinctive socio-economic privileges accorded to them as descendants of the Prophet, such as stipends, pensions and tax benefits.[27] These distinct fiscal privileges of the *ashraf* are among the tangible manifestations of their social and legal status across the various Shi'i and Sunni groupings.[28]

Yet while the *ashraf* became socially cohesive as a collective, they nonetheless remained significantly diverse in their religious beliefs.[29] Seemingly, a sizeable number belonged to the Zaydi Shi'a, but many professed Ithna'Ashari or Isma'ili Shi'ism,[30] or subscribed to one of the Sunni *madhhab*s.[31] They were similarly diverse in their political tendencies, as is further evident in their widely varying attitudes towards the Fatimid state.

Commonalities and Distinctions: The contours of Fatimid-*ashraf* relations

The Fatimid-*ashraf* dialectic gained salience following the extension of Fatimid rule over Egypt, Palestine and the Hijaz in 358 AH / 969 CE. A number of doctrinal and political considerations had an impact on this development.

The common lineage of the Fatimids and the *ashraf* meant that they also had shared notions of identity, a lived affinity to the "history of the Alids", and a shared experience of being marginalised by those who were opposed to the Alids.[32] Moreover, the Fatimids and the *ashraf* from the descent of al-Hasan and al-Husayn held a shared belief in the charisma that was embodied in the blood-line of Ali and Fatima.[33] As the case-studies below will highlight, this shared affinity became a major factor in fostering relations between the Fatimids and the pro-Fatimid *ashraf*. Importantly, it also became imbued in the Fatimid approach to governance. As the new ruling power in Egypt, the Fatimid imam-caliphs sought support from distinct segments of the local populace, providing a canopy of protection and patronage to various groups. The elite of Egypt's Christian and Jewish communities, and perhaps more importantly those of the Muslim bureaucratic and merchant classes, leant their support to Fatimid rule after their inclusion into the state administration, many having earlier sought the stability that the Fatimids brought following a period of anarchy in Egypt.[34] Central to this endeavour at entente however were the new dynasts' efforts in establishing relations with the local *ashraf*.

Yet, these shared affinities had their corollary limitations. As Isma'ili imams, the Fatimid Caliphs espoused the Shi'i *Imami* doctrine, according to which the status of a single line of the Prophet's descendants was privileged above all others - that of the Isma'ili Imams who traced their lineage through Husayn b. Ali (d. 61 AH / 680 CE) to the Prophet.[35] As will be evident, in their viewpoint, while the *ashraf* were to be accorded respect and privilege due to their descent, they were nonetheless secondary in their ranking in relation to their own uniquely designated status. This elevation of a single lineage of Husaynids necessarily relegated not only all the other lineages of the *ashraf* but also other members of the Fatimid household itself, namely the other descendants of the founding Fatimid imam-caliph al-Mahdi bi'llah (r. 297-322 AH / 909-934 CE). While they retained a position of respect, they were nonetheless devoid

of charismatic authority. As noted in Fatimid sources, within the greater Fatimid household this led to fractiousness that at times resulted in counterclaims to power.[36]

The Fatimid advocacy of a single designated lineage of Alids, posed a substantive challenge to the status of the *ashraf* in Egypt, and was notably against a trend manifest by the *ashraf* themselves. Recent scholarship has argued that from the third AH / ninth CE century onwards, members of the *ashraf* sought to elevate the collective Alid lineage above all others through a variety of measures, including the production of exclusivist genealogical tables, the regulation of membership through the institutionalisation of the *niqaba* and the establishment of endogamous marriage-practices.[37] Given that the *ashraf* expressed a tendency towards Zaydi Shi'ism, it can be argued that the majority of the fourth AH / tenth CE century *ashraf* consequently favoured a more collective notion of the *ahl al-bayt* that vested charismatic appeal in all the descendants of the Prophet. Hence, for some of the influential *ashraf*, particularly those in Syria and Iraq, the rise of the Fatimids was not only imbued with religious significance but also had social repercussions, which can be posited as a cause of considerable consternation that often degenerated into outright hostility.

Viewed from another angle however, the Fatimid doctrinal claim to the Imamate invested in the *ashraf* a distinct authority that they did not possess in their relations with other dynastic powers. By the late fourth AH / tenth CE century, the *naqib*s of the *ashraf* were manifesting unprecedented power and prestige across many urban centres of the Islamic world. This included the maintenance of registers in which they recorded, and thus regulated, the lineage of their kinsmen. Through the production of such registers and production of formal documents, they publically affirmed or denied an individual's, or clan's, claim of descent from the Prophet. Thus the *naqib*s became 'guardians of the Prophet's lineage', registering 'true descendant of the Prophet' on the one hand and publically denouncing those whom they considered to be false claimants (*da'i kadhdhab*) on the other; notwithstanding the fact that *naqib*s from different regions often disagreed as to what constituted a true lineage.[38]

The *ashraf* were therefore in an unrivalled position to pronounce on a central qualifying feature of the Fatimid claim to the imamate, that is, their genealogical lineage to the Prophet. This established prerogative gave the *ashraf* a powerful tool that could be highly beneficial, or

singularly detrimental to the Fatimid cause. As will be highlighted below, over this period in question, it was the *ashraf*s' monopoly over the veracity of claims to the Prophetic descent that propelled some of them to the forefront of the anti-Fatimid polemic. The *ashraf*s' prerogative to verify or deny true lineage furthermore became a powerful tool for the Abbasids and the Buyids, who used it to maximum effect in their rivalry against the Fatimids.

Camaraderie and Alliance

Al-Mu'izz and the Idrisids: A precursor to conciliatory policies

Soon after the establishment of the Fatimid dynasty in North Africa in 297 AH / 910 CE, the Fatimids came into contact with the Idrisids, an Alid dynasty whose Imamate was legitimised through the Zaydi Shi'i model. Idrisid rule had been established in the western-most regions of North Africa following a failed rebellion by Hasanid descendants of the Prophet against the Abbasids in 169 AH / 786 CE, culminating in the escape of a Hasanid, Idris b. 'Abdallah, to western Maghrib where he founded the eponymous Idrisid dynasty between 172 AH / 789 CE to 175 AH / 791 CE.[39] Based in the newly founded city of Fez, the establishment of the Idrisids was a major milestone in the subsequent prominence of the *ashraf*, socially and politically in Morocco from the second AH / eighth CE century until today.[40]

The Fatimid-Idrisid conflict in its initial phase highlighted that shared familial claims to Prophetic descent played no particular role.[41] In 323 AH / 935 CE, after their brief control of Fez was ended by a renegade general, Fatimid generals regained control of Fez and reinstalled the exiled Idrisids as governors, but tensions remained such that by 338 AH / 950 CE, Idrisid princes sought Umayyad help against the Fatimids.[42] It was in the reign of the fourth Fatimid imam-caliph al-Mu'izz therefore that the shared claim of Prophetic descent seems to have come to the fore in defining Fatimid-Idrisid relations. Al-Mu'izz afforded the Idrisid princes a privileged status, but one qualified by the necessity of obedience, foreshadowing a new dynamic that was to define Fatimid-*ashraf* relations following their move to Egypt.

A two-year Fatimid campaign to re-establish authority across the Maghrib (347-349 AH / 958-960 CE) saw the apprehension of a number of anti-Fatimid rebels and Khariji claimants to the

Imamate[43] and included amongst the prisoners of war were a number of Idrisid princes and notables whose dynastic power had waned. The Idrisids had nonetheless retained local power and lineal prestige, despite being internally divided and often vacillating between Fatimid and Umayyad patronage. While all the rival contenders were dispatched to the Fatimid court at al-Manṣuriyya, al-Qadi al-Nuʿman notes that the Idrisid princes and notables received special treatment at the personal instruction of al-Muʿizz, which was in marked contrast to that meted out to the others.[44] The attitude which the Fatimids were to adopt towards the *ashraf* in the subsequent Egyptian phase is indicated in al-Muʿizz's address to the Idrisdid *ashraf,* who were exceptionally awarded distinguished seating at a palace audience.[45] In his address, al-Muʿizz declared that the Idrisids had an esteemed status. However, its validity was welded to the *ashraf's* acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the divinely-sanctioned Fatimid imam. Through reference to the Qur'anic example of Noah's disobedient son [Q11:45-46],[46] al-Muʿizz iterates that familial lineage can crucially be "cut" through a *sharif's* act of disobedience. Al-Muʿizz also reaffirms the centrality of the Fatimid Prophetic descent to their mission, which is but a continuation of the call of the "imam's grandfather", the Prophet Muhammad. Invoking the Prophet as their grandfather would remain a recurring refrain in the Fatimid imams' pronouncements.[47] The paradigm of asserting lineal prestige and distinction of the *ashraf*, corroborated by allegiance to the Fatimid imam-caliph, would remain the blue-print for Fatimid-*ashraf* relations in the Egyptian phase.

Resolution of a Hasanid-Jaʿfarid feud in the Hijaz

Among the politically consequential gestures of al-Muʿizz towards the *ashraf* during the Ifriqiyan phase of his rule was rapprochement with, and patronage of, the *ashraf* in Mecca and Medina.[48] Official recognition in the Friday prayers of the holy lands of Islam had hitherto been a preserve of the Abbasid caliphs. Its subsequent displacement to the Fatimids was a major symbolic gesture that marked a growing acceptance of the Fatimid caliphate in the heartlands of the Islamic world. That this shift was fostered by members of the *ashraf* is a significant marker in Fatimid-*ashraf* relations.

Al-Mu'izz's overtures in the Hijaz began when he took on the role of mediator between the various factions of the *ashraf*. A violent blood feud had erupted in the years leading to 348 AH / 959-960 CE between *ashraf* clans of Hasanid descent and clans claiming descent from Ja'far b. Abi Talib, who though not direct descendants of the Prophet, were nonetheless considered to be imbued with charisma because of their Talibid descent.[49] After major fatalities in the conflicts between the Banu Hasan and the Banu Ja'far, al-Mu'izz is reported to have sent representatives to the Hijaz to negotiate a settlement between the two clans, paying a substantive sum as blood-money to resolve the feud. In al-Maqrizi account, this mediation is identified as the principal gesture which led the Hasanid *ashraf* in Mecca to incline towards al-Mu'izz.[50]

The efficacy of his reconciliatory efforts toward the Hijazi *ashraf* was soon evident. Between 357-358 AH / 968-969 CE, the Hasanid *amir* Ja'far b. Muhammad b. al-Husayni, a *sharif* from the ninth-generation of descent from al-Hasan b. Ali b. Abi Talib established his control over Mecca.[51] Thus began the rule of the Ja'farid clan of the Hasanids over Mecca, which was to last almost a century. Following the Fatimid takeover of Egypt, the *amir* of Mecca proclaimed al-Mu'izz as the reigning caliph over the Islamic world, from the pulpits in Mecca and Medina:

> When Jawhar entered [Egypt], Hasan b. Ja'far al-Hasani hurriedly took possession of Mecca. He publically proclaimed al-Mu'izz as the legitimate ruler. He wrote to Jawhar about it and the latter sent the news to al-Mu'izz. Al-Mu'izz sent an appointment of investiture from the Maghrib, authorising him with the administration of the Holy Cities and their environs.[52]

The reconciliation of the *ashraf* of the Hijaz through the patronage of al-Mu'izz was to have long-lasting implications. For almost the entirety of the next century, until 454 AH / 1062 CE or 455 AH / 1063 CE, Fatimid authority was pronounced by the *ashraf* of the Hijaz.[53] Al-Mu'izz's gestures towards the *ashraf* probably also provided the context for a unique account of a delegation of the Hasanid *ashraf* to the Fatimid court in North Africa, as recorded by al-Qaḍi al-Nu'man. In his *Kitab al-Majalis wa'l-Musayarat*, al-Nu'man records a delegation of Hasanids from the Hijaz and Yemen who came to Ifriqiya to proclaim their allegiance to al-Mu'izz, acknowledging the Fatimid imam-caliph as the rightful legitimate Imam by declaring

him to be the _Qa'im_ (the one who rises) of the _Ahl al-Bayt_, as foretold by their forefathers. In a mirroring of al-Mu'izz's exhortation to the aforementioned Idrisid Hasanids, al-Mu'izz privileged the social standing of the visiting delegation as descendants of the Prophet, which is subsumed by their allegiance to the rightful Imam.[54] Al-Nu'man's account could be motivated by religious concerns to present recognition of his Imam's legitimacy being underscored by the notable clans of the _ashraf_. Be that as it may, it corresponds with the Hasanid proclamation of the Fatimids in Mecca.

That al-Mu'izz embarked on a distinct policy of patronage of the _ashraf_ is further evidenced by an entry in al-Maqrizi's _Muqaffa_ regarding a notable at the Fatimid court, Ibrahim b. Duwwas Husn al-Islam (d. after 362 AH / 973 CE), probably a Kutama Berber who was present in the entourage that accompanied al-Mu'izz from North Africa to Egypt. Accordingly, this notable wed his daughter to a _sharif_, Abd Allah b. Isma'il b. al-Hasan b. Muhammad b. Sulayman al-Husayni (d. after 362 AH / 973 CE). In a possible effort to strengthen the ties between his own courtiers and associates with the _ashraf_, al-Maqrizi notes that al-Mu'izz not only attended the wedding ceremony but also instructed that the dowry was to be paid from the state treasury.[55]

The concerted efforts by al-Mu'izz to foster closer relations with the _ashraf_ are amply evident in the Ifriqiyan phase of his reign. However, after the Fatimid transfer of power to Egypt, the complex and nuanced dynamics that influenced Fatimid-_ashraf_ relations and their lasting impact came to the fore.

The Fatimids and the Egyptian _ashraf_

By the late fourth AH / tenth CE century, the _ashraf_ of Egypt formed an established and respected aristocracy of wealthy notables.[56] As is evident in the biographical entries of al-Maqrizi's _Muqaffa al-Kabir_ and elsewhere, a number of _ashraf_ wielded considerable social and political influence in Egyptian society. A survey of reports on individual _ashraf_ of the immediate pre-Fatimid period points to some significant trends. The Egyptian _ashraf_ included members from both the Hasanid and Husaynid lines, and often retained close familial and financial ties to the _ashraf_ of the Hijaz. In Egypt, certain prominent _ashraf_ had accrued social

cache such that their positions were inherited by their sons or close family members leading to the rise of elite clans within the Egyptian *ashraf*. Furthermore, rivalries between prominent *ashraf* were not uncommon. Notably, certain Egyptian *ashraf* are depicted as mediators between rival political factions, as well as between the Ikhshidid bureaucracy and the general populace. This mediating role would become one of their signal features of the *ashraf* during the Fatimid era.

Muhammad b. Yahya, Ibn al-Sarraj, (d. after 335 AH / 946 CE) was a Hasanid *sharif* who sought to establish his own authority by rebelling in the Nile Delta region against the Ikhshidid dynasts of Egypt around 330 AH / 941 CE. Following his defeat, he proceeded to seek sanctuary at the court of the second Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Qa'im, providing a notable example of Fatimid-*ashraf* relations prior to the reign of al-Mu'izz. He is reported to have returned to Egypt by the year 335 AH / 946 CE and participated in a military campaign alongside the Ikhshidid governor Abu'l-Qasim Unujur al-Ikhshidi.[57]

Abu'l-Qasim Ahmad ibn Tabataba (d. 345 AH / 965 CE) was a Hasanid *naqib* of the Egyptian *ashraf* who became renowned for his poetry. This *sharif* is attested to have been buried in a cemetery outside Fustat which was reserved for the descendants of Ali.[58]

Amongst the Husaynids *ashraf* in Egypt, Abu Muhammad al-Hasan b. Tahir b. Yahya was the leading figure prior to the Fatimid arrival.[59] Having been given an extensive land grant [*iqta'*] by the Egyptian Ikhshidid ruler for mediating between the Ikhshidids and the military *amir*s of Baghdad, he exemplifies the role of the *ashraf* as mediators.[60] Notably, after his death leadership [*ri'asa*] of the Husaynid branch of the Egyptian *ashraf* remained within his clan, passing on to his cousin Abu Ja'far Muslim, discussed further below as the leading *sharif* of the first decades of Fatimid Egypt.

Abu Muhammad 'Abd Allah al-Tabataba'i (286-348 AH / 899-900-949 CE) was undoubtedly among the most prominent Egyptian *ashraf* in the period preceding the Fatimid arrival in Egypt. His career exemplified the rising social status of the *ashraf* and was the subject to a lengthy entry in al-Maqrizi's biographical dictionary as well as in that of Ibn Khallikan.[61] The sources note Ibn Tabataba's immense wealth and vast land holdings whose farms yielded considerable revenues. The *sharif's* extensive entourage which included his

close-family members, associates, servants and slaves whenever he rode in public are repeatedly noted.[62] Ibn Tabataba's elite status in the social hierarchy is further evident by his unrivalled position at the Ikhshidid court. Ibn Tabataba was often seen riding alongside the Ikhshidid Egyptian ruler Muhammad b. Tughj (r. 323-334 AH / 935-946 CE) in whose audiences the *sharif* was granted a privileged position.[63] The close relations between *sharif* and ruler continued during the reign of the subsequent Ikhshidid regent Kafur [d. 355 AH / 966 CE].[64] Notably, Ibn Tabataba is depicted as a mediator between the locals and the officials of the bureaucracy, which include anecdotes regarding his successful intervention on behalf of individuals against over-bearing government tax officials.[65]

Ibn Tabataba's posthumous fame as an Alid 'saint' in Egyptian religious life furthermore exemplifies the increasing religious prestige accorded to prominent *ashraf* in Egyptian popular religiosity over the following centuries, certainly by Ibn Khallikan's own lifetime.[66] This posthumous veneration of Ibn Tabataba was to play a distinct role concerning his 'arbitration' of the Fatimid lineage, as will be discussed further below.

Rivalries between various *ashraf* in the pre-Fatimid phase of Egyptian history are reported between the aforementioned al-Hasan b. Tahir and the Abd Allah b. Tabataba. Al-Maqrizi makes implicit note of this by stating that the two *ashraf* did not meet with each other except when compelled to do so by circumstance, whether during an audience [*majlis*] of the ruler or in court cases involving both of them. While the exact cause of the rivalry is not explicated by al-Maqrizi, Ya'lawi notes Ibn Sa'd's assertion that the rivalry between the 'Husaynid and Hasanid' concerned *ri'asa,* or leadership.[67] Leadership in this context most likely meant a tussle over control of the Alid line in Egypt. This is evident when the Husaynid al-Hasan b. Tahir died, as al-Maqrizi notes, this rivalry continued between Abd Allah b. Tabataba and the inheritor of the Husaynid leadership *sharif* Abu Ja'far Muslim (d. after 364 AH / 975 CE).[68]

Esteem for the *ashraf* in this period also extended to female *ashraf*, as exemplified by local Egyptian religious devotion to the tombs of female members of the *Ahl al-Bayt* who had passed away in Egypt, including that of al-Sayyida Nafisa (d. 209 AH / 824 CE), a venerated female Hasanid saint in popular Egyptian piety.[69] The tomb of another *sharifa,* Kulthum bint al-

Qasim b. Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq had by the 340's AH /960's Ce become a site of visitation by Shi'i Egyptians, whose increasing presence in Egyptian Muslim society in the decades leading up to the Fatimid conquest is evidenced by funerary inscriptions.[70] Testifying to earlier Egyptian veneration of the Alids, the tomb of Umm Kulthum was located in an area of the Qarafa cemetery that had specifically been reserved for the *ahl al-bayt* and descendants of Ali by a third AH / ninth CE century Egyptian governor.[71] Furthermore, devotion to these female descendants crossed sectarian boundaries in this period, as highlighted by the fact that Abu Bakr Muhammad b. al-Madhara'i (d. 344-345 AH / 956-957 CE), a notable from an esteemed family of Egyptian viziers, dedicated a convent in the Qarafa cemetery outside the capital Fustat specifically to the female *ashraf* of Egypt [*nisa'al-ashraf*].[72]

Familial Mediators: The role of the *ashraf* in the Fatimid conquest of Egypt

The Fatimid conquest of Egypt in 358 AH / 969 CE is well recognised as a milestone both in the history of the Fatimid Caliphate and in the history of Egypt more generally.[73] The political vacuum that ensued after the death of the Kafur al-Ikhshidi in 355 AH / 966 CE, and the Abbasid inability to exert their control over Egypt, led to a break-down of law and order and a rise in armed factionalism. The increasing reception of Fatimid *da'i*s (religio-political "missionaries") amongst the Egyptian elite led to their inclination towards Fatimid rule. Following invitations from Egypt, the Fatimid al-Mu'izz, whose borders then extended to Libyan Cyrenaica [*Barqa*], adjacent to Egypt's own border, ordered extensive preparations for the Fatimid advance. In 358 AH / 968 CE the Fatimid commander Jawhar led the Fatimid expedition to Egypt, arriving in Alexandria unopposed in 358 AH / 969 CE. The subsequent takeover of Egypt paved the way for the foundation of al-Qahira (Cairo), which became the locus of the Fatimid state with the settlement therein of al-Mu'izz in 360 AH / 972 CE.

The role of individual *sharif*s in the immediate Fatimid takeover of Egypt has been discussed in scholars.[74] However, their distinct function as mediators between the Egyptian populace and the newly arrived Fatimid rulers necessities focused exploration, as it signals a key moment in the history of the *ashraf* of the fourth AH / tenth CE century, as well in Fatimid-*ashraf* relations.

