The Fatimid and Kalbite Governors in Sicily:  
909-1044  
[Islamic Sicily II] *

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This is the second part of my investigation on the Muslim governors (or rulers) in Sicily.

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I transliterate Arabic letters based on the following rule with vowels added:

- bâ=b, tâ=t, thâ=th, jîm=j, hâ=h, khâ=kh, dâl=d, dhâl=dh, râ=r, zâ=z, sîn=s, shîn=sh, šâd=š, dâd=d, tâ=t, žâ=ž, āyn=‘, ghayn=gh, fâ=f, qâf=q, kâf=k, lâm=l, mîm=m, nûn=n, hâ=h, wâ=w, yâ=y, hamza=[‘]

* If there is a problem in determining vowels I show only consonants with dashes in [ ].
Ex.: [sh/m/sh].

* I usually do not transliterate hamza. If necessary I use “‘” to indicate hamza.

* I show the assimilation of the definite article “‘ll (‘al)” before the sun letters (ḥurūf shamsiyya), and transliterate “‘al” into “a#.” according to subsequent letters. I ignore other assimilations.
Ex.: Abû al-Qâsim, not Abu-l-Qâsim.

The abbreviation system is as follows:

AH = anno hezirae (the year of the Hegira).


* This is the latter part of my study on Islamic Sicily, which originates from an appendix (Appendix 3: Islamic Sicily) to my Ph.D. dissertation entitled Medieval Kingdom of Mystery: The Norman Kingdom of Sicily and Its Administration (Yale University, New Haven, Conn. 1990). The former part of Islamic Sicily is scheduled to appear in Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies, VII (1992), with the title of “The Aghlabid Governors in Sicily: 827-909 [Islamic Sicily I].” I should like to thank Dr. Jonathan Rotondo-MacCord of Xavier University of Louisiana for his help.
b. = *ibn* (meaning “a son” in Arabic). This is a customary abbreviation among Arabists.


*EI* = *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed., Leiden 1913-38.

*EI*² = *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Leiden 1960-.

*faṣl* is an Arabic word, meaning “section” here. This is not an abbreviation.


*sana* is an Arabic word, meaning “year.” This is not an abbreviation.


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**II. THE FATIMID GOVERNORS (wālīs): 909-948**

Aghlabid rule of Sicily came to an end in 909 when the Aghlabid dynasty in Tunisia was replaced by the Fāṭimid (909-1171), and thus the history of Islamic Sicily entered the second phase. As soon as the news arrived in Sicily that Abū ‘Abd Allāh, a leader of the Shi’ites and one of the founders of the Fāṭimid dynasty, had occupied Tunisia, the Muslims in Sicily imprisoned Aḥmad b. Abī al-Ḥusayn, last Aghlabid wālī (903-909), and re-elected the former wālī ‘Alī b. Muḥammad (903-903)¹ to be first Fāṭimid wālī (909-910) on 4 April 909. Fāṭimid rule in Sicily.

‘Alī b. Muḥammad was, however, deposed and replaced with Al-Ḥasan (910-12) by the first Fāṭimid caliph ‘Ubayd Allāh al-Mahdī (909-934) in 910. This new wālī, Al-Ḥasan, appointed Ishaq b. Abī al-Minhāl to be qāḍī of Sicily, who proclaimed Al-Mahdī’s name in

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the Friday sermon at Palermo. Fāṭimid rule (909-947) of Sicily was then established religiously as well as politically. During this period most of the wālis were appointed by the caliphs and maintained close ties with the Fāṭimid court in Tunisia, but enjoyed political independence.

1. ʿĀfi b. Muḥammad b. Abī al-Fawāris (909-910)

When the news arrived in Sicily that Abū ʿAbd Allāh, a leader of the Shiʿites and founder of the Fāṭimid dynasty, had occupied Tunisia, the Muslims in Sicily imprisoned the wāli ʿĀfiyābī al-Ḥusayn and chose anew ʿĀfi b. Muḥammad (= I, No. 31) to be wāli on the tenth day of the month of Rajab of AH 296 (4 April 909) [Nuwayrī]. He was confirmed by Abū ʿAbd Allāh in the same year, but deposed by the first Fāṭimid caliph (khālīfa) Al-Mahdī ʿUbayd-Allāh (909-934) in AH 297 (20 Sep 909-8 Sep 910) [Nuwayrī]. He is described as Ibn Abī al-Fawāris in “Cronica di Cambridge” Nuwayrī in BAS testo arabo, pp. 434-5, sana 296, 297 (BAS versione italiana, II, p. 125, Anno 296, 297); “Cronica di Cambridge” in BAS testo arabo, p. 168, sana 6417 (BAS versione italiana, I, p. 280-1, Anno 6417). No mention in Ibn ʿAdhārī, Ibn Khaldūn, Abū al-Fidaʾ and Ibn al-Athīr.