Upon Jawhar's entry into Egypt, and following correspondence between him and Ja'far ibn al-Furat, the vizier of Egypt, Jawhar was met by a delegation of select notables from Fustat. These individuals were selected to represent Egyptian interests in negotiating a guarantee of safety (*aman*) with the Fatimid general. The signed *aman* was subsequently read out to the populace of Fustat, and guaranteed life, security and property, promised economic prosperity and the fulfilment of ritual obligations and proclaimed the permissibility of the continuation of the Sunni *madhhabs*.[75] Of the five delegates, two were Alid *ashraf,* Sharif Muslim al-Husayni and the Hasanid Abu Isma'il al-Rassi, discussed further below.[76] Also included amongst the delegation was Abu'l Tayyib al-Hashimi (d. after 358 AH / 969 CE) who, though not of Alid descent, was nonetheless a Hashimid belonging to the 'Abbasid house.[77] The two remaining delegates included the *qadi* of Fustat and the leading Fatimid *da'i* of Egypt. Notably, *sharif* Muslim al-Husayni assumed the central role as leader of the delegation and subsequently as the principal mediator of the public promulgation of the *aman.* Moreover, after the conquest, he retained this mediating role between the new state and the Egyptian populace. Sharif Muslim's political career after 358 AH / 969 CE, and those of other like-minded *ashraf,* highlights a culmination of al-Mu'izz's policy vis-à-vis the *ashraf.* The mediation of the *ashraf* was arguably one of the most instrumental factors in securing a generally peaceful Fatimid entry into Egypt, a point of major significance in understanding the Fatimid-*ashraf* dynamic. The fact that the notables of the surviving Egyptian administration and the military delegated these members of the *ashraf* with the authority to negotiate the vested interests of the Egyptian nobility with the Fatimid commander suggests that the Egyptian notables were drawing on the shared kinship of the *ashraf* with al-Mu'izz. Equally, al-Mu'izz's policy of reconciliation with the *ashraf* from other regions, as in the case of the Hijaz noted above, could have had a bearing on these *ashraf*'s' inclination to negotiate with his commander.

Sharif Abu Ja'far Muslim: a trusted kinsman

Sharif Abu Ja'far Muslim al-Husayni, referred to more commonly as Sharif Muslim, seems to have inherited a position of leadership over the Husaynid *ashraf* of Egypt following the death of his kinsman al-Hasan b. Tahir b. Yahya. In 358 AH / 969 CE, he was selected by Egypt's

elite, including its military factions, to lead the delegation from Fustat to meet the Fatimid general.[78] Following the meeting in Alexandria where the terms of the *aman* are dictated, Sharif Muslim is identified as the figure who carries the letter to Ibn al-Furat and the leaders of the military factions in Fustat.[79] When remnants of the previous Ikhshidid and Kafurid forces rejected the *aman* and sought to resist the Fatimid conquest,[80] Sharif Muslim was involved in tripartite negotiations involving himself, the vizier, and the factional Ikhshidid/Kafurid generals in an attempt to find a resolution.[81] Failure to resolve the situation led to limited skirmishes between the Fatimids and the Ikhshidid factions, leading to the latter's defeat. In the aftermath, when the notables of Fustat sought a re-issuance of the *aman*, they turned to *sharif* Muslim to formally request its re-issuance from Jawhar.[82] Here, sharif Muslim's shared familial relations with the Fatimid imam-caliph are subsequently made explicit. When re-issuing the *aman*, Jawhar critically directs his letter to the *sharif* first and foremost, indicating the general's recognition of the *sharif*s pre-eminence. Furthermore, in Idris's version of the re-issuance of the aman, Jawhar identifies the Fatimid state (*dawla*) as also being the *sharif*'s own *dawla* and the *dawla* of his family.[83] More importantly, in al-Maqrizi's account, Jawhar delegates authority to Sharif Muslim by declaring that the *sharif* was thereafter able to extend the "guarantee of security" to whomsoever he wished.[84]

Sharif Muslim's intermediary role is further evident following the conclusion of the agreement, when he led the Egyptian delegation to Giza to receive the Fatimid general. As al-Maqrizi relates, in all likelihood from the eye-witness account of Ibn Zulaq, the delegation also included, "all the *ashraf*, the judges, the learned men, the *shuhud* (certified witnesses), the prominent merchants and subjects".[85] Jawhar honoured Sharif Muslim by permitting him and the vizier to remain mounted when they came to greet him, while all the rest of the people were ordered "to the ground". Similarly, when Jawhar was presented with 'countless courtesies and bounties' from the Egyptian notables, he refused to accept any offerings except from Sharif Muslim.[86] Subsequently, when the Fatimid general sought as a gesture of goodwill to distribute alms to the needy of Fuṣtat, a town-crier declared that the recipients should first gather at the house of Sharif Muslim.[87]

The religious esteem afforded to Sharif Muslim was similarly apparent. When the high-ranking Fatimid military commander Sa'ada b. Hayyan died in 362 AH / 972 CE away, the honour of leading the funerary prayers was given to Sharif Muslim, behind whom the general Jawhar himself prayed.[88]

The esteem for the *sharif* came to the fore when the Imam-caliph al-Mu'izz arrived in Egypt. In Sha'ban 362 AH / May 973 CE, Sharif Muslim once again assumed the distinctive role of heading the Egyptian delegation to receive the Fatimid caliph. Ibn Zulaq's account highlights the particular regard which al-Mu'izz accorded to *sharif* Abu Ja'far:

> Abu Ja'far Muslim and a group of the *ashraf* received him in the region of Mahallat Hafṣ. With them were the prominent people of the town… Abu Ja'far Muslim was the first one to approach him… Then he [al-Mu'izz] set out accompanied by Abu Ja'far Muslim. Whilst speaking to him, he asked about the *ashraf*. So, the prominent ones among them approached him: [They were] Abu'l-Hasan Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Adra, Abu Isma'il al-Rassi, Isa, the brother of Muslim, and Abd Allah b. Yahya b. Tahir b. al-Suwayh. Then he [al-Mu'izz] honoured al-Sharif Muslim by ordering a riding animal with a litter for him as it was extremely hot and al-Sharif Muslim was fasting. A she-camel with a decorated litter was brought for him, as well as a slave to ride by his side.[89]

Following al-Mu'izz's settlement in Egypt, a distinct policy of drawing the *ashraf* into the state administration becomes apparent.

Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Ubayd Allah b. Ali was of the Hasanid line and seems to have been known more commonly as al-Baghir al-Alawi (293-c.364 AH / 909-c. 974 CE). Having moved to Ramla from Kufa, and known for his knowledge and probity, al-Baghir al-Alawi arrived in Cairo in 362 AH / 973 CE. Al-Mu'izz honoured the *sharif* with a public appointment in 364 AH / 975 CE, making him responsible for the prayer, the judiciary, the endowments as well as the guardianship of the public mint in Ramla.[90]

In the same year, al-Hasan (d. 379 AH / 989 CE), the son of the *naqib* Ibrahim b. Ahmad al-Rassi (the Hasanid, who had been part of the Egyptian delegation to receive Jawhar) was given

the joint administrative task of collecting the tax revenues from the region of al-Ashmunayn. After jointly securing the land tax of al-Ashmunayn for al-Mu'izz in the year 364 AH / 974 CE, he was honoured by an enrobing by the Fatimid Caliph. [91]

Over this period, the sources also suggest an increasing familiarity between clans of the *ashraf* and the Fatimid house. A note on the biography of Tamim, son of the imam-caliph al-Mu'izz and a famed poet in his own right, notes his personal friendship with the Banu Rassi, a notable *sharif* lineage of the Hasanid line.[92] Following the seizure of the property of the anti-Fatimid *sharif* Akhu Muslim [discussed further below], correspondence was sent from the *sharif* of Mecca, Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Hasani, as well as his brother al-Hasan b. Muhammad, to al-Mu'izz requesting the release of the economic assets of his sister who had been married to the rebel *sharif*, to which al-Mu'izz duly agreed.[93]

There are further indications that the prominence of the *ashraf* in the Fatimid court in Egypt led to some consternation amongst the Ifriqiyan contingent of the Imam's followers. The Berber Kutama followers of the Fatimid Imam are said to have protested loudly when hearing the title *sharif* used in reference to Sharif Muslim.[94] Al-Mu'izz reprimanded the follower, and publically affirmed the genealogical linkage and intimate relations between him and the *ashraf*. As al-Maqrizi notes:

> So when he [al-Mu'izz] sat on his throne and permitted the dignitaries to be seated he said [to the *ashraf*]: 'O members of my family and my cousins from the progeny of Fatima, you are my kin and you are the armour (*al-'udda*). We do not approve of what has been said. Whoever said what we were told has erred. By the blessings of God, you have exalted nobility and uterine kinship. If we were ever to hear again what we have heard, we will mete out severe punishment to him.'[95]

The extent of amity which al-Mu'izz had succeeded in fostering among some members of the *ashraf* is further evident from an anecdote attributed to Abu Ja'far Muslim in which the Sharif proclaims the familial bond between them:

> Whenever Abu Ja'far Muslim used to mention al-Mu'izz, he would say, 'I wish my father and my grandfather had seen al-Mu'izz, for they would have been proud of him. I cannot compare any of the Umayyad or 'Abbasid caliphs with him'.[96]

The *Ashraf* during the reigns of al-Aziz and al-Hakim

It would be reasonable to suggest that relations between the Fatimids and some members of the *ashraf* peaked during the reign of al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah. Nonetheless, Fatimid-*ashraf* relations continued to be fostered during the reign of al-Mu'izz's son and successor al-Aziz bi'llah. The high esteem given to the two leading *ashraf* of al-Mu'izz's era were exemplified during al-Aziz's era. When the *sharif* Abu Ja'far Muslim died in 366 AH / 976-7 CE, his funerary prayers where attended by the imam-caliph.

Al-Aziz seems to have been on particularly intimate terms with the *naqib* Ibrahim b. Ahmad al-Rassi.[97] Ibrahim himself passed away in in 369 AH / 980 CE, and the imam-caliph once more attended the funerary prayers. A decade later, al-Aziz personally led the funeral prayer over Ibrahim's son, and successor to the *niqaba,* al-Hasan b. Ibrahim al-Rassi.[98] Al-Aziz's relations with Ibrahim al-Rassi and those of Tamim b.al-Mu'izz, noted earlier, illustrate their cordial relations with the prominent Hasanid-Rassid clan.

Seeking patronage from the Fatimid imam-caliph was notably a feature of intra-*ashraf* dynamics in this period. In 383 AH / 993 CE, al-Maqrizi notes a visit to Cairo by al-Qasim b. Ali from the Rassids of the Hijaz, aspiring to the governorship of those provinces.[99] Similarly, in 384 AH / 994 CE, he records the presence of Isa b. Ja'far al-Hasani, the ruling *sharif* of Mecca, as well as of al-Qasim b. Ali al-Rassi al-Tha'ir, both of whom are honoured at al-Aziz's court.[100] In all likelihood, the two al-Qasims refer to the same figure, the entries pointing to a disputation between al-Qasim and the *amir*, which they sought to resolve at the Fatimid court.

After further apparant rivalry among the *ashraf* over the control of Mecca, al-Aziz wrote to al-Hasan b. Ja'far the Hasanid (d. 430 AH / 1038 CE), brother of the above mentioned Isa b. al-Hasan, confirming his governorship over Mecca. The latter had by then rejected an attempt made in the year 381 AH / 991 CE by the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Qadir (r. 381-422 AH / 991-1031 CE) to have his suzerainty recognised in the region. The investiture sent by al-Aziz was accompanied by robes of honour and monies to distribute amongst the Hasanid *ashraf* of the city. The Hasanid *ashraf*'s acknowledgement of the Fatimid Husaynid lineage is noteworthy

as it highlights one of the distinct features of the Fatimid-*ashraf* relations. In other regions, such as eastern Iran, a *sharif's* acceptance of patronage from a ruler conferred legitimacy upon the patron. In the case of the Fatimid-*ashraf* dynamics, the acceptance of Fatimid patronage affirmed an implicit acceptance of the legitimacy of the state led by an Alid Imam-caliph, to whom they had filial affinity, as is evident in the sermon of the Hasanid *sharif* regarding al-Aziz's patronage to the *ashraf* in Mecca:

> He [al-Hasan b. Ja'far] made them [the *ashraf*] gather in front of the Ka'ba and divided monies amongst them. After he draped the white *kiswa* atop the *Ka'ba*, he pronounced 'Praise be to God, O sons of Fatima al-Zahra and possessors of the firm Sunna; that His House has been adorned with the cloth of delight after having worn the cloth of mourning,[101] and that He has made the kings of the two sanctuaries from the sons of the daughter of His Messenger, from the sons of al-Husayn [al-Aziz bi'llah], and the sons of al-Hasan [himself], and thus contented both sides'.[102]

This alliance was chequered as, during the reign of al-'Aziz's successor, al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (r. 386-411 AH / 996-1021 CE) disputes over doctrine led to a fissure between al-Hasan b. Ja'far, who then proceeded to assert his own claim as a Zaydi imam between 401 AH / 1011 CE to 403 AH / 1012 CE. Following his failed attempt to rally an army at al-Ramla, al-Hasan returned to the Hijaz and subsequently re-pledged his allegiance to the Fatimid imam-caliph, al-Hakim.[103]

During al-Hakim's reign, the prominence of the *ashraf* in the Fatimid administration begins to wane. Nonetheless, the *naqib*s, one of whom included Abu'l-Hasan Ali b. Ibrahim al-Rassi, retained the distinguished position of officiating the birth rituals of the sons of the Fatimid Imam-caliph.[104] In addition, female employees of the Fatimid household comprised women of high-social standing, including a wife of al-Sharif al-Musawi (d. 415 AH / 1024 CE), who, as Calderini and Cortese note, had the honour of having her funerary prayers led by a leading Isma'ili *da'i*.[105]

Thus far, there is little indication that members of the Fatimid household used the appellate *ashraf* in self-reference. The one notable exception to this is Sitt al-Mulk, the sister of al-Hakim, whose multiple titles included *al-Sayyida al-Sharifa*.[106]

While the sources attest the investiture of the *ashraf* as governors over Medina during the reign of the eighth Fatimid imam-caliph al-Muṣṭanṣir bi'llah (r. 427-481 AH / 1036-1094 CE) in 428 AH / 1036-1037 CE,[107] the highpoint of Fatimid-*ashraf* alliance had passed.

Contestation between the Fatimids and the *ashraf*

Alliances between the Hijazi and Egyptian *ashraf* with the Fatimid state during the reign of Mu'izz li-Din Allah represent a high-point in Fatimid-*ashraf* relations. Yet this period also witnessed the flourishing of the careers of some of the most vehemently anti-Fatimid *ashraf* who publically rebelled against Fatimid rule. Similarly, the reigns of al-Mu'izz's successors saw the emergence of anti-Fatimid *ashraf* in Damascus and Baghdad at the forefront of anti-Fatimid polemic, either of their own accord or incentivised by the Abbasids.

Abd Allah b. Ubayd Allah (d. c. 363 AH / 973 CE) was the brother of the preeminent pro-Fatimid *sharif* Abu Ja'far Muslim. Known more commonly as Akhu Muslim (the brother of Muslim) after his more famous brother, Abd Allah rose to prominence in the time of Kafur al-Ikhshidi. In the warfare that ensued between the Fatimids and the Qaramita after the former's arrival to Egypt,[108] Akhu Muslim notably took to the field to side with the Qaramita. The sources cite several instances of his fighting alongside Qaramiti armies both in Syria and in Upper Egypt.[109] Furthermore, Abu Ja'far Muslim's own son Ja'far, also defected to the Qaramita.[110] Al-Mu'izz's response to the situation is instructive. While rebuking Abu Ja'far for his brother and son's insubordination, he also corresponded with them to win them over.[111] Following the defeat of the Qaramita in Egypt by the Fatimid forces in 364 AH / 974 CE, Akhu Muslim became a liability to the Qaramita who soon had him killed.[112]

Subsequently, Tahir b. Muslim b. Ubayd Allah, another son of Abu Ja'far Muslim renounced his allegiance to the Fatimids. He left Egypt and returned to his ancestral homeland in Medina

where he was appointed to the senior position of the Husaynid *ashraf* of Medina. Soon thereafter, he announced his recognition of the Abbasid Caliph. It was only after the Fatimid sovereign al-Aziz had dispatched an expedition to Medina in 366 AH / 976 CE that Tahir was forced to acquiesce and Medina returned to the Fatimid fold.

Contesting the Lineage: Sharif Akhu Muhsin and the Baghdad Manifesto

The prerogative of the *ashraf* to act as public arbiters of the Prophet's lineage also brought into prominence those *ashraf* who became embroiled in anti-Fatimid polemic. In the latter decades of the fourth AH / tenth CE century, contestation between the Fatimids and the anti-Fatimid *ashraf* developed an enduring legacy through the writings of *sharif* Abu'l-Husayn Muhammad b. Ali b. al-Husayni, more commonly known as Akhu Muhsin (d. c. 375 AH / 985-986 CE). Around 372 AH / 982 CE, during the reign of al-Aziz bi'llah, *sharif* Akhu Muhsin, himself a genealogist and living in Damascus, composed a treatise with two inter-related aims: the first was to compose a polemical refutation of Isma'ili doctrines, and secondly, to deny the Fatimid claim to be the descendants of Prophet Muhammad.[113] For his anti-Isma'ili polemic, Akhu Muhsin drew heavily on the writings of a noted anti-Isma'ili writer Muhammad b. Ali b. Rizam who lived in Baghdad during the first half of the fourth AH / tenth CE century.[114] Though his work is no longer extant, fragments of Akhu Muhsin's writings have survived in the works of later authors, notably those of al-Nuwayri (d. 733 AH / 1333 CE), Ibn al-Dawadari (d. after 736 AH / 1335 CE) and Taqi al-Din al-Maqrizi. Akhu Muhsin himself claimed to be a descendant of Muhammad b. Isma'il and therefore from the same lineal descent as that of the Fatimids. His virulent contestation of the legitimacy of the Alid lineage of the Fatimids and of the authenticity of their doctrines fuelled the ideological warfare which the Abbasids were waging against the Fatimids at the time. Subsequently, it became embedded in Abbasid historiography as a standard account of the non-'Alid origins of the Fatimids.[115]

Furthermore, Damascus seems to have served as a locus for anti-Fatimid *ashraf*. Ibn Taghri-birdi notes that in 380 AH / 990 CE, a *sharif* named Abu'l-Hamza b. Ali b. al-Hasan al-Alawi al-Dimashqi died while imprisoned in Alexandria. The cause of his arrest was

this *sharif's* public derision of the Fatimid genealogy when read out from the *minbars* of Damascus, leading to the vizier Ya'qub b. Killis ordering his arrest and imprisonment.[116]

However, the most lasting use of the prerogative of the *ashraf* to pronounce on prophetic lineage was deployed by the Abbasids. In Rabi' al-Thani 402 AH / November 1011 CE, the Abbasid Caliph al-Qadir bi'llah issued what has come to be known as 'the Baghdad Manifesto'.[117] A signed statement was publically read out in Baghdad and subsequently in mosques across the Abbasid realms. This 'Manifesto' pronounced that the Fatimid imam-caliphs were not the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, but rather that they were false claimants whose origins in fact lay in an unknown Daysanite known as Sa'id.[118] Notably, although the Manifesto was issued during the reign of the Fatimid imam-caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, it began by naming al-Mu'izz and tracing his lineage to non-Alid forefathers to whom abominable acts were attributed. Significantly, affixed to the document were the signatures of the leading *ashraf* of Baghdad, along with a number of other leading Sunni judges and jurists. Accounts on the background to the manifesto highlight the manoeuvrings by the Abbasid Caliph of the most prominent of these *ashraf* to add their signatures to the document. These included Sharif al-Radi and Sharif Murtada, as well as Ibn al-Azraq al-Musawi, Abu Tahir b. Abi Tayyib, and Muhammad b. Muhammad b. 'Umar amongst others.

The distinct social and political context behind the proclamation of the Baghdad Manifesto, including the spread of the Fatimid da'wa to the Bedouin principalities of Iraq, the rise of Shi'ism in Baghdad and the 'Sunni resurgence' fostered in the reign of the Abbasid al-Qadir, fall beyond the scope of this paper. Notable however, is the development that the role of *ashraf* as 'witnesses' against the Fatimid claim to authority becomes a distinct trope. Hereafter, the *ashraf* are deployed in pro-Abbasid historiography over the following centuries to act as 'literary foils' to further anti-Fatimid polemic. Instructive amongst these are accounts on the aforementioned pre-Fatimid *sharif,* Abu Muhammad Abd Allah Tabataba.

Buried in the Qarafa cemetery, by the sixth AH / thirteenth CE century Ibn Tabataba had become a figure imbued with charismatic appeal in Egyptian religious life. Ibn Khallikan notes his tomb as a visitation place where prayers are answered, and provides anecdotes of peoples' dreams in which the Prophet recommends their visitation to Ibn Tabataba's tomb. In the same

biographical entry, Ibn Tabataba also emerges as the foil al-Mu'izz's claim to lineage. This is despite the attestation in the same account that Ibn Tabataba died in 348 AH / 949 CE, some two decades before the arrival of al-Mu'izz in Egypt. Upon the arrival of the Fatimid al-Mu'izz in Egypt, Ibn Tabataba is described as confronting al-Mu'izz:

> Sharif Ibn Tabataba met al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah and said to him: 'What is your lineage, our Master?'
>
> He [Al-Mu'izz] fixed a day to meet. People gathered on that day, he drew his sword and said: 'This is my lineage!' and he expended some dinars and said: 'This is my noble descent!'
>
> They said: 'We hear and obey'.[119]

The permeation of the anecdote in Abbasid historiography illustrates its efficacy in invalidating the Fatimid claim to Alid descent, particularly as it could be sourced to a *sharif*.

Concluding observations

The complex and enigmatic relationships between the Fatimids and the *ashraf* can be surmised through the following widely reported account. *Sharif* Abu'l-Hasan Muhammad al-Radi (359-406 AH / 970-1016 CE), a Husaynid from the Musawi line, the *naqib* of the Alids in Iraq and from amongst the leading family of Ithna'Ashari theologians in fourth AH/ tenth CE century Iraq, was one of the most notable signatories of the Baghdad Manifesto. His signature as well as that of his brother *Sharif* al-Murtada (355-436 AH / 967-1044 CE), would have undoubtedly added credence to the proclamation.[120] Yet, it was also to *Sharif* al-Radi that a line of poetry is ascribed, which privileged his kinship with the Fatimids, and which certain accounts note as a principal cause for the proclamation of the manifesto. Standing in the presence of the Abbasid Caliph while decrying the treatment meted out to him, the *Sharif* is reputed to have said:

> [Why should] I bear humiliation in the land of the enemy, when in Egypt the Caliph is an Alid [*'alawi*]. His father is my father, his friend [*mawla*] is my friend if the distant stranger bears malice for me. That which ties my neck to his neck [i.e. binds us], is the *sayyid* of all men Muhammad, and Ali.[121]

Regardless of whether *Sharif* al-Radi actually pronounced these words or indeed whether he willingly or otherwise became among the signatories of the Baghdad Manifesto, the supposed vacillation in Sharif al-Radi's stance towards the Fatimids highlights the complex and multi-faceted relationships between the Fatimids and the *ashraf*.

The accounts discussed in this paper illustrate the calibrations by Fatimid imam-caliphs in their relations with the *ashraf* in the fourth AH / tenth CE century. They also explore the variations in the attitudes of the *ashraf* towards the Fatimid sovereigns. In doing so, they shed light on the intricate historical contingencies of Fatimid-*ashraf* relations that assumed a distinctive dynamic because of the claim of shared descent. They further illustrate that, in expanding the scope of his empire and particularly in preparation for the Fatimid move to Egypt, it was the Fatimid caliph al-Mu'izz who expended significant effort in fostering congenial relations with the *ashraf*, an effort that was met with a considerable degree of success.

Yet, while some of the *ashraf* favoured alliance and conciliation with the Fatimids, others were instrumental in challenging the Alid legitimacy of the Fatimid claim to authority. Their viewpoint gained further credence and longevity as it became enmeshed in Abbasid historiography as a cornerstone of the ideological rivalry which the Abbasids were waging against the Fatimids.

For those *ashraf* who were inclined to the Fatimids, the significance of the Fatimid sovereign as instituting the rule of the *ahl al-bayt* provided a kinship bond which enhanced their distinction while also gaining a platform from which they could publicly participate in servicing the Fatimid state, thus adding further lustre to their social status. The *ashraf* were also ideally suited to be mediators between the Sunni populace and the Fatimid imam, for while they were noted for their descent from the Prophet, they were not necessarily Isma'ili or even Shi'i. Hence they had the ability to straddle and when necessary transcend the ideological as well as ethnic demarcations that were increasingly becoming embedded in Egyptian society during this period.

[1] Note Bernheimer's assessment "It is difficult to imagine Islamic history without the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. From the famous early rebels to the founders or eponyms of the major Islamic sects, to numerous rulers such as the Idrisids in ninth-century Morocco, the Fatimids in tenth-century Egypt, the current-day king of Jordan, the Ayatollah Khomeini or the Aga Khan; descendants of the Prophet have played a major role throughout the history of the Islamic world." See Teresa Bernheimer, "Genealogy, marriage and the drawing of boundaries among the Alids (eighth twelfth centuries)", in *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The living links to the Prophet*, ed. Morimoto Kazuo (Oxford: Routledge, 2012), pp. 75-92, esp. 75.

[2] Morimoto notes further that "attitudes favourable to *sayyid*s and *sharif*'s have been a phenomenon widely attested in what we may call 'intercessional Islam." See Morimoto Kazuo, "Introduction", in *Sayyids and Sharifs,* pp. 1-13, esp. 3, 9.

[3] For the broader Shi'i concept of the Imama see Wilferd Madelung, "Imama", in *EI2*. For specific Fatimid iterations, see Farhad Daftary, *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines.* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 163-167; Michael Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids: The World of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the Fourth Century of the Hijra, Tenth Century CE.* (Leiden: Brill, 2001)*,* pp. 176-219; Heinz Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi: The Rise of the Fatimids,* tr. Michael Bonner (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 346-55**.**

[4] See Sumaiya Hamdani, *Between Revolution and State: The Path to Fatimid Statehood, Qadi al-Nu'man and the Construction of Fatimid Legitimacy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006); Wilferd Madelung, "The Religious Policy of the Fatimids towards their Sunni Subjects in the Maghrib", in *L'Égypte Fatimide, son art en son histoire,* ed. M. Barrucand (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne**,** 1999), pp. 97–104. I have further discussed this in Shainool Jiwa, "Governance and Pluralism under the Fatimids (909-996 CE)", in *The Shi'i world: Pathways in Tradition and Modernity,* ed. Farhad Daftary, Amyn B. Sajoo and Shainool Jiwa (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015**),** pp. 111-30.

[5] For earlier tribal usage of the term see C. Van Arendonk [W. A. Graham], 'Sharif', *EI2*. For the purposes of this paper, *Ashraf* [sing. *sharif*] will be used specifically to refer to the blood-descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad through the marriage of his daughter Fatima with Ali b. Abi Talib, and is therefore used synonymously with the Alids. As is well-known, the term *ashraf* could have broader boundaries depending on historical context [see e.g. Teresa Bernheimer, *The Alids: The First Family of Islam, 750-1200* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 2-4.] *Ashraf* as a title could include other Ṭalibids (descendants of Abu Ṭalib) or the Hashimi clan at large, thus including the Abbasids]. The use of *sayyid* ["lord"] is sometimes attested as being synonymous to *sharif,* but, at other times, the term is restricted specifically to the Hasanids or Husaynids, who became the fulcrum around which the idea of the 'special status' of the *ashraf* was established, and importantly, who served as the progenitors of the majority of the descendants of the Prophet by the fourth AH / tenth CE century. See Morimoto, *Introduction*, 10.

[6] Bernheimer, *Genealogy,* 75. The Alids as the peerless 'blood aristocracy' was noted by Bulliet in his coverage of the Hasanid *ashraf* of Nishapur. See Richard W. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 234-40, esp. p. 234.

[7] See e.g. Halm's on Abu Jaʿfar Muslim al-Husayni in the Fatimid conquest of Egypt and the reception of al-Muʿizz [Halm, *Empire,* 414-414, 419-20. See also Brett, *Fatimids,* 299-300 for the Egyptian *ashraf* as mediators of the Fatimid conquest. Relations between the Fatimids and the *ashraf* of Mecca have been examined in Richard T. Mortel, "Zaydi Shiism and the Hasanid Sharifs of Mecca", *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 19/4 (Nov., 1987): 455-472, pp. 455-459; Heinz Halm, *Die Kalifen Von Kairo: Die Fatimiden in Ägypten 973-1074* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003), pp. 113-116 and pp. 228-235; Paul Walker, *Caliph of Cairo: Al-Hakim Bi-Amr Allah, 996-102* (Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2012), pp. 174-177**.**

[8] The works by the anti-Fatimid polemicist *sharif* Akhu Muhsin, as discussed below in this paper, are discussed in Daftary, *Ismailis,* 100-103 and Brett, *Fatimids,* 29-49. The presence of

the *ashraf* in the anti-Faṭimid 'Baghdad Manifesto' has been alluded to in works including Prince P. H. Mamour, *Polemics on the Origin of the Fatimid Caliphs* (London: Luzac & Co, 1934), pp. 16-27; Bernard Lewis, *Origins of Ismailism,* (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1940), p. 60; Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (London and New York: Longman**,** 1986), pp. 241-242; Daftary, *Ismailis,* 101.

[9] For an initial state of the field survey and *desideratum* see Morimoto Kazuo, "Towards the Formation of Sayyido-Sharifology: Questioning Accepted Fact", *Journal of Sophia Asian Studies* 22 (2004): 87-103.

[10] The Zaydi Imamates of Yemen and the Caspian, and the more distinct Idrisid dynasty, saw rule by the descendants of the Prophet in a broadly Shiʻi frame but were generally localized in scope.

[11] The question of who constituted the *Ahl al-Bayt* was, like that of who belonged to the *ashraf,* somewhat ambiguous and contested. For attested tribal origins of the term see Ignaz Goldziher *et al.* 'Ahl al-Bayt', *EI2*] or for 'cultic' origins associated with devotion to a sanctuary [*bayt* see e.g. Moshe Sharon, 'Ahl al-Bayt - People of the House', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 8 (1986): 169-184. Following Qur'anic precedent, early Muslims increasingly identified the term as referring to the household of the Prophet Muhammad. Shiʻi belief came to hold that it referred specifically to Ali, Fatima, their sons al-Hasan and al-Husayn and the legitimate Imams from their descent [see Farhad Daftary, 'Ahl al-Kisa'*, EI3*]. Other groups posit broader definitions which include the wives or the greater Hashimid clan of the Prophet [therefore including the Abbasids]. See Bernheimer, *Alids,* 3.

[12] Though initially rejecting the overtures, the Qaramita subsequently proffered their allegiance to al-Muʻizz's successor, al-Aziz bi'llah (r. 365-386 AH / 975-996 CE). For an overview of al-Muʻizz and the Qaramita see Daftary, *Ismailis,* 163-167.

[13] W. Madelung, "The Fatimids and the Qarmatis of Bahrayn", in *Mediaeval Ismaʻili History and Thought,* ed. Farhad Daftary, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 21–73.

[14] Morimoto, *Sayyido-Sharifology*, 5.

[15] Bernheimer, *Alids,* 72.

[16] The question of the Fatimid lineage was subject of considerable study particularly in early twentieth century scholarship. See Brett's survey on 'The Problem of Fatimid Origins' in Brett, *Fatimids,* 29-49.

[17] Note for instance Ala' al-Din Juwayni's (d. 681 AH / 1283 CE) use of the Manifesto and its signatories in his polemic against the Nizari Isma'ili communities of Alamut and their belief in the Fatimid imam-caliph's in his chronicle of Hulegu's conquest of Iran. Ala' al-Din Ata-Malik b. Muhammad Juwayni, *Ta'rikh-i jahan-gusha,* trans. John A. Boyle, *The History of the World-Conqueror* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), 2:658-659. The potency of the Manifesto and its *ashraf* signatories is further signified by the discussion of the document in chapters concerned with the origins of the Fatimid state as found in Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l tarikh* ed. Muhammad Y. al-Daqaq (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1987), XI:446-448; Ibn Khaldun, *Tarikh* ed(s). Khalil Shahada, Suhayl Zakkar (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2001), III: 547; Taqi al-Din Ahmad b. Ali al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az al-Ḥunafa bi-akhbar al-a'imma al-fatimiyyin al-khulafa* ed. Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal, volumes I-III (Cairo: al-Lajnat Ihya' al-Turath al-Islami 1967), I:43.

[18] For a comprehensive overview of sources and historiographical issues on Fatimid history, see Paul Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and its Sources* (London, I.B. Tauris, 2002).

[19] Idris 'Imad al-Din, *'Uyun al-akhbar wa funun al-athar,* ed. Muḥammad al-Ya'lawi, *Tarikh al-khulafa' al-Fatimiyyin bi'l-Maghrib: al-qism al-khass min kitab 'uyun al-akhbar* (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1985). A translation of Idris' chapter on al-Mu'izz as prepared by this author is found in Shainool Jiwa, *The Founder of Cairo: The Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Mu'izz and his Era. An English translation of the text on al-Mu'izz from Idris 'Imad al-Din's 'Uyun al-akhbar,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013). Henceforth references shall be given to both the Ya'lawi's Arabic edition and the translation. For a comparative study of the

approaches of al-Maqrizi and Idris 'Imad al-Din, see Shainool Jiwa, 'Historical representations of a Fatimid Imam-caliph: Exploring al-Maqrizi's and Idris' writings on al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah', *Alifaba: Studi Arabo-Islamici e Mediterranei, Published proceedings of the International Conference on the Fatimids and the Mediterranean* (Palermo, Italy), XXI (2008), pp. 55-70.

[20] See Ed., 'Ibn Zulaq', *EI2*. For Ibn Zulaq's conversation with the *sharif* see al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:107. A translation of al-Maqrizi's chapter on al-Mu'izz as prepared by this author is found in Shainool Jiwa, *Towards a Shi'i Mediterranean Empire: Fatimid Egypt and the Founding of Cairo - The Reign of the Imam-caliph al-Mu'izz from Taqi al-Din Ahmad b. Ali al-Maqrizi's Itti'az al-hunafa' bi-akhbar al-a'imma al-Fatimiyyin al-khulafa'* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009). See p. 73. Henceforth references to the *Itti'az* will be given in both Shayyal's Arabic edition and this translation.

[21] See this author's introduction to the writings of Idris 'Imad al-Din in Shainool Jiwa, *Founder*, pp. 25-46.

[22] Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat al-ay'an,* trans. M. de Slane, *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary,* volumes 1-4 (Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1842-1871); Taqi al-Din al-Maqrizi, *Kitab al-muqaffa al-kabir: Tarajim maghribiyya wa-mashriqiyya mina'l-fatrat al-'Ubaydiyya,* ed. Muhammad al-Ya'lawi (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1981).

[23] Arendonk, 'Sharif', *EI2*; Bulliet, *Patricians*, pp. 234-340; Bernheimer, *Genealogy*; *idem, Alids.* For the role of a Ja'farid family of *ashraf* in Qazwin see Roy Mottahedeh, "Administration in Buyid Qazwin", in *Islamic Civilisation 950-1150,* ed. D. S. Richards (Oxford: Cassirer, 1983), pp. 33-45; also *idem,* "Qur'anic commentary on the verse of *khums* (al-Anfal VIII:41)", in *Sayyids and Sharifs,* 37-49; Biancamaria Scarcia Amoretti, "A historical atlas on the Alids: a proposal and a few samples", in *Sayyids and Sharifs,* 92-123. Morimoto has forged the way in the field he labels 'Sayyido-Sharifology'. See also Kazuo Morimoto, "A preliminary Study on the Diffusion of the Niqaba al-Ṭalibiyin: Towards an Understanding of the Early Dispersal of Sayyids" in *The Influence of Human Mobility in*

Muslim Societies, ed. K. Hidomitsu (London, Kegan Paul, 2003), 3-42**.** On further *ashraf* studies including research on contemporary manifestations as well as recent conferences see Bernheimer, *Alids,* 7.

[24] Bernheimer cogently argues it was through concerted effort including the production of genealogical works, control of marriage practises and the institution of the *niqaba* that the Alids between 132 AH / 750 CE to the end of the fifth AH /eleventh CE century were able to attain and "extend their special status." See Bernheimer, *Alids,* 87-8.

[25] In addition to from further instances noted below in reference to Egypt, note, for example, the career of the prominent Abu Ahmad al-Husayn b. Musa (d. 406 AH / 1016 CE), father of the famous *sharifs* al-Murtada and al-Radi, who in 354 AH / 965 CE held the position of both overseer of the *mazalim* in Baghdad and the *hajj* caravans. See Moktar Djebli, 'al-Sharif al-Radi', *EI2*.

[26] For an earlier, somewhat dated summation of the role of the naqib see A. Havemann, 'Naqib al- Ashraf', *EI2*. For recent scholarship, see Morimoto, *Niqaba*, 3-42 and Bernheimer, *Alids*, 51-70**.**

[27] On the responsibilities of the *naqib*s see Bernheimer, *Alids*, 61-63.

[28] Among the distinguishing features of the *ashraf* as a social group was a generally held position that they were not to receive alms [*sadaqa*] but rather were afforded the right to the one-fifth [*khums*] tax once reserved for the Prophet, according to Qur'anic stipulation. Dynasties both before and after the fourth AH / tenth CE century often regularly allocated pensions to the *ashraf* in their locale, overseen by the *naqib.* The Qur'anic origins of this practice have been explored in Mottahedeh, *Khums*, 37-49.

[29] See Bernheimer, *Alids*, 8-9. Bernheimer notes, as evidenced by biographical dictionaries, that relatively few Alids took part in the formulation of Shi'ism, but that "there were certainly more Alids among the early Zaydi scholars."

[30] Two of the most prominent of Ithna'Ashari scholars of the fifth AH / eleventh CE century were *sharifs* al-Murtada and al-Radi [see Djebli, 'al-Sharif al-Radi', EI2]. While

Isma'ili *ashraf* (aside from the Fatimid household) are less expressly attested, note al-Nu'man's attestation of the Hasanid delegation coming to give their allegiance to al-Mu'izz below in this paper. Similarly, as examined below, while not explicit, the recognition of the Imamate of al-Mu'izz by figures such as Sharif Muslim would indicate religious recognition.

[31] Instructive in this regard is Bulliet's depiction of the manifest Sunni scholarship of a line of Hasanid *ashraf* of Nishapur. See Bulliet, *Patricians,* pp. 234-235.

[32] Note Amoretti's comment that "the cliché that portrays the Ahl al-Bayt as victims par excellence is historically accurate and that emphasizing this point is necessary, at least when speaking of the early generations of the Alids" [Amoretti, *Historical Atlas*, 94]. In the Fatimid's conception of their own past, the period of persecution initiated by the Abbasids from the middle of the second AH / eighth CE century against the early Ismaili Imams initiated a 'period of concealment' [*dawr al-satr*] wherein the Ismaili Imams remain in hiding until the zuhur [manifestation] of Abd Allah al-Mahdi and his proclamation of the Fatimid state. See Daftary, *The Isma'ilis,* pp. 88-136.

[33] The centrality of blood-descent from the Prophet [through Fatima] and Ali in Shi'i doctrine, and the concomitant legitimizing consequences of this genealogical inheritance, is well-known. This applies to Ithna'Ashari, Isma'ili and Zaydi Shi'ism. See e.g. Verena Klemm, 'Fatima bt. Muhammad', *EI3*. That in the fourth AH / tenth CE century the descendants of Ali and Fatima [i.e. the Hasanids and Husaynids] similarly conceptualised a unique characteristic of this descent, to the exclusion of others, emerges particularly in the work of Morimoto and Bernheimer. Bernheimer notes that the "Hasanids and Ḥusaynids were clearly central to the emergence of the Prophet's family as the First Family of Islam' theirs was the 'most noble lineage', since al-Hasan and al-Husayn, as children of Ali and Fatima, were related to the Prophet on both their mother's side and their father's - a point repeatedly made in the sources". See Bernheimer, *Alids,* 2.

[34] For the establishment of the Fatimid administration and the policy of drawing from the local bureaucracy see Brett, *Fatimids,* 299-308. For a summary of Fatimid administrative

policies in with different local constituencies during their first decades in Egypt see Shainool Jiwa, Al-Aziz bi'llah', *Encyclopaedia Islamica.*

[35] The most important analysis of evolutions and iterations Isma'ili and Fatimid notions of the Imamate remains Wilferd Madelung, 'Das Imamat in der frühen ismailitischen Lehre', *Der Islam,* 37/1-3 (Jan 1961), pp. 43-135.

[36] Ustadh Jawdhar provides an insight into these Fatimid familial dynamics in his *Sirah*, see Mansur al-Aziz al-Jawdhari, *Sirat al-Ustadh Jawdhar,* trans. H. Haji, *Inside the Immaculate Portal* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), pp. 59-64. For further discussion on contesting claims within the Fatimid household see Brett, *Fatimids,* 162-164, 179-181, 318-319.

[37] Bernheimer's study of Alid marriage patterns shows that the Alids controlled and calibrated marriages, whereby females only married within the family, while the males married internally as well as externally, but the latter was done to forge links with elite clans. See Bernheimer, 'Genealogy', 76- 86.

[38] On variant opinions amongst Alid genealogists regarding 'true-lineages' see Bernheimer, *Alids*, 22-28.

[39] See D. Eustache, Idrisids', *EI2*; idem., Idris I', *EI2;* John P. Turner, 'Fakhkh', *EI3*. For the historiography of Idris al-Akbar see Najam Haider, 'The community divided: a textual analysis of the murders of Idris b. Abd Allah (d. 175 AH / 791 CE), *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 128/3 (2008), 459-475.

[40] The prominent role of Prophetic descent in Morocco both in history and in contemporary times has led to the study of the *ashraf* becoming a distinct field of study in Moroccan studies. See (E. Lévi-Provençal-[Ch. de la Véronne]), 'Shurafa'', *EI2*. For its prominence in the overall field see Morimoto, *Sayyido-Sharifology,* 89.

[41] The initial Fatimid-Idrisid conflict began in 308 AH / 921 CE when the Fatimid general Masala b. Habus occupied Fez as part of the Fatimid campaign to extend Fatimid rule to the western limits of North Africa. By this time Idrisid rule had fissured amongst many Idrisid claimants from multiple lines of descent from Idris II, son of Idris I. In 308 AH / 921 CE, the

Fatimid general Masala displaced the ruling dynast Yahya b. Idris b. Umar, a great-great-grandson of Idris I. Governorship of Fez was soon handed to Masala's cousin Musa b. Abi'l-Afiya, a noted general but notorious for his eventual defection to the Umayyads in 320 AH / 932 CE. Halm notably states that the latter's own allies sought to stymie his vehement pursuit of Idrisid princes due to their descent from the Prophet. See Halm, *Empire,* 281-283. For the internal Idrisid crises and their conflict with Musa see also J.D. Latham, 'Musa b. Abi'l-Afiya', *EI2.*

[42] See e.g. Halm, *Empire of the Mahdi,* 334.

[43] For Jawhar al-Siqqili's (d. 381 AH / 992 CE) campaign and the conflicts with Ibn Wasul as well as that of Ahmad b. Bakr and the associated siege of Fez see Idris, *'Uyun,* 604-611, trans., *Founder,* 138-147; Halm, *Empire,* 399.

[44] Idris states: "When they [the Idrisid princes and notables] arrived in his presence, the Commander of the Believers ordered that they receive hospitality. He honoured them with robes, gifts and riding animals and was extremely magnanimous to them. For a while they lived thus. Then he ordered their release and repatriated them. He presented them with gifts, robes and riding animals and sent clothes and a saddle load of gifts for the elite and elders among their people". See Idris, *'Uyun,* 612, trans., *Founder of Cairo,* 147.

[45] Al-Muʿizz thus tells the Idrisids: "You are aware of our benevolence and bounty to you and our pardon and clemency concerning your preceding actions…Let him who relates to us through lineage know that this [relation] is only for those who adhere to us and are obedient. As for those who disobey the *awliya' Allah* (friends of God) and oppose them, their lineage will be severed, just as God severed the lineage between Noah and his son when he disobeyed him.… God has made us the imams of His creation, and He only accepts the obedience of those who obey them, and He is only content with those who make them content. [Idris, *'Uyun,* 615, trans., *Founder,* 147-8].