2. Al-Ḥasan b. ʿĀjmād b. Abī Khinzīr (910-912)

Al-Ḥasan was appointed wāli by the caliph Al-Mahdī, and arrived in Sicily on the tenth day of the month of Dhū al-Ḥiṣa of AH 297 (20 Aug 910) [Ibn al-Athīr]. He was deposed by the caliph in AH 299 [Nuwayrī]. According to Ibn ʿAdhārī, however, he was expelled from Sicily with ʿĀli in AH 300. Nuwayrī in BAS testo arabo, p. 435, sana 297 (BAS versione italiana, II, pp. 125, 126, Anno 297); Ibn ʿAdhārī in BAS testo arabo, p. 364, sana 300 (BAS versione italiana, II, p. 23, Anno 300); Ibn Khaldūn in BAS testo arabo, faṣl 8, p. 476 (BAS versione italiana, II, §8, p. 189); Abū al-Fidaʾ in BAS testo arabo, p. 406, sana 296 (BAS versione italiana, II, p. 88, Anno 296); Ibn al-Athīr in BAS testo arabo, pp. 250-1, sana 296 (BAS versione italiana, I, p. 408, Anno 296). No mention in “Cronica di Cambridge.”

3. ʿĀli b. ʿUmār al-Balawi (912-913)

ʿĀli was appointed by the caliph Al-Mahdī, and arrived in Sicily on the tenth day of the month of Dhū al-Ḥiṣa of AH 299 (15 Aug 912) [Nuwayrī], or on the last day of the same month (17 Aug 912) [Ibn al-Athīr]. But the Muslims in Sicily were not satisfied with him because he was old and weak, and abandoned him in AH 300 (18 Aug 912-6 Aug 913) [Nuwayrī]. According to Ibn ʿAdhārī, however, ʿĀli was a brother of Al-Ḥasan and son of ʿAjmād b Abī Khinzīr. Nuwayrī in BAS testo arabo, p. 435, sana 297 (BAS versione italiana, II, p. 126, Anno 297); Ibn ʿAdhārī in BAS

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4. Āḥmad b. Ziyāda Allāh b. Qurhub (913–†916)

Āḥmad was elected wāli' by the Muslims of Sicily on 17 January of AM 6421 (27 Jan 913) ("Cronica di Cambridge"), and confirmed by the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Muqtadir (908-932) in AH 300 (18 Aug 912-6 Aug 913). He was deposed by the Muslims in Sicily on 14 July of AM 6424 (14 Jul 916) ("Cronica di Cambridge"), sent back to Africa in the month of Muḥarram of AH 304 (July 916), and was killed in the same year (5 Jul 916–23 Jun 917) [Nuwayrí, Ibn ‘Adhārī]. Nuwayrí in BAS testo arabo, pp. 435-6, sana 297, 304 (BAS versione italiana, II, pp. 126-7, Anno 297, 304); Ibn ‘Adhārī in BAS testo arabo, pp. 364, 366, sana 300, 304 (BAS versione italiana, II, pp. 23, 25-26, Anno 300, 304); Ibn Khaldūn in BAS testo arabo, faṣl 8, pp. 476-7 (BAS versione italiana, II, §8, pp. 189, 190); Ibn al-Athīr in BAS testo arabo, p. 251, sana 300 (BAS versione italiana, I, pp. 409-10, Anno 300); “Cronica di Cambridge” in BAS testo arabo, pp. 168-9, sana 6421, 6424 (BAS versione italiana, I, pp. 282-1, Anno 6421, 6424). No mention in Abu al-Fīḍā’.