[46] And Noah called upon his Lord and said: "O my Lord! surely my son is of my family! and Your promise is true and You are the most just of judges!" [Q:11-46] He said: "O Noah! he is

not of your family: for his conduct is unrighteous. So ask not of Me that of which you have no knowledge! I give you counsel, lest you become one of the ignorant (Q 11:46)

[47] See, for example, al-Mu'izz's sermon upon his accession as imam-caliph in Idris, *'Uyun al-akhbar*, 453**,** trans., Jiwa *Founder of Cairo,* 71; Paul Walker**,** *Orations of the Fatimid Caliphs: Festival Sermons of the Ismaili Imams* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009)*,* pp. 126-135.

[48] For the *ashraf* of Mecca and Medina in this period see Richard T. Mortel, "Zaydi Shiʿism and the Ḥasanid Sharifs of Mecca" in *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 19 (1987), 455-472 and *idem.,* 'The Origins and Early History of the Husaynid Amirate of Medina to the End of the Ayyubid period', *Studia Islamica* 74 (1991): 63-78, esp. p. 64.

[49] The Ja'farids here provide a "broader" definition of *ashraf.* For other Ja'farid lineages as prominent in eastern Iran, see Mottahedeh, "Administration in Buyid Qazwin".

[50] Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:101, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 66.

[51] Mortel, "Zaydi Shi'ism", 455.

[52] Mortel notes that the Hasanid Ja'far b. Muhammad took control of Mecca, and then proclaimed al-Mu'izz's suzerainty as early as 358 AH / 969 CE before proceeding to receive the investiture from al-Mu'izz. He also notes, however, that Ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn al-Athir both state the *khutba* for al-Mu'izz was not pronounced in Mecca until 363 AH / 974 CE, while al-Maqrizi adds that this occurred in 364 AH / 975 CE (Mortel, "Zaydi Shi'ism", 457). Al-Maqrizi in this excerpt however asserts the 358 AH / 969 CE date, and adds that this proclamation was made by al-Hasan b. Ja'far who seized Mecca after the Fatimid conquest of Egypt. See al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:101, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 66.

[53] The provision of Egyptian grain to the resource-depleted Hijaz was a major feature in the relations of the Fatimids and the *ashraf* of Mecca. Mortel notes that the Fatimid policy towards the Hasanid *ashraf,* "proved to be so successful that, with only minor interruption, the name of the Abbasid caliph was destined not to be mentioned again in the Friday khutba at Mecca, nor during the rites associated with the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, until 454 AH / 1062 CE or 455 AH / 1062 CE. See Mortel,"Zaydi Shi'ism"*,* 457.

[54] Qadi Abu Hanifa al-Nuʻman, *Kitab al-Majalis wa'l-Musayarat,* ed. H. Al-Faqqi, I. Shabbuh, M. al-Yaʻlawi (Tunis: al-Jamiʻah al-Tunisiyah, Kulliyat al-Adab wa-al Ulum al-Insaniyah, 1978), pp. 413-14.

[55] Al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 231. Yaʻlawi makes the suggested identification of Ibrahim b. Duwwas as a Kutama nobleman.

[56] See Amoretti on Alid diaspora into different regions of the Muslim world after their dispersal from the Ḥijaz in the latte second AH / eighth CE century (Amoretti, "Historical Atlas"). For the Egyptian *ashraf* during the Ottoman period see Michael Winter, "The *Ashraf* and *Niqabat al-ashraf* in Egypt and Ottoman Times", *Asian and African Studies,* 19 (1985): 17-41; *idem, Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule, 1517-1798* (London; Routledge, 1992), pp. 185-98; *idem,* "The *Ashraf* and *Naqabat al-ashraf* in Ottoman Egypt and Syria: A Comparative Analysis", in *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The living Links to the Prophet,* ed. Kazuo Morimoto (Oxford: Routledge, 2012) pp. 139-59.

[57] His full lineage is given as Muhammad b. Yahya b. Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Abd Allah b. Musa b. Abd Allah b. al-Hasan b. al-Hasan b. Ali b. Abi Talib (al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 138).

[58] See Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat,* 1:114-115. He is not to be confused with the more famous Abu Muhammad Ibn Ṭabataba discussed below, though this Abu'l-Qasim Ahmad and the latter Abu Muhammad are third and fourth generation descendants of the *sharif* Ibrahim Ṭabaṭaba from two different sons.

[59] As mentioned in al-Maqrizi's entry on Ibn Ṭabaṭaba (*Muqaffa,* 207).

[60] Al-Qalqashandi and Ibn Taghri Birdi as cited in Richard T. Mortel, "Zaydi Shiʻism", 64.

[61] See Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat,* 2:47-49 and the lengthier entry in al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 207-215. His full name and lineage is given as Abu Muhammad Abd Allah b. Ahmad b. Ali b. al-Hasan b. Ibrahim Ṭabataba b. Ismaʻil b. Ibrahim b. al-Hasan b. al-Hasan b. Ali b. Abi Talib, and is referred to as Abu Muhammad ibn Tabataba.

[62] al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 207.

[63] al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, 286.

[64]An anecdote concerning the blessed status of the Alid lineage as reported by Ibn Khallikan and al-Maqrizi relates to Ibn Tabataba's intimate relations with the regent Kafur. They relate that this *sharif* used to send Kafur sweetmeats and cakes that had been prepared in the *sharif's* house almost every-day. A jealous court-rival of Ibn Tabataba sought to end the practise by claiming that Kafur was denigrating his own position in accepting the cakes. Ibn Tabataba, however, told Kafur that the sweetmeats were kneaded and baked by a Hasanid lady, after which the regent claimed that he 'would eat no other' sweetmeat aside from those from the *sharif*'s house. See Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat,* II:48-9; al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 209.

[65] Al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 210-11.

[66] Ibn Tabataba's grave was located in the vicinity the Alid saint Umm Kulthum discussed further below. See Caroline Williams, "The Cult of Alid Saints in the Fatimid Monuments of Cairo. Part II: The Mausolea", *Muqarnas,* 3 (1985): 39-60, p. 40. In his discussion on the influence of Shi'ism in Egyptian funerary architecture, Taylor notes the possibility that the funerary monument [*mashhad*] of Ibn Ṭabtaba was patronized by the Ikhshidid's cannot be dismissed. See Christopher S. Taylor, "Reevaluating the Shi'i Role in the Development of Monumental Islamic Funerary Architecture: The Case of Egypt", *Muqarnas* 9 (1992): 1-10, p. 5.

[67] al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, 207-208 [see Ya'lawi's note 4].

[68] al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 207.

[69] Jonathan M. Bloom, "The Mosque of the Qarafa in Cairo", *Muqarnas,* 4 (1987): 7-20, p. 14.

[70] Bloom, "Mosque of the Qarafa", 15.

[71] Williams, "Cult of Alid Saints", 40.

[72] Bloom, Mosque of Qarafa, 14, 16.

[73] Al-Maqrizi encapsulates this momentous transformation by stating, after the arrival of al-Mu'izz, that Egypt "became the seat of a caliphate after having been the seat of an amirate" (*Itti'az,* 1:134, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 104).

[74] Halm, *Empire,* 410-14, 419-20; Brett, *Fatimids,* 299-300.

[75] For the background and stipulations of the Fatimid *aman* document in particular see Shainool Jiwa, "Inclusive Governance: A Fatimid Illustration" in *A Companion to the Muslim World,* ed. Amyn B. Sajoo (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), pp. 157-177 and Brett, *Fatimids,* 299-303.

[76] The full list of delegates as well as the full-text of the *aman* are found in al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:102-107, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 68-73; Idris, '*Uyun al-akhbar*, 673-8, trans., Jiwa, *Founder of Cairo,* 209-15.

[77] His fuller title is Abu'l-Tayyib al-Abbas b. Ahmad al-Hashimi. He can be identified as an Abbasid due to a subsequent passage in al-Maqrizi, when the vizier Ja'far ibn al-Furat remonstrates with the remnants of the Ikshidid armed forces for rejecting the *aman*. He notes "You have asked this matter of al-Sharif [i.e. Sharif Muslim]. He was not content [to go on his own], so he took with him Abu Isma'il, a Hasanid, a Muslim qadi and an Abbasid" (al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:108, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 74) the Abbasid therefore must refer to Abu'l-Tayyib al-Hashimi. For his participation in the delegation see Idris, '*Uyun,* 673, trans., *Founder,* 208 and al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:103, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 68.

[78] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:108, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 74.

[79] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:108, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 74.

[80] A notable indication of the Sharif's lineage emerges in a statement attributed to the leader of the *Kafuriyya*, Farah al-Bajkami, who in rejection of the document asserts to the *sharif:* "Even if your forefather [i.e. the Prophet] had come to us with this [document], we would have slashed his face with the sword" (al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:108, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 74). That such a sacrilegious remark would have been made publically is doubtful, and it could be a later interpolation reprimanding their conduct through the *sharif*.

[81] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:108, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 74.

[82] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:109, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 76.

[83]Thus Jawhar writes: "The Sharif''s letter has arrived, may God lengthen his life, perpetuate his honour, support and strengthen him. [In it] he congratulated us for the blessed conquest, which God has paved for us, and he, may God support him, deserves to be congratulated as it is his realm [*dawla*] and the realm of his family, and he is worthy of it". See Idris,*'Uyun al-akhbar*, 682**,** trans., Jiwa. *Founder of Cairo,* 217-18. This reference is not included in al-Maqrizi's version of the letter (*Itti'az*, 1:109, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 76).

[84] Jawhar writes: "I have authorized the Sharif, may God strengthen him, to grant security as he wishes and pleases and to make additions to what I have written in it as he sees fit. This is my safety document, issued by the permission of our lord and master, the Commander of the Faithful, may God bless him" (al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:109, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 76).

[85] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:111, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 77.

[86] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:109, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 76

[87] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:114, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 81.

[88] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:114, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 81.

[89] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:133, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 103.

[90] Al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 250.

[91] Al-Hasan b. Ibrahim al-Rassi. After al-Hasan's father the *naqib* Ibrahim al-Rassi died in 369 AH / 980 CE during the reign of al-'Aziz bi'llah, al-Hasan inherited the position of *niqab* until his own death in 379 AH / 989 CE, when his funeral prayer was led by al-'Aziz himself. See al- Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, p. 326.

[92] Tamim b. al-Mu'izz, _Diwan_ *Tamim b. al-Mu'izz,* ed. M. K. Husayn (Cairo: Matba'at Dar al-Kutub al-MIsriyah, 1957), pp. 4-5.

[93] Maqrizi notes that "[Al-Mu'izz] ordered that her estates and revenues should be returned to her. Ya'qub b. Killis summoned Qadi Abu Tahir and his certified witnesses, and asked them to witness the letter from al-Mu'izz ordering him to restore her estates and revenues to her. Then she came out of hiding and was safe" (al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:225, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 206).

[94] Al-Maqrizi states: "In that month, the dignitaries entered the palace of al-Mu'izz. Among them were the *ashraf*, the administrators, the commanders, the rest of the *awliya'* among the Kutama and others. A person said to one of the *ashraf*, 'Have a seat, O *sharif*' and someone from the Kutama interjected, 'Is there any other *sharif* in the world apart from our master? If anyone other than him had claimed that, we would have killed him.'" (*Itti'az*, 1:147, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 117]

[95] al-Maqrizi, Itti'az , I:147, trans., Jiwa, Mediterranean Empire, 117.

[96] Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:150, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 119.

[97] Followed the conclusion of al- 'Aziz's successful campaign against the Turkish general Alp Tegin in 368 AH / 979 CE, al-Maqrizi relates correspondence between the *naqib* and the imam-caliph, the former querying the clemency granted to the rebel, and al-'Aziz replying on familial terms. See al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1: 244.

[98] Al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 315, 326.

[99] Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1: 277.

[100] Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1: 281.

[101] This is in reference to the Abbasid black *kiswa* that was henceforth replaced by the Fatimid white.

[102] Al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 430.

[103] Al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 432.

[104] Ibid, 163. Note also Walker's account of al-Hakim's request of the *ashraf* of Mecca concerning the contents of the home of the Shi'i Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq which had apparently remained unopened for centuries in Medina. See Walker, *Caliph of Cairo,* 230. The context is amplified in his "Purloined Symbols of the Past: The Theft of Souvenirs and Sacred Relics in the Rivalry between the Abbasids and Fatimids" in *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madelung,* ed. F. Daftary and J. Meri (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003) pp. 364-87.

[105] See Delia Cortese and Simonetta Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids in the world of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 80.

[106] For the regency of Sitt al-Mulk see Paul Walker, 'The Fatimid Caliph al-Aziz and His Daughter Sitt al-Mulk: A Case of Delayed but Eventual Succession to Rule by a Woman', *Journal of Persianate Studies,* 4/1 (2011): 30-44; Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids,* 117-127.

[107] Mortel, "Zaydi Shi'ism", p. 67.

[108] Madelung, "Fatimids and the Qarmatis".

[109] Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:147-50, 1:202-4, 1:217-25, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 117-21, 181-84, 197-206.

[110] Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, I:217, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 197.

[111] In reference to Sharif Muslim visiting al-Mu'izz on the death of the latter's son, al-Maqrizi notes: "Abu Ja'far Muslim said to al-Mu'izz: 'I seek God's protection from losing a pious son'. Al-Mu'izz said to him: 'What is your opinion about a disobedient son, and a disobedient brother?' indicating his [Abu Ja'far's] son Ja'far and his brother Abd Allah, for they had sided with the Qaramita (al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:217, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 197).

[112] al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 242.

[113] The purposes of the text included discrediting the whole of the Isma'ili movement by claiming the original founder of the Isma'ilis, as well as the ancestor of the Fatimids, was Abd Allah b. Maymun al-Qaddah, an alleged follower of Daysani (Bardesian) dualism. It was in Akhu Muhsin that the *kitab al-siyasa* [Book of Initiation], a forgery claimed to be an Isma'ili text with the aim of destroying Islam from within, came to be cited and entered into Sunni historiography. For Akhu Muhsin's role within the polemics on Isma'ili origins see Daftary, *Ismailis,* 100-3.

[114] Abu Abd Allah Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Rizam (or Razzam) al-Ta'i al-Kufi, more commonly known as Ibn Rizam, lived in Baghdad in first half of fourth AH / tenth CE century. His major anti-Isma'ili text *Kitab radd 'ala'l-Isma'iliyya* (or *Naqḍ 'ala'l-Batiniyya)* only survives in fragments in Ibn al-Nadim's *Fihrist,* but became highly influential in the later work of Akhu Muhsin. See Daftary, *Ismailis,* 102-103.

[115] For a listing of how the Ibn Rizam-Akhu Muhsin related accounts continued to be reproduced in later Sunni historiography including Persian sources as well as Arabic, see Daftary, *Ismailis*, p. 553 n. 72.

[116] Abu'l-Mahasin ibn Taghribirdi, *al-Nujum al-Zahira fi Muluk Misr wa'l-Qahira,* ed. William Popper, volumes I-III (Berkeley: University Press 1909), II:17**.**

[117] The main sources for the manifesto in chronological order of appearance are Ibn al-Jawzi [Abu'l-Faraj Abd al-Rahman Ibn Jawzi, *al-Muntazam fi tarikh al-muluk wa'l-umam,* ed. Muhammad A. Aṭa and Musṭafa A. Aṭa, volumes I-IXX, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub, 1412-1992), XV:82], Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil,* XI:446-448; Ibn Khaldun, *Tarikh,* III:547; al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* I:43, Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum al-Zahira*, IV:229. The first extant written reference to the Manifesto is thus at least 130 years after its issuance. A study on the context and textual history of the decree is currently being prepared by this author under the title 'The Baghdad Manifesto: A Lineage Exposed or an Expose on lineage?' (Forthcoming).

[118] Discussion of the so-called "Baghdad Manifesto" is found especially in Mamour, *Polemics,* 16-29; Lewis, *Origins,* 60-1; Daftary, *Ismailis*, 101-3, 185.

[119] Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat,* II: 47; Notably the same verses are also cited in Idris, *'Uyun*, 728, trans., Jiwa, *Founder of Cairo,* 263; evidencing the ubiquitous nature of this apocryphal anecdote, which found its way into Isma'ili historiography through the writings of Idris 'Imad al-Din.

[120] Both *sharif*s al-Radi and al-Murtada were the sons of Abu Ahmad Husayn al-Musawi, a descent of Musa al-Kazim b. Ja'far al-Sadiq. Abu Ahmad was one of the most prominent and influential *Sharif*s of the Muslim world in the latter half of the fourth AH / tenth CE century, where from his base in Baghdad he stood as *naqib* of the Alids, head of the *mazalim* and the *ḥajj* and de-facto leader of the Shi'i community there. After Abu Ahmads demise in 400 AH / 1009-10 CE, *sharif*s al-Radi and al-Murtada became heirs to their father's heritage. Both brothers were educated in Imami Shi'i tenants, studying notably under the famed Imami theologian Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413 AH / 1022 CE). Sharif al-Radi became noted particularly for his poetry and as the compiler of the *Nahj al-Balagha,* the compilation of sermons, sayings and homilies attributed to Ali b. Abi Ṭalib. See M. Djebli, art."al-Sharif al-Radi", in E12. Sharif al-Murtada on the other hand, had a long legacy and influence as a Shi'i theologian, writing extensive works including those in defence of the Twelver notion of the Imamate. See C. Brockelmann, art. "al-Sharif al-Murtada", in *EI2*.

[121] The longer version is found in al-Maqrizi quoting Hilal al-Sabi' (al- Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:32-4), and is also found in Ibn al-Athir, (*Al-Kamil* VI:446-8]. For Idris version, see Idris, *'Uyun al-Alkhbar*, 728, trans., Jiwa, *Founder of Cairo,* 263.

The founding of the Fatimid caliphate across the southern Mediterranean, and then in Egypt, Syria and the Hijaz at the turn of the fourth AH / tenth CE century, necessitated its negotiation with the *ashraf*, those who claimed lineal descent from the Prophet Muhammad, and who by this time had gained significant influence as a social class based on their charismatic descent. While other dynastic powers fostered relationships with various members of the *ashraf*, the Fatimid-*ashraf* dynamics were distinctive in that the Fatimids legitimised their rule as Ismai'li Shi'i imam-caliphs, based on their claim of descent from the Prophet Muhammad, and as the sole successors to his authority and leadership over the Islamic world. Consequently, Fatimid-

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ashraf relations were permeated by fraternal camaraderie as well as competing contestations based on their shared claim of Prophetic lineage.

Introduction

Lineal descent from the Prophet Muhammad was among the earliest markers of charismatic authority and social distinction in the history of the Muslim world.[1] To this day, across a wide range of Muslim societies and doctrinal interpretations, blood-descent from the Prophet remains imbued with significant prestige.[2] The establishment of the Fatimid caliphate in 297 AH / 909 CE was predicated on lineal descent from the Prophet. Proclaiming their authority as Shi'i imams, the Fatimids presented themselves as the sole designated successors to the Prophet Muhammad, and therefore the only legitimate inheritors to his authority and leadership over the *umma*.[3] Following the establishment of their rule, the Fatimids had to continually negotiate their authority across a range of social, ethnic and religious groups in their burgeoning empire.[4] Of these groups, among the most influential and socially-cohesive were the *ashraf*, the term used to refer to those who claimed lineal descent from the Prophet Muhammad.[5] By the latter half of the fourth AH / tenth CE century the *ashraf* had settled across the breadth of the Islamic world, and had successfully established themselves as an exclusive, privileged and charismatic social group.[6] Moreover, the Fatimids' rise to power in fourth AH / tenth CE century also coincided with the heightening and consolidation of the social status of the *ashraf*. This inevitably meant that the shared claim of Prophetic descent between the Fatimid imam-caliphs and the *ashraf* provided an impetus for camaraderie as much as it did for contestation.

Notwithstanding commentary on individual episodes in Fatimid-*ashraf* relations,[7]or on the role of *ashraf* in particular instances of anti-Fatimid polemic,[8] the relationship between the

Fatimids and the *ashraf* has yet to be the focus of a sustained study in contemporary scholarship. Nonetheless, the interplay of these relationships merits further attention. The considerable role played by a host of different *ashraf,* whether they were pro or anti-Fatimid, is as much a distinct feature of Fatimid history as it is in the history of the *ashraf.* This is most apparent in the decades immediately following the Fatimid entry to Egypt in 358 AH / 969 CE.

Over the last three decades, a quantum of research focusing on the *ashraf* as a social group, with studies ranging from the early Islamic to the modern periods, has provided significant analysis and schematic frameworks through which the *ashraf* can be historically approached.[9] Yet, as this paper aims to highlight, the relationship between the *ashraf* and the Fatimid imam-caliphs was rather distinctive in respect to *ashraf*-state relations in medieval Muslim history. The Fatimid polity was the only sustained Shiʻi caliphate across the central heartlands of the Islamic world in this period.[10] Therefore for the *ashraf*, the Fatimids were the only major dynastic power with whom they shared the claim of blood-descent from the Prophet Muhammad, and thus who also shared the charismatic membership of the *Ahl al-Bayt* [the 'People of the Prophet's house'].[11] This article will therefore explore the distinctive dynamic engendered between the Fatimids and the *ashraf*, which had the potential to converge on mutual interests, but also had the tendency to be fractious when their interests diverged.

A reading of the source narratives reveals that Fatimid-*ashraf* relations gained salience during the reign of the fourth Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Muʻizz li-Din Allah (r. 341-365 AH / 953-975 CE), whose reign witnessed the transference of the Fatimid polity from North Africa to Egypt. There are three principal causes that account for this shift. First, al-Muʻizz is well-known to have initiated efforts at rapprochement across different social and religious groups which had historical and doctrinal links with the Fatimids.[12] His interactions with the Qaramita of Bahrain as well as his efforts at reconciliation with non-Fatimid Ismaʻilis in Iran and Iraq are cases in point.[13] The cultivation of al-Muʻizz's relations with the *ashraf*, often through reference to the notion of shared descent, provides another example of his conciliatory approach. Second, the transference of the Fatimid caliphate to Egypt necessitated the genesis

of new relationships with the influential aristocracies already present in Egypt as well as in Syria and Arabia. As will be discussed below, central to these Fatimid efforts were relations with what will be referred to as the 'pro-Fatimid' *ashraf*. The third factor concerns the consequences of the Fatimid expansion into Egypt and Syria, which positioned the Fatimids as the most potent threat to the Abbasid Caliphate, their Buyid overlords and the proto-Sunni legal establishment in the eastern lands. In countering this development, the 'anti-Fatimid' *ashraf* therefore gained a unique function. Fatimid-*ashraf* relations during the reign of al-Muʿizz will thus form the principal focus of this study; while continuities during the reign of his son and successor al-ʿAziz will also be noted.

A Note on the Sources

Morimoto notes that it is "important to keep in mind that the functions of the *sayyid*/*sharif* pedigree should be interpreted in terms of its legitimising capacity."[14] Similarly, in explaining the prominent position given to Alid families in the fifth AH/ eleventh CE century in 'local histories' of the various eastern Muslim regions, Bernheimer notes that "the presence of members of the Prophet's family became almost part of the *fada'il* (virtues) of a place: It linked the locality genealogically with the earliest period of Islam."[15] This 'legitimising power' of the *ashraf* denotes a distinct historiographical concern for the study of Fatimid-*ashraf* relations, namely the function of the *ashraf* to promote Fatimid lineage, and more critically, to act as 'literary-foils' with a function of rejecting the Fatimid lineage as part of the broader anti-Fatimid polemic.

The fact that the Fatimid genealogical link to the Prophet Muhammad was integral to their legitimisation of authority, meant that their lineage became a central target of attack by their detractors.[16] The *ashraf* therefore came to feature prominently in anti-Fatimid polemic. First, some *ashraf* used their prerogative as 'guardians of the Prophet's lineage' to fuel anti-Fatimid propaganda in the fourth AH / tenth CE century, most notably, the polemicist *sharif* Akhu Muhsin. The *ashraf* were similarly also deployed by the Abbasid Caliphs to delegitimise the Fatimid lineage as evidenced in the so-called 'Baghdad Manifesto' of 402 AH / 1011 CE. Subsequently, the writings of Akhu Muhsin and the signatories of the Baghdad Manifesto

became embedded in pro-Abbasid historiography. The use of the *ashraf* as tools in the delegitimising discourse against the Fatimids is further evident in the central positioning of the *ashraf* in the chronicles that attest to the signing of the Manifesto.[17]

Most accounts relating to Fatimid-*ashraf* relations are found in post sixth AH / twelfth CE century literature concerned either with the histories of North Africa and Egypt in general, or that of the Fatimids in particular.[18] Among these are the works of the ninth AH / fifteenth CE century Egyptian Sunni Mamluk historian Taqi al-Din al-Maqrizi (d. 845 AH / 1449 CE) and his contemporary Yemeni Isma'ili author Idris 'Imad al-Din (d. 872 AH / 1468 CE), both of whom report extensively from primary sources which are no longer extant.[19] Al-Maqrizi draws extensively from Ibn Zulaq (d. 386 AH / 996 CE), an eyewitness source on the Fatimid conquest of Egypt and, seemingly, is in close contact with the leading *sharif* of Egypt.[20] The preservation of Fatimid sources in Idris' writings has made his works among of the vital sources for this period.[21]

The chronicles usually mention the *ashraf* in the Fatimid realms in relation to their political or literary activity, either as allies to the Fatimids, or as rebels or polemicists against them. The Egyptian *ashraf* under the Fatimids also appear in the longer biographical dictionaries on the notables of Egypt, such as Ibn Khallikan's *Wafayat al-a'yan* and al-Maqrizi's *Kitab al-muqaffa al-kabir*.[22]

Historical Backdrop

The emergence of the *ashraf* as a distinct social group in the early medieval period, the involvement of its members in different dynastic administrations, and their dispersal across Islamic lands more broadly, has received scholarly attention from Arendonk, Bulliet, Mottahedeh, Morimoto, Bernheimer and Amoretti, among others.[23] Their findings indicate that by the fifth AH / eleventh CE century, the descendants of the Prophet had proliferated across the Islamic world and had successfully established themselves as a charismatic and influential social group with defined membership criteria.[24] By the late fourth AH / tenth CE century, in the Abbasid administration as well as in other regional principalities, the *ashraf* often held public welfare and civic roles, functioning as heads of the pilgrimage

caravans, market overseers and inspectors, diplomats and judges.[25] Their collective group identity was reinforced by the institutionalisation of the position of the *naqib*, attested as early as the third AH / ninth CE century, and generally translated as 'martial' or 'overseer' of the *ashraf*.[26] The *naqib*s functioned essentially as leaders of the *ashraf* in a given region. Their principal functions included the maintenance of the genealogical registers of the *ashraf*, recording their births and deaths, and regulating marriages. The *naqib*s also ensured that the *ashraf* benefited from distinctive socio-economic privileges accorded to them as descendants of the Prophet, such as stipends, pensions and tax benefits.[27] These distinct fiscal privileges of the *ashraf* are among the tangible manifestations of their social and legal status across the various Shi'i and Sunni groupings.[28]

Yet while the *ashraf* became socially cohesive as a collective, they nonetheless remained significantly diverse in their religious beliefs.[29] Seemingly, a sizeable number belonged to the Zaydi Shi'a, but many professed Ithna'Ashari or Isma'ili Shi'ism,[30] or subscribed to one of the Sunni *madhhab*s.[31] They were similarly diverse in their political tendencies, as is further evident in their widely varying attitudes towards the Fatimid state.

Commonalities and Distinctions: The contours of Fatimid-*ashraf* relations

The Fatimid-*ashraf* dialectic gained salience following the extension of Fatimid rule over Egypt, Palestine and the Hijaz in 358 AH / 969 CE. A number of doctrinal and political considerations had an impact on this development.

The common lineage of the Fatimids and the *ashraf* meant that they also had shared notions of identity, a lived affinity to the "history of the Alids", and a shared experience of being marginalised by those who were opposed to the Alids.[32] Moreover, the Fatimids and the *ashraf* from the descent of al-Hasan and al-Husayn held a shared belief in the charisma that was embodied in the blood-line of Ali and Fatima.[33] As the case-studies below will highlight, this shared affinity became a major factor in fostering relations between the Fatimids and the pro-Fatimid *ashraf.* Importantly, it also became imbued in the Fatimid approach to governance. As the new ruling power in Egypt, the Fatimid imam-caliphs sought support from distinct segments of the local populace, providing a canopy of protection and patronage to various

groups. The elite of Egypt's Christian and Jewish communities, and perhaps more importantly those of the Muslim bureaucratic and merchant classes, leant their support to Fatimid rule after their inclusion into the state administration, many having earlier sought the stability that the Fatimids brought following a period of anarchy in Egypt.[34] Central to this endeavour at entente however were the new dynasts' efforts in establishing relations with the local *ashraf*.

Yet, these shared affinities had their corollary limitations. As Isma'ili imams, the Fatimid Caliphs espoused the Shi'i *Imami* doctrine, according to which the status of a single line of the Prophet's descendants was privileged above all others - that of the Isma'ili Imams who traced their lineage through Husayn b. Ali (d. 61 AH / 680 CE) to the Prophet.[35] As will be evident, in their viewpoint, while the *ashraf* were to be accorded respect and privilege due to their descent, they were nonetheless secondary in their ranking in relation to their own uniquely designated status. This elevation of a single lineage of Husaynids necessarily relegated not only all the other lineages of the *ashraf* but also other members of the Fatimid household itself, namely the other descendants of the founding Fatimid imam-caliph al-Mahdi bi'llah (r. 297-322 AH / 909-934 CE). While they retained a position of respect, they were nonetheless devoid of charismatic authority. As noted in Fatimid sources, within the greater Fatimid household this led to fractiousness that at times resulted in counterclaims to power.[36]

The Fatimid advocacy of a single designated lineage of Alids, posed a substantive challenge to the status of the *ashraf* in Egypt, and was notably against a trend manifest by the *ashraf* themselves. Recent scholarship has argued that from the third AH / ninth CE century onwards, members of the *ashraf* sought to elevate the collective Alid lineage above all others through a variety of measures, including the production of exclusivist genealogical tables, the regulation of membership through the institutionalisation of the *niqaba* and the establishment of endogamous marriage-practices.[37] Given that the *ashraf* expressed a tendency towards Zaydi Shi'ism, it can be argued that the majority of the fourth AH / tenth CE century *ashraf* consequently favoured a more collective notion of the *ahl al-bayt* that vested charismatic appeal in all the descendants of the Prophet. Hence, for some of the influential *ashraf*, particularly those in Syria and Iraq, the rise of the Fatimids was not only

imbued with religious significance but also had social repercussions, which can be posited as a cause of considerable consternation that often degenerated into outright hostility.

Viewed from another angle however, the Fatimid doctrinal claim to the Imamate invested in the *ashraf* a distinct authority that they did not possess in their relations with other dynastic powers. By the late fourth AH / tenth CE century, the *naqib*s of the *ashraf* were manifesting unprecedented power and prestige across many urban centres of the Islamic world. This included the maintenance of registers in which they recorded, and thus regulated, the lineage of their kinsmen. Through the production of such registers and production of formal documents, they publically affirmed or denied an individual's, or clan's, claim of descent from the Prophet. Thus the *naqib*s became 'guardians of the Prophet's lineage', registering 'true descendant of the Prophet' on the one hand and publically denouncing those whom they considered to be false claimants (*da'i kadhdhab*) on the other; notwithstanding the fact that *naqib*s from different regions often disagreed as to what constituted a true lineage.[38]

The *ashraf* were therefore in an unrivalled position to pronounce on a central qualifying feature of the Fatimid claim to the imamate, that is, their genealogical lineage to the Prophet. This established prerogative gave the *ashraf* a powerful tool that could be highly beneficial, or singularly detrimental to the Fatimid cause. As will be highlighted below, over this period in question, it was the *ashraf*s' monopoly over the veracity of claims to the Prophetic descent that propelled some of them to the forefront of the anti-Fatimid polemic. The *ashraf*s' prerogative to verify or deny true lineage furthermore became a powerful tool for the Abbasids and the Buyids, who used it to maximum effect in their rivalry against the Fatimids.

Camaraderie and Alliance

Al-Mu'izz and the Idrisids: A precursor to conciliatory policies

Soon after the establishment of the Fatimid dynasty in North Africa in 297 AH / 910 CE, the Fatimids came into contact with the Idrisids, an Alid dynasty whose Imamate was legitimised through the Zaydi Shi'i model. Idrisid rule had been established in the western-most regions of North Africa following a failed rebellion by Hasanid descendants of the Prophet against the

Abbasids in 169 AH / 786 CE, culminating in the escape of a Hasanid, Idris b. 'Abdallah, to western Maghrib where he founded the eponymous Idrisid dynasty between 172 AH / 789 CE to 175 AH / 791 CE.[39] Based in the newly founded city of Fez, the establishment of the Idrisids was a major milestone in the subsequent prominence of the *ashraf*, socially and politically in Morocco from the second AH / eighth CE century until today.[40]

The Fatimid-Idrisid conflict in its initial phase highlighted that shared familial claims to Prophetic descent played no particular role.[41] In 323 AH / 935 CE, after their brief control of Fez was ended by a renegade general, Fatimid generals regained control of Fez and reinstalled the exiled Idrisids as governors, but tensions remained such that by 338 AH / 950 CE, Idrisid princes sought Umayyad help against the Fatimids.[42] It was in the reign of the fourth Fatimid imam-caliph al-Mu'izz therefore that the shared claim of Prophetic descent seems to have come to the fore in defining Fatimid-Idrisid relations. Al-Mu'izz afforded the Idrisid princes a privileged status, but one qualified by the necessity of obedience, foreshadowing a new dynamic that was to define Fatimid-*ashraf* relations following their move to Egypt.

A two-year Fatimid campaign to re-establish authority across the Maghrib (347-349 AH / 958-960 CE) saw the apprehension of a number of anti-Fatimid rebels and Khariji claimants to the Imamate[43] and included amongst the prisoners of war were a number of Idrisid princes and notables whose dynastic power had waned. The Idrisids had nonetheless retained local power and lineal prestige, despite being internally divided and often vacillating between Fatimid and Umayyad patronage. While all the rival contenders were dispatched to the Fatimid court at al-Manṣuriyya, al-Qadi al-Nu'man notes that the Idrisid princes and notables received special treatment at the personal instruction of al-Mu'izz, which was in marked contrast to that meted out to the others.[44] The attitude which the Fatimids were to adopt towards the *ashraf* in the subsequent Egyptian phase is indicated in al-Mu'izz's address to the Idrisdid *ashraf,* who were exceptionally awarded distinguished seating at a palace audience.[45] In his address, al-Mu'izz declared that the Idrisids had an esteemed status. However, its validity was welded to the *ashraf's* acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the divinely-sanctioned Fatimid imam. Through reference to the Qur'anic example of Noah's disobedient son [Q11:45-46],[46] al-

Mu'izz iterates that familial lineage can crucially be "cut" through a *sharif*'s act of disobedience. Al-Mu'izz also reaffirms the centrality of the Fatimid Prophetic descent to their mission, which is but a continuation of the call of the "imam's grandfather", the Prophet Muhammad. Invoking the Prophet as their grandfather would remain a recurring refrain in the Fatimid imams' pronouncements.[47] The paradigm of asserting lineal prestige and distinction of the *ashraf*, corroborated by allegiance to the Fatimid imam-caliph, would remain the blue-print for Fatimid-*ashraf* relations in the Egyptian phase.

Resolution of a Hasanid-Ja'farid feud in the Hijaz

Among the politically consequential gestures of al-Mu'izz towards the *ashraf* during the Ifriqiyan phase of his rule was rapprochement with, and patronage of, the *ashraf* in Mecca and Medina.[48] Official recognition in the Friday prayers of the holy lands of Islam had hitherto been a preserve of the Abbasid caliphs. Its subsequent displacement to the Fatimids was a major symbolic gesture that marked a growing acceptance of the Fatimid caliphate in the heartlands of the Islamic world. That this shift was fostered by members of the *ashraf* is a significant marker in Fatimid-*ashraf* relations.

Al-Mu'izz's overtures in the Hijaz began when he took on the role of mediator between the various factions of the *ashraf*. A violent blood feud had erupted in the years leading to 348 AH / 959-960 CE between *ashraf* clans of Hasanid descent and clans claiming descent from Ja'far b. Abi Talib, who though not direct descendants of the Prophet, were nonetheless considered to be imbued with charisma because of their Talibid descent.[49] After major fatalities in the conflicts between the Banu Hasan and the Banu Ja'far, al-Mu'izz is reported to have sent representatives to the Hijaz to negotiate a settlement between the two clans, paying a substantive sum as blood-money to resolve the feud. In al-Maqrizi account, this mediation is identified as the principal gesture which led the Hasanid *ashraf* in Mecca to incline towards al-Mu'izz.[50]

The efficacy of his reconciliatory efforts toward the Hijazi *ashraf* was soon evident. Between 357-358 AH / 968-969 CE, the Hasanid *amir* Ja'far b. Muhammad b. al-Husayni, a *sharif* from the ninth-generation of descent from al-Hasan b. Ali b. Abi Talib established his control over

Mecca.[51] Thus began the rule of the Ja'farid clan of the Hasanids over Mecca, which was to last almost a century. Following the Fatimid takeover of Egypt, the *amir* of Mecca proclaimed al-Mu'izz as the reigning caliph over the Islamic world, from the pulpits in Mecca and Medina:

> When Jawhar entered [Egypt], Hasan b. Ja'far al-Hasani hurriedly took possession of Mecca. He publically proclaimed al-Mu'izz as the legitimate ruler. He wrote to Jawhar about it and the latter sent the news to al-Mu'izz. Al-Mu'izz sent an appointment of investiture from the Maghrib, authorising him with the administration of the Holy Cities and their environs.[52]

The reconciliation of the *ashraf* of the Hijaz through the patronage of al-Mu'izz was to have long-lasting implications. For almost the entirety of the next century, until 454 AH / 1062 CE or 455 AH / 1063 CE, Fatimid authority was pronounced by the *ashraf* of the Hijaz.[53] Al-Mu'izz's gestures towards the *ashraf* probably also provided the context for a unique account of a delegation of the Hasanid *ashraf* to the Fatimid court in North Africa, as recorded by al-Qaḍi al-Nu'man. In his *Kitab al-Majalis wa'l-Musayarat*, al-Nu'man records a delegation of Hasanids from the Hijaz and Yemen who came to Ifriqiya to proclaim their allegiance to al-Mu'izz, acknowledging the Fatimid imam-caliph as the rightful legitimate Imam by declaring him to be the *Qa'im* (the one who rises) of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, as foretold by their forefathers. In a mirroring of al-Mu'izz's exhortation to the aforementioned Idrisid Hasanids, al-Mu'izz privileged the social standing of the visiting delegation as descendants of the Prophet, which is subsumed by their allegiance to the rightful Imam.[54] Al-Nu'man's account could be motivated by religious concerns to present recognition of his Imam's legitimacy being underscored by the notable clans of the *ashraf*. Be that as it may, it corresponds with the Hasanid proclamation of the Fatimids in Mecca.

That al-Mu'izz embarked on a distinct policy of patronage of the *ashraf* is further evidenced by an entry in al-Maqrizi's *Muqaffa* regarding a notable at the Fatimid court, Ibrahim b. Duwwas Husn al-Islam (d. after 362 AH / 973 CE), probably a Kutama Berber who was present in the entourage that accompanied al-Mu'izz from North Africa to Egypt. Accordingly, this notable wed his daughter to a *sharif*, Abd Allah b. Isma'il b. al-Hasan b. Muhammad b. Sulayman al-Husayni (d. after 362 AH / 973 CE). In a possible effort to strengthen the ties

between his own courtiers and associates with the *ashraf*, al-Maqrizi notes that al-Mu'izz not only attended the wedding ceremony but also instructed that the dowry was to be paid from the state treasury.[55]

The concerted efforts by al-Mu'izz to foster closer relations with the *ashraf* are amply evident in the Ifriqiyan phase of his reign. However, after the Fatimid transfer of power to Egypt, the complex and nuanced dynamics that influenced Fatimid-*ashraf* relations and their lasting impact came to the fore.

The Fatimids and the Egyptian *ashraf*

By the late fourth AH / tenth CE century, the *ashraf* of Egypt formed an established and respected aristocracy of wealthy notables.[56] As is evident in the biographical entries of al-Maqrizi's *Muqaffa al-Kabir* and elsewhere, a number of *ashraf* wielded considerable social and political influence in Egyptian society. A survey of reports on individual *ashraf* of the immediate pre-Fatimid period points to some significant trends. The Egyptian *ashraf* included members from both the Hasanid and Husaynid lines, and often retained close familial and financial ties to the *ashraf* of the Hijaz. In Egypt, certain prominent *ashraf* had accrued social cache such that their positions were inherited by their sons or close family members leading to the rise of elite clans within the Egyptian *ashraf*. Furthermore, rivalries between prominent *ashraf* were not uncommon. Notably, certain Egyptian *ashraf* are depicted as mediators between rival political factions, as well as between the Ikhshidid bureaucracy and the general populace. This mediating role would become one of their signal features of the *ashraf* during the Fatimid era.

Muhammad b. Yahya, Ibn al-Sarraj, (d. after 335 AH / 946 CE) was a Hasanid *sharif* who sought to establish his own authority by rebelling in the Nile Delta region against the Ikhshidid dynasts of Egypt around 330 AH / 941 CE. Following his defeat, he proceeded to seek sanctuary at the court of the second Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Qa'im, providing a notable example of Fatimid-*ashraf* relations prior to the reign of al-Mu'izz. He is reported to have returned to Egypt by the year 335 AH / 946 CE and participated in a military campaign alongside the Ikhshidid governor Abu'l-Qasim Unujur al-Ikhshidi.[57]

Abu'l-Qasim Ahmad ibn Tabataba (d. 345 AH / 965 CE) was a Hasanid *naqib* of the Egyptian *ashraf* who became renowned for his poetry. This *sharif* is attested to have been buried in a cemetery outside Fustat which was reserved for the descendants of Ali.[58]

Amongst the Husaynids *ashraf* in Egypt, Abu Muhammad al-Hasan b. Tahir b. Yahya was the leading figure prior to the Fatimid arrival.[59] Having been given an extensive land grant [*iqta'*] by the Egyptian Ikhshidid ruler for mediating between the Ikhshidids and the military *amir*s of Baghdad, he exemplifies the role of the *ashraf* as mediators.[60] Notably, after his death leadership [*ri'asa*] of the Husaynid branch of the Egyptian *ashraf* remained within his clan, passing on to his cousin Abu Ja'far Muslim, discussed further below as the leading *sharif* of the first decades of Fatimid Egypt.

Abu Muhammad 'Abd Allah al-Tabataba'i (286-348 AH / 899-900-949 CE) was undoubtedly among the most prominent Egyptian *ashraf* in the period preceding the Fatimid arrival in Egypt. His career exemplified the rising social status of the *ashraf* and was the subject to a lengthy entry in al-Maqrizi's biographical dictionary as well as in that of Ibn Khallikan.[61] The sources note Ibn Tabataba's immense wealth and vast land holdings whose farms yielded considerable revenues. The *sharif's* extensive entourage which included his close-family members, associates, servants and slaves whenever he rode in public are repeatedly noted.[62] Ibn Tabataba's elite status in the social hierarchy is further evident by his unrivalled position at the Ikhshidid court. Ibn Tabataba was often seen riding alongside the Ikhshidid Egyptian ruler Muhammad b. Tughj (r. 323-334 AH / 935-946 CE) in whose audiences the *sharif* was granted a privileged position.[63] The close relations between *sharif* and ruler continued during the reign of the subsequent Ikhshidid regent Kafur [d. 355 AH / 966 CE].[64] Notably, Ibn Tabataba is depicted as a mediator between the locals and the officials of the bureaucracy, which include anecdotes regarding his successful intervention on behalf of individuals against over-bearing government tax officials.[65]

Ibn Tabataba's posthumous fame as an Alid 'saint' in Egyptian religious life furthermore exemplifies the increasing religious prestige accorded to prominent *ashraf* in Egyptian popular religiosity over the following centuries, certainly by Ibn Khallikan's own lifetime.[66] This

posthumous veneration of Ibn Tabataba was to play a distinct role concerning his 'arbitration' of the Fatimid lineage, as will be discussed further below.