5. Ābdū Saʿīd Mūsā b. Āḥmad, aḍ-Ḍayf (916-917)


6. Sālim b. Asad b. Rashīd (917-937 [†940])


8. Ibn al-Kūfī (941-946?) and Abū al-Qāsim b. ‘Aṭṭāf (941-948)

III. THE KALBITE RULERS (wālīs, amīrs): 948-1044
On 25 April 947 the people in Palermo rose against the Fāṭimid wālī Ibn ‘Aṭṭāf. In order to handle this situation, the third Fāṭimid caliph Al-Mansūr (946-953) appointed Al-Ḥasan (948-953) as wālī and sent him to Sicily. This was the beginning of the Kalbite dynasty, which ruled the island for over ninety years (948-1044), and marks the third phase of the Islamic history of Sicily.3 In 953 Al-Ḥasan was called back to Mahdia by the new caliph Al-Mu‘izz (953-975) to attend the Fāṭimid court, and his son Aḥmad was appointed wālī of Sicily. Aḥmad’s governorship continued for more than sixteen years until he was also recalled to Africa in 969. The government of Sicily was entrusted to Al-Ḥasan’s freedman Ya‘ish. But soon disorder prevailed in Sicily, and Caliph Al-Mu‘izz sent Abū al-

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Qāsim ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan, brother of Aḥmad, to the island as the latter’s deputy. Aḥmad died a few months later and Abū al-Qāsim was confirmed as wālī of Sicily in 970. Thus, the Kalbite wālī of Sicily became hereditary and the Kalbite dynasty was established.4

The Kalbite dynasty was interrupted by the intervention of the Zirid amīr Al-Muʿizz in Africa, who sent his son ‘Abd Allāh with his army to Sicily in 1036. The Kalbite wālī Aḥmad al-Akḥal (1019–1036) was killed during the war against the Zirids, and the Zirid prince ‘Abd Allāh was elected wālī in the same year. In 1040, however, Al-Ḥasan aş-Ṣimsām, brother of Aḥmad al-Akḥal, defeated ‘Abd-Allāh, who fled to Africa, and became wālī (1040-44). Thus the Kalbite dynasty was revived, but its authority no longer extended over the whole island.

Local governors and leaders of the army gained more power and independence. Among them four powerful local rulers emerged: the qaʿid ‘Abd Allāh b. Mankūd (or Mankūt), the independent ruler of Trapani, Marsala, Mazara, Sciacca and the western plains; the qaʿid ‘Alī b. Niʿma, better known as Ibn al-Ḥawwās, the powerful master of Castrogiovanni, Girgenti, Castronuovo, and their neighborhoods; the qaʿid Ibn Maklatī, the ruler of Catania; and the qaʿid Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. ath-Thumna, better known as Ibn ath-Thumna, the master of Syracuse.

In 1044 the wālī Aṣ-Ṣimsām was deposed and the Kalbite dynasty came to an end. The government of Palermo was put in the hands of its nobles. Now, Ibn al-Ḥawwās became the most powerful local ruler. But the balance of power among local rulers was changed by Ibn ath-Thumna, who first attacked and killed Ibn Maklatī, the ruler of Catania, and then defeated ‘Abd Allāh b. Mankūd and took all his territory in the western part of Sicily.

4 Amari, SMS, II, pp. 276, 330-1; Ahmad, A History of Islamic Sicily, pp. 30-31.
Thus, Ibn ath-Thumna became the most powerful ruler in Sicily. His name was proclaimed in the Friday sermon in Palermo, and he was called al-Qādir billah. However, a domestic conflict between Ibn ath-Thumna and his wife Maymūna, Ibn al-Ḥawwās' sister, led to a conflict between himself and Ibn al-Ḥawwās. Ibn ath-Thumna, defeated by Ibn al-Ḥawwās, asked for help from the Normans, offering the island in return. This enabled the Norman conquest of Sicily.5