Rivalries between various *ashraf* in the pre-Fatimid phase of Egyptian history are reported between the aforementioned al-Hasan b. Tahir and the Abd Allah b. Tabataba. Al-Maqrizi makes implicit note of this by stating that the two *ashraf* did not meet with each other except when compelled to do so by circumstance, whether during an audience [*majlis*] of the ruler or in court cases involving both of them. While the exact cause of the rivalry is not explicated by al-Maqrizi, Ya'lawi notes Ibn Sa'd's assertion that the rivalry between the 'Husaynid and Hasanid' concerned *ri'asa,* or leadership.[67] Leadership in this context most likely meant a tussle over control of the Alid line in Egypt. This is evident when the Husaynid al-Hasan b. Tahir died, as al-Maqrizi notes, this rivalry continued between Abd Allah b. Tabataba and the inheritor of the Husaynid leadership *sharif* Abu Ja'far Muslim (d. after 364 AH / 975 CE).[68]

Esteem for the *ashraf* in this period also extended to female *ashraf*, as exemplified by local Egyptian religious devotion to the tombs of female members of the *Ahl al-Bayt* who had passed away in Egypt, including that of al-Sayyida Nafisa (d. 209 AH / 824 CE), a venerated female Hasanid saint in popular Egyptian piety.[69] The tomb of another *sharifa,* Kulthum bint al-Qasim b. Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq had by the 340's AH /960's Ce become a site of visitation by Shi'i Egyptians, whose increasing presence in Egyptian Muslim society in the decades leading up to the Fatimid conquest is evidenced by funerary inscriptions.[70] Testifying to earlier Egyptian veneration of the Alids, the tomb of Umm Kulthum was located in an area of the Qarafa cemetery that had specifically been reserved for the *ahl al-bayt* and descendants of Ali by a third AH / ninth CE century Egyptian governor.[71] Furthermore, devotion to these female descendants crossed sectarian boundaries in this period, as highlighted by the fact that Abu Bakr Muhammad b. al-Madhara'i (d. 344-345 AH / 956-957 CE), a notable from an esteemed family of Egyptian viziers, dedicated a convent in the Qarafa cemetery outside the capital Fustat specifically to the female *ashraf* of Egypt [*nisa'al-ashraf*].[72]

Familial Mediators: The role of the *ashraf* in the Fatimid conquest of Egypt

The Institute of Ismaili Studies

The Fatimid conquest of Egypt in 358 AH / 969 CE is well recognised as a milestone both in the history of the Fatimid Caliphate and in the history of Egypt more generally.[73] The political vacuum that ensued after the death of the Kafur al-Ikhshidi in 355 AH / 966 CE, and the Abbasid inability to exert their control over Egypt, led to a break-down of law and order and a rise in armed factionalism. The increasing reception of Fatimid *da'i*s (religio-political "missionaries") amongst the Egyptian elite led to their inclination towards Fatimid rule. Following invitations from Egypt, the Fatimid al-Mu'izz, whose borders then extended to Libyan Cyrenaica [*Barqa*], adjacent to Egypt's own border, ordered extensive preparations for the Fatimid advance. In 358 AH / 968 CE the Fatimid commander Jawhar led the Fatimid expedition to Egypt, arriving in Alexandria unopposed in 358 AH / 969 CE. The subsequent takeover of Egypt paved the way for the foundation of al-Qahira (Cairo), which became the locus of the Fatimid state with the settlement therein of al-Mu'izz in 360 AH / 972 CE.

The role of individual *sharif*s in the immediate Fatimid takeover of Egypt has been discussed in scholars.[74] However, their distinct function as mediators between the Egyptian populace and the newly arrived Fatimid rulers necessities focused exploration, as it signals a key moment in the history of the *ashraf* of the fourth AH / tenth CE century, as well in Fatimid-*ashraf* relations.

Upon Jawhar's entry into Egypt, and following correspondence between him and Ja'far ibn al-Furat, the vizier of Egypt, Jawhar was met by a delegation of select notables from Fustat. These individuals were selected to represent Egyptian interests in negotiating a guarantee of safety (*aman*) with the Fatimid general. The signed *aman* was subsequently read out to the populace of Fustat, and guaranteed life, security and property, promised economic prosperity and the fulfilment of ritual obligations and proclaimed the permissibility of the continuation of the Sunni *madhhabs*.[75] Of the five delegates, two were Alid *ashraf,* Sharif Muslim al-Husayni and the Hasanid Abu Isma'il al-Rassi, discussed further below.[76] Also included amongst the delegation was Abu'l Tayyib al-Hashimi (d. after 358 AH / 969 CE) who, though not of Alid descent, was nonetheless a Hashimid belonging to the 'Abbasid house.[77] The two remaining delegates included the *qadi* of Fustat and the leading Fatimid *da'i* of Egypt. Notably, *sharif* Muslim al-Husayni assumed the central role as leader of the delegation and

subsequently as the principal mediator of the public promulgation of the *aman.* Moreover, after the conquest, he retained this mediating role between the new state and the Egyptian populace. Sharif Muslim's political career after 358 AH / 969 CE, and those of other like-minded *ashraf,* highlights a culmination of al-Muʿizz's policy vis-à-vis the *ashraf.* The mediation of the *ashraf* was arguably one of the most instrumental factors in securing a generally peaceful Fatimid entry into Egypt, a point of major significance in understanding the Fatimid-*ashraf* dynamic. The fact that the notables of the surviving Egyptian administration and the military delegated these members of the *ashraf* with the authority to negotiate the vested interests of the Egyptian nobility with the Fatimid commander suggests that the Egyptian notables were drawing on the shared kinship of the *ashraf* with al-Muʿizz. Equally, al-Muʿizz's policy of reconciliation with the *ashraf* from other regions, as in the case of the Hijaz noted above, could have had a bearing on these *ashraf*'s' inclination to negotiate with his commander.

Sharif Abu Jaʿfar Muslim: a trusted kinsman

Sharif Abu Jaʿfar Muslim al-Husayni, referred to more commonly as Sharif Muslim, seems to have inherited a position of leadership over the Husaynid *ashraf* of Egypt following the death of his kinsman al-Hasan b. Tahir b. Yahya. In 358 AH / 969 CE, he was selected by Egypt's elite, including its military factions, to lead the delegation from Fustat to meet the Fatimid general.[78] Following the meeting in Alexandria where the terms of the *aman* are dictated, Sharif Muslim is identified as the figure who carries the letter to Ibn al-Furat and the leaders of the military factions in Fustat.[79] When remnants of the previous Ikhshidid and Kafurid forces rejected the *aman* and sought to resist the Fatimid conquest,[80] Sharif Muslim was involved in tripartite negotiations involving himself, the vizier, and the factional Ikhshidid/Kafurid generals in an attempt to find a resolution.[81] Failure to resolve the situation led to limited skirmishes between the Fatimids and the Ikhshidid factions, leading to the latter's defeat. In the aftermath, when the notables of Fustat sought a re-issuance of the *aman*, they turned to *sharif* Muslim to formally request its re-issuance from Jawhar.[82] Here, sharif Muslim's shared familial relations with the Fatimid imam-caliph are subsequently made explicit. When re-issuing the *aman*, Jawhar critically directs his letter to

the *sharif* first and foremost, indicating the general's recognition of the *sharif*s pre-eminence. Furthermore, in Idris's version of the re-issuance of the aman, Jawhar identifies the Fatimid state (*dawla*) as also being the *sharif*'s own *dawla* and the *dawla* of his family.[83] More importantly, in al-Maqrizi's account, Jawhar delegates authority to Sharif Muslim by declaring that the *sharif* was thereafter able to extend the "guarantee of security" to whomsoever he wished.[84]

Sharif Muslim's intermediary role is further evident following the conclusion of the agreement, when he led the Egyptian delegation to Giza to receive the Fatimid general. As al-Maqrizi relates, in all likelihood from the eye-witness account of Ibn Zulaq, the delegation also included, "all the *ashraf*, the judges, the learned men, the *shuhud* (certified witnesses), the prominent merchants and subjects".[85] Jawhar honoured Sharif Muslim by permitting him and the vizier to remain mounted when they came to greet him, while all the rest of the people were ordered "to the ground". Similarly, when Jawhar was presented with 'countless courtesies and bounties' from the Egyptian notables, he refused to accept any offerings except from Sharif Muslim.[86] Subsequently, when the Fatimid general sought as a gesture of goodwill to distribute alms to the needy of Fuṣtat, a town-crier declared that the recipients should first gather at the house of Sharif Muslim.[87]

The religious esteem afforded to Sharif Muslim was similarly apparent. When the high-ranking Fatimid military commander Sa'ada b. Hayyan died in 362 AH / 972 CE away, the honour of leading the funerary prayers was given to Sharif Muslim, behind whom the general Jawhar himself prayed.[88]

The esteem for the *sharif* came to the fore when the Imam-caliph al-Mu'izz arrived in Egypt. In Sha'ban 362 AH / May 973 CE, Sharif Muslim once again assumed the distinctive role of heading the Egyptian delegation to receive the Fatimid caliph. Ibn Zulaq's account highlights the particular regard which al-Mu'izz accorded to *sharif* Abu Ja'far:

> Abu Ja'far Muslim and a group of the *ashraf* received him in the region of Mahallat
> Hafṣ. With them were the prominent people of the town… Abu Ja'far Muslim was
> the first one to approach him… Then he [al-Mu'izz] set out accompanied by Abu

Ja'far Muslim. Whilst speaking to him, he asked about the *ashraf*. So, the prominent ones among them approached him: [They were] Abu'l-Hasan Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Adra, Abu Isma'il al-Rassi, Isa, the brother of Muslim, and Abd Allah b. Yahya b. Tahir b. al-Suwayh. Then he [al-Mu'izz] honoured al-Sharif Muslim by ordering a riding animal with a litter for him as it was extremely hot and al-Sharif Muslim was fasting. A she-camel with a decorated litter was brought for him, as well as a slave to ride by his side.[89]

Following al-Mu'izz's settlement in Egypt, a distinct policy of drawing the *ashraf* into the state administration becomes apparent.

Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Ubayd Allah b. Ali was of the Hasanid line and seems to have been known more commonly as al-Baghir al-Alawi (293-c.364 AH / 909-c. 974 CE). Having moved to Ramla from Kufa, and known for his knowledge and probity, al-Baghir al-Alawi arrived in Cairo in 362 AH / 973 CE. Al-Mu'izz honoured the *sharif* with a public appointment in 364 AH / 975 CE, making him responsible for the prayer, the judiciary, the endowments as well as the guardianship of the public mint in Ramla.[90]

In the same year, al-Hasan (d. 379 AH / 989 CE), the son of the *naqib* Ibrahim b. Ahmad al-Rassi (the Hasanid, who had been part of the Egyptian delegation to receive Jawhar) was given the joint administrative task of collecting the tax revenues from the region of al-Ashmunayn. After jointly securing the land tax of al-Ashmunayn for al-Mu'izz in the year 364 AH / 974 CE, he was honoured by an enrobing by the Fatimid Caliph. [91]

Over this period, the sources also suggest an increasing familiarity between clans of the *ashraf* and the Fatimid house. A note on the biography of Tamim, son of the imam-caliph al-Mu'izz and a famed poet in his own right, notes his personal friendship with the Banu Rassi, a notable *sharif* lineage of the Hasanid line.[92] Following the seizure of the property of the anti-Fatimid *sharif* Akhu Muslim [discussed further below], correspondence was sent from the *sharif* of Mecca, Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Hasani, as well as his brother al-Hasan b. Muhammad, to al-Mu'izz requesting the release of the economic assets of his sister who had been married to the rebel *sharif*, to which al-Mu'izz duly agreed.[93]

There are further indications that the prominence of the *ashraf* in the Fatimid court in Egypt led to some consternation amongst the Ifriqiyan contingent of the Imam's followers. The Berber Kutama followers of the Fatimid Imam are said to have protested loudly when hearing the title *sharif* used in reference to Sharif Muslim.[94] Al-Mu'izz reprimanded the follower, and publically affirmed the genealogical linkage and intimate relations between him and the *ashraf*. As al-Maqrizi notes:

> So when he [al-Mu'izz] sat on his throne and permitted the dignitaries to be seated
> he said [to the *ashraf*]: 'O members of my family and my cousins from the progeny
> of Fatima, you are my kin and you are the armour (*al-'udda*). We do not approve
> of what has been said. Whoever said what we were told has erred. By the blessings
> of God, you have exalted nobility and uterine kinship. If we were ever to hear again
> what we have heard, we will mete out severe punishment to him.'[95]

The extent of amity which al-Mu'izz had succeeded in fostering among some members of the *ashraf* is further evident from an anecdote attributed to Abu Ja'far Muslim in which the Sharif proclaims the familial bond between them:

> Whenever Abu Ja'far Muslim used to mention al-Mu'izz, he would say, 'I wish my
> father and my grandfather had seen al-Muʿizz, for they would have been proud of
> him. I cannot compare any of the Umayyad or ʿAbbasid caliphs with him'.[96]

The *Ashraf* during the reigns of al-Aziz and al-Hakim

It would be reasonable to suggest that relations between the Fatimids and some members of the *ashraf* peaked during the reign of al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah. Nonetheless, Fatimid-*ashraf* relations continued to be fostered during the reign of al-Mu'izz's son and successor al-Aziz bi'llah. The high esteem given to the two leading *ashraf* of al-Mu'izz's era were exemplified during al-Aziz's era. When the *sharif* Abu Ja'far Muslim died in 366 AH / 976-7 CE, his funerary prayers where attended by the imam-caliph.

Al-Aziz seems to have been on particularly intimate terms with the *naqib* Ibrahim b. Ahmad al-Rassi.[97] Ibrahim himself passed away in in 369 AH / 980 CE, and the imam-caliph once more attended the funerary prayers. A decade later, al-Aziz personally led the funeral prayer

over Ibrahim's son, and successor to the *niqaba,* al-Hasan b. Ibrahim al-Rassi.[98] Al-Aziz's relations with Ibrahim al-Rassi and those of Tamim b.al-Mu'izz, noted earlier, illustrate their cordial relations with the prominent Hasanid-Rassid clan.

Seeking patronage from the Fatimid imam-caliph was notably a feature of intra-*ashraf* dynamics in this period. In 383 AH / 993 CE, al-Maqrizi notes a visit to Cairo by al-Qasim b. Ali from the Rassids of the Hijaz, aspiring to the governorship of those provinces.[99] Similarly, in 384 AH / 994 CE, he records the presence of Isa b. Ja'far al-Hasani, the ruling *sharif* of Mecca, as well as of al-Qasim b. Ali al-Rassi al-Tha'ir, both of whom are honoured at al-Aziz's court.[100] In all likelihood, the two al-Qasims refer to the same figure, the entries pointing to a disputation between al-Qasim and the *amir*, which they sought to resolve at the Fatimid court.

After further apparant rivalry among the *ashraf* over the control of Mecca, al-Aziz wrote to al-Hasan b. Ja'far the Hasanid (d. 430 AH / 1038 CE), brother of the above mentioned Isa b. al-Hasan, confirming his governorship over Mecca. The latter had by then rejected an attempt made in the year 381 AH / 991 CE by the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Qadir (r. 381-422 AH / 991-1031 CE) to have his suzerainty recognised in the region. The investiture sent by al-Aziz was accompanied by robes of honour and monies to distribute amongst the Hasanid *ashraf* of the city. The Hasanid *ashraf'*'s acknowledgement of the Fatimid Husaynid lineage is noteworthy as it highlights one of the distinct features of the Fatimid-*ashraf* relations. In other regions, such as eastern Iran, a *sharif's* acceptance of patronage from a ruler conferred legitimacy upon the patron. In the case of the Fatimid-*ashraf* dynamics, the acceptance of Fatimid patronage affirmed an implicit acceptance of the legitimacy of the state led by an Alid Imam-caliph, to whom they had filial affinity, as is evident in the sermon of the Hasanid *sharif* regarding al-Aziz's patronage to the *ashraf* in Mecca:

> He [al-Hasan b. Ja'far] made them [the *ashraf*] gather in front of the *Ka'ba* and
> divided monies amongst them. After he draped the white *kiswa* atop the *Ka'ba*, he
> pronounced 'Praise be to God, O sons of Fatima al-Zahra and possessors of the firm
> Sunna; that His House has been adorned with the cloth of delight after having worn
> the cloth of mourning,[101] and that He has made the kings of the two sanctuaries

from the sons of the daughter of His Messenger, from the sons of al-Husayn [al-Aziz bi'llah], and the sons of al-Hasan [himself], and thus contented both sides'.[102]

This alliance was chequered as, during the reign of al-'Aziz's successor, al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (r. 386-411 AH / 996-1021 CE) disputes over doctrine led to a fissure between al-Hasan b. Ja'far, who then proceeded to assert his own claim as a Zaydi imam between 401 AH / 1011 CE to 403 AH / 1012 CE. Following his failed attempt to rally an army at al-Ramla, al-Hasan returned to the Hijaz and subsequently re-pledged his allegiance to the Fatimid imam-caliph, al-Hakim.[103]

During al-Hakim's reign, the prominence of the *ashraf* in the Fatimid administration begins to wane. Nonetheless, the *naqib*s, one of whom included Abu'l-Hasan Ali b. Ibrahim al-Rassi, retained the distinguished position of officiating the birth rituals of the sons of the Fatimid Imam-caliph.[104] In addition, female employees of the Fatimid household comprised women of high-social standing, including a wife of al-Sharif al-Musawi (d. 415 AH / 1024 CE), who, as Calderini and Cortese note, had the honour of having her funerary prayers led by a leading Isma'ili *da'i*.[105]

Thus far, there is little indication that members of the Fatimid household used the appellate *ashraf* in self-reference. The one notable exception to this is Sitt al-Mulk, the sister of al-Hakim, whose multiple titles included *al-Sayyida al-Sharifa*.[106]

While the sources attest the investiture of the *ashraf* as governors over Medina during the reign of the eighth Fatimid imam-caliph al-Muṣtanṣir bi'llah (r. 427-481 AH / 1036-1094 CE) in 428 AH / 1036-1037 CE,[107] the highpoint of Fatimid-*ashraf* alliance had passed.

Contestation between the Fatimids and the *ashraf*

Alliances between the Hijazi and Egyptian *ashraf* with the Fatimid state during the reign of Mu'izz li-Din Allah represent a high-point in Fatimid-*ashraf* relations. Yet this period also witnessed the flourishing of the careers of some of the most vehemently anti-Fatimid *ashraf* who publically rebelled against Fatimid rule. Similarly, the reigns of al-

Mu'izz's successors saw the emergence of anti-Fatimid *ashraf* in Damascus and Baghdad at the forefront of anti-Fatimid polemic, either of their own accord or incentivised by the Abbasids.

Abd Allah b. Ubayd Allah (d. c. 363 AH / 973 CE) was the brother of the preeminent pro-Fatimid *sharif* Abu Ja'far Muslim. Known more commonly as Akhu Muslim (the brother of Muslim) after his more famous brother, Abd Allah rose to prominence in the time of Kafur al-Ikhshidi. In the warfare that ensued between the Fatimids and the Qaramita after the former's arrival to Egypt,[108] Akhu Muslim notably took to the field to side with the Qaramita. The sources cite several instances of his fighting alongside Qaramiti armies both in Syria and in Upper Egypt.[109] Furthermore, Abu Ja'far Muslim's own son Ja'far, also defected to the Qaramita.[110] Al-Mu'izz's response to the situation is instructive. While rebuking Abu Ja'far for his brother and son's insubordination, he also corresponded with them to win them over.[111] Following the defeat of the Qaramita in Egypt by the Fatimid forces in 364 AH / 974 CE, Akhu Muslim became a liability to the Qaramita who soon had him killed.[112]

Subsequently, Tahir b. Muslim b. Ubayd Allah, another son of Abu Ja'far Muslim renounced his allegiance to the Fatimids. He left Egypt and returned to his ancestral homeland in Medina where he was appointed to the senior position of the Husaynid *ashraf* of Medina. Soon thereafter, he announced his recognition of the Abbasid Caliph. It was only after the Fatimid sovereign al-Aziz had dispatched an expedition to Medina in 366 AH / 976 CE that Tahir was forced to acquiesce and Medina returned to the Fatimid fold.

Contesting the Lineage: Sharif Akhu Muhsin and the Baghdad Manifesto

The prerogative of the *ashraf* to act as public arbiters of the Prophet's lineage also brought into prominence those *ashraf* who became embroiled in anti-Fatimid polemic. In the latter decades of the fourth AH / tenth CE century, contestation between the Fatimids and the anti-Fatimid *ashraf* developed an enduring legacy through the writings of *sharif* Abu'l-Husayn Muhammad b. Ali b. al-Husayni, more commonly known as Akhu Muhsin (d. c. 375 AH / 985-986 CE). Around 372 AH / 982 CE, during the reign of al-Aziz bi'llah, *sharif* Akhu Muhsin, himself a genealogist and living in Damascus, composed a treatise with two inter-related aims:

the first was to compose a polemical refutation of Isma'ili doctrines, and secondly, to deny the Fatimid claim to be the descendants of Prophet Muhammad.[113] For his anti-Isma'ili polemic, Akhu Muhsin drew heavily on the writings of a noted anti-Isma'ili writer Muhammad b. Ali b. Rizam who lived in Baghdad during the first half of the fourth AH / tenth CE century.[114] Though his work is no longer extant, fragments of Akhu Muhsin's writings have survived in the works of later authors, notably those of al-Nuwayri (d. 733 AH / 1333 CE), Ibn al-Dawadari (d. after 736 AH / 1335 CE) and Taqi al-Din al-Maqrizi. Akhu Muhsin himself claimed to be a descendant of Muhammad b. Isma'il and therefore from the same lineal descent as that of the Fatimids. His virulent contestation of the legitimacy of the Alid lineage of the Fatimids and of the authenticity of their doctrines fuelled the ideological warfare which the Abbasids were waging against the Fatimids at the time. Subsequently, it became embedded in Abbasid historiography as a standard account of the non-'Alid origins of the Fatimids.[115]

Furthermore, Damascus seems to have served as a locus for anti-Fatimid *ashraf*. Ibn Taghri-birdi notes that in 380 AH / 990 CE, a *sharif* named Abu'l-Hamza b. Ali b. al-Hasan al-Alawi al-Dimashqi died while imprisoned in Alexandria. The cause of his arrest was this *sharif's* public derision of the Fatimid genealogy when read out from the *minbars* of Damascus, leading to the vizier Ya'qub b. Killis ordering his arrest and imprisonment.[116]

However, the most lasting use of the prerogative of the *ashraf* to pronounce on prophetic lineage was deployed by the Abbasids. In Rabi' al-Thani 402 AH / November 1011 CE, the Abbasid Caliph al-Qadir bi'llah issued what has come to be known as 'the Baghdad Manifesto'.[117] A signed statement was publically read out in Baghdad and subsequently in mosques across the Abbasid realms. This 'Manifesto' pronounced that the Fatimid imam-caliphs were not the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, but rather that they were false claimants whose origins in fact lay in an unknown Daysanite known as Sa'id.[118] Notably, although the Manifesto was issued during the reign of the Fatimid imam-caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, it began by naming al-Mu'izz and tracing his lineage to non-Alid forefathers to whom abominable acts were attributed. Significantly, affixed to the document were the signatures of the leading *ashraf* of Baghdad, along with a number of other leading Sunni judges and jurists. Accounts on the background to the manifesto highlight the manoeuvrings by the

Abbasid Caliph of the most prominent of these *ashraf* to add their signatures to the document. These included Sharif al-Radi and Sharif Murtada, as well as Ibn al-Azraq al-Musawi, Abu Tahir b. Abi Tayyib, and Muhammad b. Muhammad b. 'Umar amongst others.

The distinct social and political context behind the proclamation of the Baghdad Manifesto, including the spread of the Fatimid da'wa to the Bedouin principalities of Iraq, the rise of Shi'ism in Baghdad and the 'Sunni resurgence' fostered in the reign of the Abbasid al-Qadir, fall beyond the scope of this paper. Notable however, is the development that the role of *ashraf* as 'witnesses' against the Fatimid claim to authority becomes a distinct trope. Hereafter, the *ashraf* are deployed in pro-Abbasid historiography over the following centuries to act as 'literary foils' to further anti-Fatimid polemic. Instructive amongst these are accounts on the aforementioned pre-Fatimid *sharif,* Abu Muhammad Abd Allah Tabataba.

Buried in the Qarafa cemetery, by the sixth AH / thirteenth CE century Ibn Tabataba had become a figure imbued with charismatic appeal in Egyptian religious life. Ibn Khallikan notes his tomb as a visitation place where prayers are answered, and provides anecdotes of peoples' dreams in which the Prophet recommends their visitation to Ibn Tabataba's tomb. In the same biographical entry, Ibn Tabataba also emerges as the foil al-Mu'izz's claim to lineage. This is despite the attestation in the same account that Ibn Tabataba died in 348 AH / 949 CE, some two decades before the arrival of al-Mu'izz in Egypt. Upon the arrival of the Fatimid al-Mu'izz in Egypt, Ibn Tabataba is described as confronting al-Mu'izz:

> Sharif Ibn Tabataba met al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah and said to him: 'What is your lineage, our Master?'
> He [Al-Mu'izz] fixed a day to meet. People gathered on that day, he drew his sword and said: 'This is my lineage!' and he expended some dinars and said: 'This is my noble descent!'
> They said: 'We hear and obey'.[119]

The permeation of the anecdote in Abbasid historiography illustrates its efficacy in invalidating the Fatimid claim to Alid descent, particularly as it could be sourced to a *sharif*.

Concluding observations

The complex and enigmatic relationships between the Fatimids and the *ashraf* can be surmised through the following widely reported account. *Sharif* Abu'l-Hasan Muhammad al-Radi (359-406 AH / 970-1016 CE), a Husaynid from the Musawi line, the *naqib* of the Alids in Iraq and from amongst the leading family of Ithna'Ashari theologians in fourth AH/ tenth CE century Iraq, was one of the most notable signatories of the Baghdad Manifesto. His signature as well as that of his brother *Sharif* al-Murtada (355-436 AH / 967-1044 CE), would have undoubtedly added credence to the proclamation.[120] Yet, it was also to *Sharif* al-Radi that a line of poetry is ascribed, which privileged his kinship with the Fatimids, and which certain accounts note as a principal cause for the proclamation of the manifesto. Standing in the presence of the Abbasid Caliph while decrying the treatment meted out to him, the *Sharif* is reputed to have said:

> [Why should] I bear humiliation in the land of the enemy, when in Egypt the Caliph is an Alid [*'alawi*]. His father is my father, his friend [*mawla*] is my friend if the distant stranger bears malice for me. That which ties my neck to his neck [i.e. binds us], is the *sayyid* of all men Muhammad, and Ali.[121]

Regardless of whether *Sharif* al-Radi actually pronounced these words or indeed whether he willingly or otherwise became among the signatories of the Baghdad Manifesto, the supposed vacillation in Sharif al-Radi's stance towards the Fatimids highlights the complex and multi-faceted relationships between the Fatimids and the *ashraf*.

The accounts discussed in this paper illustrate the calibrations by Fatimid imam-caliphs in their relations with the *ashraf* in the fourth AH / tenth CE century. They also explore the variations in the attitudes of the *ashraf* towards the Fatimid sovereigns. In doing so, they shed light on the intricate historical contingencies of Fatimid-*ashraf* relations that assumed a distinctive dynamic because of the claim of shared descent. They further illustrate that, in expanding the scope of his empire and particularly in preparation for the Fatimid move to Egypt, it was the Fatimid caliph al-Mu'izz who expended significant effort in fostering congenial relations with the *ashraf*, an effort that was met with a considerable degree of success.

Yet, while some of the *ashraf* favoured alliance and conciliation with the Fatimids, others were instrumental in challenging the Alid legitimacy of the Fatimid claim to authority. Their

viewpoint gained further credence and longevity as it became enmeshed in Abbasid historiography as a cornerstone of the ideological rivalry which the Abbasids were waging against the Fatimids.

For those *ashraf* who were inclined to the Fatimids, the significance of the Fatimid sovereign as instituting the rule of the *ahl al-bayt* provided a kinship bond which enhanced their distinction while also gaining a platform from which they could publicly participate in servicing the Fatimid state, thus adding further lustre to their social status. The *ashraf* were also ideally suited to be mediators between the Sunni populace and the Fatimid imam, for while they were noted for their descent from the Prophet, they were not necessarily Isma'ili or even Shi'i. Hence they had the ability to straddle and when necessary transcend the ideological as well as ethnic demarcations that were increasingly becoming embedded in Egyptian society during this period.

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[1] Note Bernheimer's assessment "It is difficult to imagine Islamic history without the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. From the famous early rebels to the founders or eponyms of the major Islamic sects, to numerous rulers such as the Idrisids in ninth-century Morocco, the Fatimids in tenth-century Egypt, the current-day king of Jordan, the Ayatollah Khomeini or the Aga Khan; descendants of the Prophet have played a major role throughout the history of the Islamic world." See Teresa Bernheimer, "Genealogy, marriage and the drawing of boundaries among the Alids (eighth twelfth centuries)", in *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The living links to the Prophet*, ed. Morimoto Kazuo (Oxford: Routledge, 2012), pp. 75-92, esp. 75.

[2] Morimoto notes further that "attitudes favourable to *sayyid*s and *sharif*'s have been a phenomenon widely attested in what we may call 'intercessional Islam." See Morimoto Kazuo, "Introduction", in *Sayyids and Sharifs,* pp. 1-13, esp. 3, 9.

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[3] For the broader Shi'i concept of the Imama see Wilferd Madelung, "Imama", in *EI2*. For specific Fatimid iterations, see Farhad Daftary, *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines*. 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 163-167; Michael Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids: The World of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the Fourth Century of the Hijra, Tenth Century CE*. (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 176-219; Heinz Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi: The Rise of the Fatimids,* tr. Michael Bonner (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 346-55**.**

[4] See Sumaiya Hamdani, *Between Revolution and State: The Path to Fatimid Statehood, Qadi al-Nu'man and the Construction of Fatimid Legitimacy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006); Wilferd Madelung, "The Religious Policy of the Fatimids towards their Sunni Subjects in the Maghrib", in *L'Égypte Fatimide, son art en son histoire,* ed. M. Barrucand (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne**,** 1999), pp. 97–104. I have further discussed this in Shainool Jiwa, "Governance and Pluralism under the Fatimids (909-996 CE)", in *The Shi'i world: Pathways in Tradition and Modernity,* ed. Farhad Daftary, Amyn B. Sajoo and Shainool Jiwa (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015**),** pp. 111-30.

[5] For earlier tribal usage of the term see C. Van Arendonk [W. A. Graham], 'Sharif', *EI2*. For the purposes of this paper, *Ashraf* [sing. *sharif*] will be used specifically to refer to the blood-descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad through the marriage of his daughter Fatima with Ali b. Abi Talib, and is therefore used synonymously with the Alids. As is well-known, the term *ashraf* could have broader boundaries depending on historical context [see e.g. Teresa Bernheimer, *The Alids: The First Family of Islam, 750-1200* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 2-4.] *Ashraf* as a title could include other Ṭalibids (descendants of Abu Ṭalib) or the Hashimi clan at large, thus including the Abbasids]. The use of *sayyid* ["lord"] is sometimes attested as being synonymous to *sharif,* but, at other times, the term is restricted specifically to the Hasanids or Husaynids, who became the fulcrum around which the idea of the 'special status' of the *ashraf* was established, and importantly, who served as the progenitors of the majority of the descendants of the Prophet by the fourth AH / tenth CE century. See Morimoto, *Introduction*, 10.

[6] Bernheimer, *Genealogy*, 75. The Alids as the peerless 'blood aristocracy' was noted by Bulliet in his coverage of the Hasanid *ashraf* of Nishapur. See Richard W. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 234-40, esp. p. 234.

[7] See e.g. Halm's on Abu Ja'far Muslim al-Husayni in the Fatimid conquest of Egypt and the reception of al-Mu'izz [Halm, *Empire,* 414-414, 419-20. See also Brett, *Fatimids,* 299-300 for the Egyptian *ashraf* as mediators of the Fatimid conquest. Relations between the Fatimids and the *ashraf* of Mecca have been examined in Richard T. Mortel, "Zaydi Shiism and the Hasanid Sharifs of Mecca", *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 19/4 (Nov., 1987): 455-472, pp. 455-459; Heinz Halm, *Die Kalifen Von Kairo: Die Fatimiden in Ägypten 973-1074* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003), pp. 113-116 and pp. 228-235; Paul Walker, *Caliph of Cairo: Al-Hakim Bi-Amr Allah, 996-102* (Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2012), pp. 174-177**.**

[8] The works by the anti-Fatimid polemicist *sharif* Akhu Muhsin, as discussed below in this paper, are discussed in Daftary, *Ismailis,* 100-103 and Brett, *Fatimids,* 29-49. The presence of the *ashraf* in the anti-Faṭimid 'Baghdad Manifesto' has been alluded to in works including Prince P. H. Mamour, *Polemics on the Origin of the Fatimid Caliphs* (London: Luzac & Co, 1934), pp. 16-27; Bernard Lewis, *Origins of Ismailism,* (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1940), p. 60; Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (London and New York: Longman**,** 1986), pp. 241-242; Daftary, *Ismailis,* 101.

[9] For an initial state of the field survey and *desideratum* see Morimoto Kazuo, "Towards the Formation of Sayyido-Sharifology: Questioning Accepted Fact", *Journal of Sophia Asian Studies* 22 (2004): 87-103.

[10] The Zaydi Imamates of Yemen and the Caspian, and the more distinct Idrisid dynasty, saw rule by the descendants of the Prophet in a broadly Shi'i frame but were generally localized in scope.

[11] The question of who constituted the *Ahl al-Bayt* was, like that of who belonged to the *ashraf,* somewhat ambiguous and contested. For attested tribal origins of the term see Ignaz Goldziher *et al.* 'Ahl al-Bayt', *EI2*] or for 'cultic' origins associated with devotion to a sanctuary [*bayt* see e.g. Moshe Sharon, 'Ahl al-Bayt - People of the House', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 8 (1986): 169-184. Following Qur'anic precedent, early Muslims increasingly identified the term as referring to the household of the Prophet Muhammad. Shi'i belief came to hold that it referred specifically to Ali, Fatima, their sons al-Hasan and al-Husayn and the legitimate Imams from their descent [see Farhad Daftary, 'Ahl al-Kisa'*, EI3*]. Other groups posit broader definitions which include the wives or the greater Hashimid clan of the Prophet [therefore including the Abbasids]. See Bernheimer, *Alids,* 3.

[12] Though initially rejecting the overtures, the Qaramita subsequently proffered their allegiance to al-Mu'izz's successor, al-Aziz bi'llah (r. 365-386 AH / 975-996 CE). For an overview of al-Mu'izz and the Qaramita see Daftary, *Ismailis,* 163-167.

[13] W. Madelung, "The Fatimids and the Qarmatis of Bahrayn", in *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought,* ed. Farhad Daftary, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 21–73.

[14] Morimoto, *Sayyido-Sharifology*, 5.

[15] Bernheimer, *Alids,* 72.

[16] The question of the Fatimid lineage was subject of considerable study particularly in early twentieth century scholarship. See Brett's survey on 'The Problem of Fatimid Origins' in Brett, *Fatimids,* 29-49.

[17] Note for instance Ala' al-Din Juwayni's (d. 681 AH / 1283 CE) use of the Manifesto and its signatories in his polemic against the Nizari Isma'ili communities of Alamut and their belief in the Fatimid imam-caliph's in his chronicle of Hulegu's conquest of Iran. Ala' al-Din Ata-Malik b. Muhammad Juwayni, *Ta'rikh-i jahan-gusha,* trans. John A. Boyle, *The History of the World-Conqueror* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), 2:658-659. The potency of the Manifesto and its *ashraf* signatories is further signified by the discussion of

the document in chapters concerned with the origins of the Fatimid state as found in Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l tarikh* ed. Muhammad Y. al-Daqaq (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1987), XI:446-448; Ibn Khaldun, *Tarikh* ed(s). Khalil Shahada, Suhayl Zakkar (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2001), III: 547; Taqi al-Din Ahmad b. Ali al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az al-Ḥunafa bi-akhbar al-a'imma al-fatimiyyin al-khulafa* ed. Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal, volumes I-III (Cairo: al-Lajnat Ihya' al-Turath al-Islami 1967), I:43.

[18] For a comprehensive overview of sources and historiographical issues on Fatimid history, see Paul Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and its Sources* (London, I.B. Tauris, 2002).

[19] Idris 'Imad al-Din, *'Uyun al-akhbar wa funun al-athar,* ed. Muḥammad al-Ya'lawi, *Tarikh al-khulafa' al-Fatimiyyin bi'l-Maghrib: al-qism al-khass min kitab 'uyun al-akhbar* (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1985). A translation of Idris' chapter on al-Mu'izz as prepared by this author is found in Shainool Jiwa, *The Founder of Cairo: The Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Mu'izz and his Era. An English translation of the text on al-Mu'izz from Idris 'Imad al-Din's 'Uyun al-akhbar,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013). Henceforth references shall be given to both the Ya'lawi's Arabic edition and the translation. For a comparative study of the approaches of al-Maqrizi and Idris 'Imad al-Din, see Shainool Jiwa, 'Historical representations of a Fatimid Imam-caliph: Exploring al-Maqrizi's and Idris' writings on al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah', *Alifaba: Studi Arabo-Islamici e Mediterranei, Published proceedings of the International Conference on the Fatimids and the Mediterranean* (Palermo, Italy), XXI (2008), pp. 55-70.

[20] See Ed., 'Ibn Zulaq', *EI2*. For Ibn Zulaq's conversation with the *sharif* see al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:107. A translation of al-Maqrizi's chapter on al-Mu'izz as prepared by this author is found in Shainool Jiwa, *Towards a Shi'i Mediterranean Empire: Fatimid Egypt and the Founding of Cairo - The Reign of the Imam-caliph al-Mu'izz from Taqi al-Din Ahmad b. Ali al-Maqrizi's Itti'az al-hunafa' bi-akhbar al-a'imma al-Fatimiyyin al-khulafa'* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009). See p. 73. Henceforth references to the *Itti'az* will be given in both Shayyal's Arabic edition and this translation.

[21] See this author's introduction to the writings of Idris 'Imad al-Din in Shainool Jiwa, *Founder*, pp. 25-46.

[22] Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat al-ay'an,* trans. M. de Slane, *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary,* volumes 1-4 (Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1842-1871); Taqi al-Din al-Maqrizi, *Kitab al-muqaffa al-kabir: Tarajim maghribiyya wa-mashriqiyya mina'l-fatrat al-'Ubaydiyya,* ed. Muhammad al-Ya'lawi (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1981).

[23] Arendonk, 'Sharif', *EI2*; Bulliet, *Patricians*, pp. 234-340; Bernheimer, *Genealogy*; *idem, Alids.* For the role of a Ja'farid family of *ashraf* in Qazwin see Roy Mottahedeh, "Administration in Buyid Qazwin", in *Islamic Civilisation 950-1150,* ed. D. S. Richards (Oxford: Cassirer**,** 1983), pp. 33-45; also *idem,* "Qur'anic commentary on the verse of *khums* (al-Anfal VIII:41)", in *Sayyids and Sharifs,* 37-49; Biancamaria Scarcia Amoretti, "A historical atlas on the Alids: a proposal and a few samples", in *Sayyids and Sharifs,* 92-123. Morimoto has forged the way in the field he labels 'Sayyido-Sharifology'. See also Kazuo Morimoto, "A preliminary Study on the Diffusion of the Niqaba al-Ṭalibiyin: Towards an Understanding of the Early Dispersal of Sayyids" in *The Influence of Human Mobility in Muslim Societies,* ed. K. Hidomitsu (London, Kegan Paul, 2003), 3-42**.** On further *ashraf* studies including research on contemporary manifestations as well as recent conferences see Bernheimer, *Alids,* 7.

[24] Bernheimer cogently argues it was through concerted effort including the production of genealogical works, control of marriage practises and the institution of the *niqaba* that the Alids between 132 AH / 750 CE to the end of the fifth AH /eleventh CE century were able to attain and "extend their special status." See Bernheimer, *Alids,* 87-8.

[25] In addition to from further instances noted below in reference to Egypt, note, for example, the career of the prominent Abu Ahmad al-Husayn b. Musa (d. 406 AH / 1016 CE), father of the famous *sharifs* al-Murtada and al-Radi, who in 354 AH / 965 CE held the position of both overseer of the *mazalim* in Baghdad and the *hajj* caravans. See Moktar Djebli, 'al-Sharif al-Radi', *EI2*.

[26] For an earlier, somewhat dated summation of the role of the naqib see A. Havemann, 'Naqib al- Ashraf', *EI2*. For recent scholarship, see Morimoto, *Niqaba*, 3-42 and Bernheimer, *Alids*, 51-70**.**

[27] On the responsibilities of the *naqib*s see Bernheimer, *Alids*, 61-63.

[28] Among the distinguishing features of the *ashraf* as a social group was a generally held position that they were not to receive alms [*sadaqa*] but rather were afforded the right to the one-fifth [*khums*] tax once reserved for the Prophet, according to Qur'anic stipulation. Dynasties both before and after the fourth AH / tenth CE century often regularly allocated pensions to the *ashraf* in their locale, overseen by the *naqib*. The Qur'anic origins of this practice have been explored in Mottahedeh, *Khums*, 37-49.

[29] See Bernheimer, *Alids*, 8-9. Bernheimer notes, as evidenced by biographical dictionaries, that relatively few Alids took part in the formulation of Shi'ism, but that "there were certainly more Alids among the early Zaydi scholars."

[30] Two of the most prominent of Ithna'Ashari scholars of the fifth AH / eleventh CE century were *sharifs* al-Murtada and al-Radi [see Djebli, 'al-Sharif al-Radi', EI2]. While Isma'ili *ashraf* (aside from the Fatimid household) are less expressly attested, note al-Nu'man's attestation of the Hasanid delegation coming to give their allegiance to al-Mu'izz below in this paper. Similarly, as examined below, while not explicit, the recognition of the Imamate of al-Mu'izz by figures such as Sharif Muslim would indicate religious recognition.

[31] Instructive in this regard is Bulliet's depiction of the manifest Sunni scholarship of a line of Hasanid *ashraf* of Nishapur. See Bulliet, *Patricians,* pp. 234-235.

[32] Note Amoretti's comment that "the cliché that portrays the Ahl al-Bayt as victims par excellence is historically accurate and that emphasizing this point is necessary, at least when speaking of the early generations of the Alids" [Amoretti, *Historical Atlas*, 94]. In the Fatimid's conception of their own past, the period of persecution initiated by the Abbasids from the middle of the second AH / eighth CE century against the early Ismaili Imams initiated a 'period of concealment' [*dawr al-satr*] wherein the Ismaili Imams remain in hiding until the zuhur

[manifestation] of Abd Allah al-Mahdi and his proclamation of the Fatimid state. See Daftary, *The Isma'ilis,* pp. 88-136.

[33] The centrality of blood-descent from the Prophet [through Fatima] and Ali in Shi'i doctrine, and the concomitant legitimizing consequences of this genealogical inheritance, is well-known**.** This applies to Ithna'Ashari, Isma'ili and Zaydi Shi'ism. See e.g. Verena Klemm, 'Fatima bt. Muhammad', *EI3*. That in the fourth AH / tenth CE century the descendants of Ali and Fatima [i.e. the Hasanids and Husaynids] similarly conceptualised a unique characteristic of this descent, to the exclusion of others, emerges particularly in the work of Morimoto and Bernheimer. Bernheimer notes that the "Hasanids and Ḥusaynids were clearly central to the emergence of the Prophet's family as the First Family of Islam' theirs was the 'most noble lineage', since al-Hasan and al-Husayn, as children of Ali and Fatima, were related to the Prophet on both their mother's side and their father's - a point repeatedly made in the sources". See Bernheimer, *Alids,* 2.

[34] For the establishment of the Fatimid administration and the policy of drawing from the local bureaucracy see Brett, *Fatimids,* 299-308. For a summary of Fatimid administrative policies in with different local constituencies during their first decades in Egypt see Shainool Jiwa, Al-Aziz bi'llah', *Encyclopaedia Islamica.*

[35] The most important analysis of evolutions and iterations Isma'ili and Fatimid notions of the Imamate remains Wilferd Madelung, 'Das Imamat in der frühen ismailitischen Lehre', *Der Islam,* 37/1-3 (Jan 1961), pp. 43-135.

[36] Ustadh Jawdhar provides an insight into these Fatimid familial dynamics in his *Sirah*, see Mansur al-Aziz al-Jawdhari, *Sirat al-Ustadh Jawdhar,* trans. H. Haji, *Inside the Immaculate Portal* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), pp. 59-64. For further discussion on contesting claims within the Fatimid household see Brett, *Fatimids,* 162-164, 179-181, 318-319.

[37] Bernheimer's study of Alid marriage patterns shows that the Alids controlled and calibrated marriages, whereby females only married within the family, while the males married

internally as well as externally, but the latter was done to forge links with elite clans. See Bernheimer, 'Genealogy', 76- 86.

[38] On variant opinions amongst Alid genealogists regarding 'true-lineages' see Bernheimer, *Alids*, 22-28.

[39] See D. Eustache, Idrisids', *EI2*; idem., Idris I', *EI2;* John P. Turner, 'Fakhkh', *EI3*. For the historiography of Idris al-Akbar see Najam Haider, 'The community divided: a textual analysis of the murders of Idris b. Abd Allah (d. 175 AH / 791 CE), *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 128/3 (2008), 459-475.

[40] The prominent role of Prophetic descent in Morocco both in history and in contemporary times has led to the study of the *ashraf* becoming a distinct field of study in Moroccan studies. See (E. Lévi-Provençal-[Ch. de la Véronne]), 'Shurafa'', *EI2*. For its prominence in the overall field see Morimoto, *Sayyido-Sharifology,* 89.

[41] The initial Fatimid-Idrisid conflict began in 308 AH / 921 CE when the Fatimid general Masala b. Habus occupied Fez as part of the Fatimid campaign to extend Fatimid rule to the western limits of North Africa. By this time Idrisid rule had fissured amongst many Idrisid claimants from multiple lines of descent from Idris II, son of Idris I. In 308 AH / 921 CE, the Fatimid general Masala displaced the ruling dynast Yahya b. Idris b. Umar, a great-great-grandson of Idris I. Governorship of Fez was soon handed to Masala's cousin Musa b. Abi'l-Afiya, a noted general but notorious for his eventual defection to the Umayyads in 320 AH / 932 CE. Halm notably states that the latter's own allies sought to stymie his vehement pursuit of Idrisid princes due to their descent from the Prophet. See Halm, *Empire,* 281-283. For the internal Idrisid crises and their conflict with Musa see also J.D. Latham, 'Musa b. Abi'l-Afiya', *EI2*.

[42] See e.g. Halm, *Empire of the Mahdi,* 334.

[43] For Jawhar al-Siqqili's (d. 381 AH / 992 CE) campaign and the conflicts with Ibn Wasul as well as that of Ahmad b. Bakr and the associated siege of Fez see Idris, *'Uyun,* 604-611, trans., *Founder,* 138-147; Halm, *Empire,* 399.

[44] Idris states: "When they [the Idrisid princes and notables] arrived in his presence, the Commander of the Believers ordered that they receive hospitality. He honoured them with robes, gifts and riding animals and was extremely magnanimous to them. For a while they lived thus. Then he ordered their release and repatriated them. He presented them with gifts, robes and riding animals and sent clothes and a saddle load of gifts for the elite and elders among their people". See Idris, *'Uyun,* 612, trans., *Founder of Cairo,* 147.

[45] Al-Mu'izz thus tells the Idrisids: "You are aware of our benevolence and bounty to you and our pardon and clemency concerning your preceding actions…Let him who relates to us through lineage know that this [relation] is only for those who adhere to us and are obedient. As for those who disobey the *awliya' Allah* (friends of God) and oppose them, their lineage will be severed, just as God severed the lineage between Noah and his son when he disobeyed him.… God has made us the imams of His creation, and He only accepts the obedience of those who obey them, and He is only content with those who make them content. [Idris, *'Uyun,* 615, trans., *Founder,* 147-8].

[46] And Noah called upon his Lord and said: "O my Lord! surely my son is of my family! and Your promise is true and You are the most just of judges!" [Q:11-46] He said: "O Noah! he is not of your family: for his conduct is unrighteous. So ask not of Me that of which you have no knowledge! I give you counsel, lest you become one of the ignorant (Q 11:46)

[47] See, for example, al-Mu'izz's sermon upon his accession as imam-caliph in Idris, *'Uyun al-akhbar*, 453**,** trans., Jiwa *Founder of Cairo,* 71; Paul Walker**,** *Orations of the Fatimid Caliphs: Festival Sermons of the Ismaili Imams* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009)*,* pp. 126-135.

[48] For the *ashraf* of Mecca and Medina in this period see Richard T. Mortel, "Zaydi Shiʿism and the Ḥasanid Sharifs of Mecca" in *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 19 (1987), 455-472 and *idem.,* 'The Origins and Early History of the Husaynid Amirate of Medina to the End of the Ayyubid period', *Studia Islamica* 74 (1991): 63-78, esp. p. 64.

[49] The Ja'farids here provide a "broader" definition of *ashraf.* For other Ja'farid lineages as prominent in eastern Iran, see Mottahedeh, "Administration in Buyid Qazwin".

[50] Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:101, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 66.

[51] Mortel, "Zaydi Shi'ism", 455.

[52] Mortel notes that the Hasanid Ja'far b. Muhammad took control of Mecca, and then proclaimed al-Mu'izz's suzerainty as early as 358 AH / 969 CE before proceeding to receive the investiture from al-Mu'izz. He also notes, however, that Ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn al-Athir both state the *khutba* for al-Mu'izz was not pronounced in Mecca until 363 AH / 974 CE, while al-Maqrizi adds that this occurred in 364 AH / 975 CE (Mortel, "Zaydi Shi'ism", 457). Al-Maqrizi in this excerpt however asserts the 358 AH / 969 CE date, and adds that this proclamation was made by al-Hasan b. Ja'far who seized Mecca after the Fatimid conquest of Egypt. See al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:101, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 66.

[53] The provision of Egyptian grain to the resource-depleted Hijaz was a major feature in the relations of the Fatimids and the *ashraf* of Mecca. Mortel notes that the Fatimid policy towards the Hasanid *ashraf,* "proved to be so successful that, with only minor interruption, the name of the Abbasid caliph was destined not to be mentioned again in the Friday khutba at Mecca, nor during the rites associated with the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, until 454 AH / 1062 CE or 455 AH / 1062 CE. See Mortel, "Zaydi Shi'ism"*,* 457.

[54] Qadi Abu Hanifa al-Nu'man, *Kitab al-Majalis wa'l-Musayarat,* ed. H. Al-Faqqi, I. Shabbuh, M. al-Ya'lawi (Tunis: al-Jami'ah al-Tunisiyah, Kulliyat al-Adab wa-al Ulum al-Insaniyah, 1978), pp. 413-14.

[55] Al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 231. Ya'lawi makes the suggested identification of Ibrahim b. Duwwas as a Kutama nobleman.

[56] See Amoretti on Alid diaspora into different regions of the Muslim world after their dispersal from the Ḥijaz in the latte second AH / eighth CE century (Amoretti, "Historical Atlas"). For the Egyptian *ashraf* during the Ottoman period see Michael Winter, "The *Ashraf* and *Niqabat al-ashraf* in Egypt and Ottoman Times", *Asian and African Studies,* 19 (1985): 17-41; *idem, Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule, 1517-1798* (London; Routledge, 1992), pp. 185-98; *idem,* "The *Ashraf* and *Naqabat al-ashraf* in Ottoman Egypt

and Syria: A Comparative Analysis", in *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The living Links to the Prophet,* ed. Kazuo Morimoto (Oxford: Routledge, 2012) pp. 139-59.

[57] His full lineage is given as Muhammad b. Yahya b. Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Abd Allah b. Musa b. Abd Allah b. al-Hasan b. al-Hasan b. Ali b. Abi Talib (al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 138).

[58] See Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat,* 1:114-115. He is not to be confused with the more famous Abu Muhammad Ibn Ṭabataba discussed below, though this Abu'l-Qasim Ahmad and the latter Abu Muhammad are third and fourth generation descendants of the *sharif* Ibrahim Ṭabaṭaba from two different sons.

[59] As mentioned in al-Maqrizi's entry on Ibn Ṭabaṭaba (*Muqaffa,* 207).

[60] Al-Qalqashandi and Ibn Taghri Birdi as cited in Richard T. Mortel, "Zaydi Shi'ism", 64.

[61] See Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat*, 2:47-49 and the lengthier entry in al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 207-215. His full name and lineage is given as Abu Muhammad Abd Allah b. Ahmad b. Ali b. al-Hasan b. Ibrahim Ṭabataba b. Isma'il b. Ibrahim b. al-Hasan b. al-Hasan b. Ali b. Abi Talib, and is referred to as Abu Muhammad ibn Tabataba.

[62] al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 207.

[63] al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, 286.

[64]An anecdote concerning the blessed status of the Alid lineage as reported by Ibn Khallikan and al-Maqrizi relates to Ibn Tabataba's intimate relations with the regent Kafur. They relate that this *sharif* used to send Kafur sweetmeats and cakes that had been prepared in the *sharif's* house almost every-day. A jealous court-rival of Ibn Tabataba sought to end the practise by claiming that Kafur was denigrating his own position in accepting the cakes. Ibn Tabataba, however, told Kafur that the sweetmeats were kneaded and baked by a Hasanid lady, after which the regent claimed that he 'would eat no other' sweetmeat aside from those from the *sharif'*'s house. See Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat,* II:48-9; al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 209.

[65] Al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 210-11.

[66] Ibn Tabataba's grave was located in the vicinity the Alid saint Umm Kulthum discussed further below. See Caroline Williams, "The Cult of Alid Saints in the Fatimid Monuments of Cairo. Part II: The Mausolea", *Muqarnas,* 3 (1985): 39-60, p. 40. In his discussion on the influence of Shi'ism in Egyptian funerary architecture, Taylor notes the possibility that the funerary monument [*mashhad*] of Ibn Ṭabtaba was patronized by the Ikhshidid's cannot be dismissed. See Christopher S. Taylor, "Reevaluating the Shi'i Role in the Development of Monumental Islamic Funerary Architecture: The Case of Egypt", *Muqarnas* 9 (1992): 1-10, p. 5.

[67] al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, 207-208 [see Ya'lawi's note 4].

[68] al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 207.

[69] Jonathan M. Bloom, "The Mosque of the Qarafa in Cairo", *Muqarnas,* 4 (1987): 7-20, p. 14.

[70] Bloom, "Mosque of the Qarafa", 15.

[71] Williams, "Cult of Alid Saints", 40.

[72] Bloom, Mosque of Qarafa, 14, 16.

[73] Al-Maqrizi encapsulates this momentous transformation by stating, after the arrival of al-Mu'izz, that Egypt "became the seat of a caliphate after having been the seat of an amirate" (*Itti'az,* 1:134, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 104).

[74] Halm, *Empire,* 410-14, 419-20; Brett, *Fatimids,* 299-300.

[75] For the background and stipulations of the Fatimid *aman* document in particular see Shainool Jiwa, "Inclusive Governance: A Fatimid Illustration" in *A Companion to the Muslim World,* ed. Amyn B. Sajoo (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), pp. 157-177 and Brett, *Fatimids,* 299-303.

[76] The full list of delegates as well as the full-text of the *aman* are found in al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:102-107, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 68-73; Idris, '*Uyun al-akhbar*, 673-8**,** trans., Jiwa, *Founder of Cairo,* 209-15.

[77] His fuller title is Abu'l-Tayyib al-Abbas b. Ahmad al-Hashimi. He can be identified as an Abbasid due to a subsequent passage in al-Maqrizi, when the vizier Ja'far ibn al-Furat remonstrates with the remnants of the Ikshidid armed forces for rejecting the *aman*. He notes "You have asked this matter of al-Sharif [i.e. Sharif Muslim]. He was not content [to go on his own], so he took with him Abu Isma'il, a Hasanid, a Muslim qadi and an Abbasid" (al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:108, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 74) the Abbasid therefore must refer to Abu'l-Tayyib al-Hashimi. For his participation in the delegation see Idris,*'Uyun,* 673, trans., *Founder,* 208 and al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:103, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 68.

[78] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:108, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 74.

[79] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:108, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 74.

[80] A notable indication of the Sharif's lineage emerges in a statement attributed to the leader of the *Kafuriyya*, Farah al-Bajkami, who in rejection of the document asserts to the *sharif:* "Even if your forefather [i.e. the Prophet] had come to us with this [document], we would have slashed his face with the sword" (al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:108, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 74). That such a sacrilegious remark would have been made publically is doubtful, and it could be a later interpolation reprimanding their conduct through the *sharif*.

[81] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1:108, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 74.

[82] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:109, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 76.

[83]Thus Jawhar writes: "The Sharif''s letter has arrived, may God lengthen his life, perpetuate his honour, support and strengthen him. [In it] he congratulated us for the blessed conquest, which God has paved for us, and he, may God support him, deserves to be congratulated as it is his realm [*dawla*] and the realm of his family, and he is worthy of it". See Idris,*'Uyun al-akhbar*, 682**,** trans., Jiwa. *Founder of Cairo,* 217-18. This reference is not included in al-Maqrizi's version of the letter (*Itti'az*, 1:109, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 76).

[84] Jawhar writes: "I have authorized the Sharif, may God strengthen him, to grant security as he wishes and pleases and to make additions to what I have written in it as he sees fit. This is my safety document, issued by the permission of our lord and master, the Commander of the

Faithful, may God bless him" (al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:109, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 76).

[85] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:111, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 77.

[86] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:109, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 76

[87] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:114, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 81.

[88] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:114, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 81.

[89] al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:133, trans., *Mediterranean Empire,* 103.

[90] Al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 250.

[91] Al-Hasan b. Ibrahim al-Rassi. After al-Hasan's father the *naqib* Ibrahim al-Rassi died in 369 AH / 980 CE during the reign of al-'Aziz bi'llah, al-Hasan inherited the position of *niqab* until his own death in 379 AH / 989 CE, when his funeral prayer was led by al-'Aziz himself. See al- Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, p. 326.

[92] Tamim b. al-Mu'izz, *Diwan Tamim b. al-Mu'izz,* ed. M. K. Husayn (Cairo: Matba'at Dar al-Kutub al-MIsriyah, 1957), pp. 4-5.

[93] Maqrizi notes that "[Al-Mu'izz] ordered that her estates and revenues should be returned to her. Ya'qub b. Killis summoned Qadi Abu Tahir and his certified witnesses, and asked them to witness the letter from al-Mu'izz ordering him to restore her estates and revenues to her. Then she came out of hiding and was safe" (al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:225, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 206).

[94] Al-Maqrizi states: "In that month, the dignitaries entered the palace of al-Mu'izz. Among them were the *ashraf*, the administrators, the commanders, the rest of the *awliya'* among the Kutama and others. A person said to one of the *ashraf*, 'Have a seat, O *sharif*' and someone from the Kutama interjected, 'Is there any other *sharif* in the world apart from our master? If anyone other than him had claimed that, we would have killed him.'" (*Itti'az*, 1:147, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 117]

[95] al-Maqrizi, Itti'az , I:147, trans., Jiwa, Mediterranean Empire, 117.

[96] Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:150, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 119.

[97] Followed the conclusion of al- 'Aziz's successful campaign against the Turkish general Alp Tegin in 368 AH / 979 CE, al-Maqrizi relates correspondence between the *naqib* and the imam-caliph, the former querying the clemency granted to the rebel, and al-'Aziz replying on familial terms. See al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1: 244.

[98] Al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 315, 326.

[99] Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1: 277.

[100] Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* 1: 281.

[101] This is in reference to the Abbasid black *kiswa* that was henceforth replaced by the Fatimid white.

[102] Al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 430.

[103] Al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 432.

[104] Ibid, 163. Note also Walker's account of al-Hakim's request of the *ashraf* of Mecca concerning the contents of the home of the Shi'i Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq which had apparently remained unopened for centuries in Medina. See Walker, *Caliph of Cairo,* 230. The context is amplified in his "Purloined Symbols of the Past: The Theft of Souvenirs and Sacred Relics in the Rivalry between the Abbasids and Fatimids" in *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madelung,* ed. F. Daftary and J. Meri (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003) pp. 364-87.

[105] See Delia Cortese and Simonetta Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids in the world of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 80.

[106] For the regency of Sitt al-Mulk see Paul Walker, 'The Fatimid Caliph al-Aziz and His Daughter Sitt al-Mulk: A Case of Delayed but Eventual Succession to Rule by a

Woman', *Journal of Persianate Studies,* 4/1 (2011): 30-44; Cortese and Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids,* 117-127.

[107] Mortel, "Zaydi Shi'ism", p. 67.

[108] Madelung, "Fatimids and the Qarmatis".

[109] Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:147-50, 1:202-4, 1:217-25, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 117-21, 181-84, 197-206.

[110] Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, I:217, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 197.

[111] In reference to Sharif Muslim visiting al-Mu'izz on the death of the latter's son, al-Maqrizi notes: "Abu Ja'far Muslim said to al-Mu'izz: 'I seek God's protection from losing a pious son'. Al-Mu'izz said to him: 'What is your opinion about a disobedient son, and a disobedient brother?' indicating his [Abu Ja'far's] son Ja'far and his brother Abd Allah, for they had sided with the Qaramita (al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:217, trans., Jiwa, *Mediterranean Empire,* 197).

[112] al-Maqrizi, *Muqaffa,* 242.

[113] The purposes of the text included discrediting the whole of the Isma'ili movement by claiming the original founder of the Isma'ilis, as well as the ancestor of the Fatimids, was Abd Allah b. Maymun al-Qaddah, an alleged follower of Daysani (Bardesian) dualism. It was in Akhu Muhsin that the *kitab al-siyasa* [Book of Initiation], a forgery claimed to be an Isma'ili text with the aim of destroying Islam from within, came to be cited and entered into Sunni historiography. For Akhu Muhsin's role within the polemics on Isma'ili origins see Daftary, *Ismailis,* 100-3.

[114] Abu Abd Allah Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Rizam (or Razzam) al-Ta'i al-Kufi, more commonly known as Ibn Rizam, lived in Baghdad in first half of fourth AH / tenth CE century. His major anti-Isma'ili text *Kitab radd 'ala'l-Isma'iliyya* (or *Naqḍ 'ala'l-Batiniyya)* only survives in fragments in Ibn al-Nadim's *Fihrist,* but became highly influential in the later work of Akhu Muhsin. See Daftary, *Ismailis,* 102-103.

[115] For a listing of how the Ibn Rizam-Akhu Muhsin related accounts continued to be reproduced in later Sunni historiography including Persian sources as well as Arabic, see Daftary, *Ismailis*, p. 553 n. 72.

[116] Abu'l-Mahasin ibn Taghribirdi, *al-Nujum al-Zahira fi Muluk Misr wa'l-Qahira,* ed. William Popper, volumes I-III (Berkeley: University Press 1909), II:17**.**

[117] The main sources for the manifesto in chronological order of appearance are Ibn al-Jawzi [Abu'l-Faraj Abd al-Rahman Ibn Jawzi, *al-Muntazam fi tarikh al-muluk wa'l-umam,* ed. Muhammad A. Aṭa and Musṭafa A. Aṭa, volumes I-IXX, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub, 1412-1992), XV:82], Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil,* XI:446-448; Ibn Khaldun, *Tarikh,* III:547; al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az,* I:43, Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum al-Zahira*, IV:229. The first extant written reference to the Manifesto is thus at least 130 years after its issuance. A study on the context and textual history of the decree is currently being prepared by this author under the title 'The Baghdad Manifesto: A Lineage Exposed or an Expose on lineage?' (Forthcoming).

[118] Discussion of the so-called "Baghdad Manifesto" is found especially in Mamour, *Polemics,* 16-29; Lewis, *Origins,* 60-1; Daftary, *Ismailis*, 101-3, 185.

[119] Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat,* II: 47; Notably the same verses are also cited in Idris, *'Uyun*, 728, trans., Jiwa, *Founder of Cairo,* 263; evidencing the ubiquitous nature of this apocryphal anecdote, which found its way into Isma'ili historiography through the writings of Idris 'Imad al-Din.

[120] Both *sharif*s al-Radi and al-Murtada were the sons of Abu Ahmad Husayn al-Musawi, a descent of Musa al-Kazim b. Ja'far al-Sadiq. Abu Ahmad was one of the most prominent and influential *Sharif*s of the Muslim world in the latter half of the fourth AH / tenth CE century, where from his base in Baghdad he stood as *naqib* of the Alids, head of the *mazalim* and the *ḥajj* and de-facto leader of the Shi'i community there. After Abu Ahmads demise in 400 AH / 1009-10 CE, *sharif*s al-Radi and al-Murtada became heirs to their father's heritage. Both brothers were educated in Imami Shi'i tenants, studying notably under the famed Imami theologian Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413 AH / 1022 CE). Sharif al-Radi became noted particularly

for his poetry and as the compiler of the *Nahj al-Balagha,* the compilation of sermons, sayings and homilies attributed to Ali b. Abi Ṭalib. See M. Djebli, art."al-Sharif al-Radi", in E12. Sharif al-Murtada on the other hand, had a long legacy and influence as a Shi'i theologian, writing extensive works including those in defence of the Twelver notion of the Imamate. See C. Brockelmann, art. "al-Sharif al-Murtada", in *EI2*.

[121] The longer version is found in al-Maqrizi quoting Hilal al-Sabi' (al- Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:32-4), and is also found in Ibn al-Athir, (*Al-Kamil* VI:446-8]. For Idris version, see Idris, *'Uyun al-Alkhbar*, 728, trans., Jiwa, *Founder of Cairo,* 263.

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