Al-Ḥasan was appointed wālī by the caliph Al-Manṣūr, and arrived in Sicily from Africa in AH 336 (23 Jul 947-10 Jul 948) [Nuwayrī, Abū al-Fidā‘] and in AM 6456 (1 Sep 947-31 Aug 948) [“Cronica di Cambridge”]. He was recalled to Mahdia in AH 342 (18 May 953-6 May 954) after having spent two years and some months in Sicily [Abū al-Fidā‘], or in AH 341 (29 May 952-17 May 953) [Ibn al-Athīr]. According to “Cronica di Cambridge,” Al-Ḥasan went back to Africa in AM 6469 (1 Sep 960-31 Aug 961), but returned to Palermo in AM 6473 (1 Sep 964-31 Aug 965), and died there in November of the same year (964) [“Cronica di Cambridge”] or in the month of Dhu al-Qa‘da of AH 353 (9 Nov-8 Dec 964) [Abū al-Fidā‘]. Nuwayrī in BAS testo arabo, p. 435, sana 325 (BAS versione italiana, II, pp. 129-130, Anno 325); Ibn Khaldūn in BAS testo arabo, faṣl 2, p. 463, faṣl 8, pp. 479-80 (BAS versione italiana, II, §2, p. 168; §8, pp. 193-4); Abū al-Fidā‘ in BAS testo arabo, pp. 407-9, sana 336 (BAS versione italiana, II, pp. 89, 91, Anno 336); Ibn al-Athīr in BAS testo arabo, pp. 256-7, 262, sana 336, 340 (BAS versione italiana, I, pp. 415-6, 423, Anno 336, 340); “Cronica di Cambridge” in BAS testo arabo, pp. 173-6, sana 6456, 6469, 6473 (BAS versione italiana, I, pp. 289, 292-3, Anno 6456, 6469, 6473). No mention in Ibn ‘Aḍhārī.

2. Abū al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan (954-969)


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3. Ya‘ish (969-970)

Ya‘ish, a freedman of Al-Ḥasan, was entrusted with Sicily by Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan in AH 358 (23 Nov 968-13 Nov 969) [Nuwayrî, Abû al-Fidâ] or in AH 359 (14 Nov 969-3 Nov 970) [Ibn al-Athîr], but soon recalled to Africa. Nuwayrî in BAS testo arabo, p. 442, sana 358 (BAS versione italiana, II, p. 135, Anno 358); Ibn Khaldûn in BAS testo arabo, faṣl 8, p. 482 (BAS versione italiana, II, §8, p. 197); Abû al-Fidâ’ in BAS testo arabo, p. 409, sana 336 (BAS versione italiana, II, p. 91, Anno 336); Ibn al-Athîr in BAS testo arabo, p. 266, sana 359 (BAS versione italiana, I, p. 429, Anno 359). No mention in Ibn ‘Adhârî and "Cronica di Cambridge."


Abû al-Qâsim, son of Al-Ḥasan and brother of Aḥmad, arrived in Sicily as deputy of Aḥmad on the 15th day of the month of Sha‘bân of AH 359 (23 Jun 970) [Nuwayrî, Abû al-Fidâ']. In the same year, Aḥmad having died, Abû al-Qâsim received a diploma from the caliph Al-Mu‘izz and his promotion to amîr was confirmed. He died in the month of Muharram of AH 372 (26 Jun-25 Jul 982) [Nuwayrî, Abû al-Fidâ']. Nuwayrî in BAS testo arabo, p. 442, sana 359 (BAS versione italiana, II, p. 136, Anno 359); Ibn ‘Adhârî in BAS testo arabo, p. 369, sana 372 (BAS versione italiana, II, p. 30, Anno 372); Ibn Khaldûn in BAS testo arabo, faṣl 8, p. 482 (BAS versione italiana, II, §8, p. 197); Abû al-Fidâ’ in BAS testo arabo, pp. 409-10, sana 336 (BAS versione italiana, II, pp. 91, 92, Anno 336); Ibn al-Athîr in BAS testo arabo, pp. 267, 269-70, sana 359, 371 (BAS versione italiana, I, p. 429, 434, Anno 359, 371).

5. Jâbir b. Abû al-Qâsim (982-983)


Ja‘far, a Kalbite, was appointed amîr by the caliph Al-‘Azîz and arrived in Sicily in AH 373 (15 Jun 983-3 Jun 984). [He died in AH 375 (24 May 985-12 May 986, Nuwayrî, Abû al-Fidâ’, Ibn Khaldûn). Nuwayrî in BAS testo arabo, p. 442, sana 359 (BAS versione italiana, II, p. 136, Anno 359); Ibn Khaldûn in BAS testo arabo, faṣl 8, p. 482 (BAS versione italiana, II, §8, pp. 198, 199); Abû al-Fidâ’ in BAS testo arabo,
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8. Abū al-Futūḥ Yusuf b. ‘Abd Allāh, Ṭiqāt ad-Dawla (989-998)
   Abū al-Futūḥ, son of ‘Abd Allāh, became wālī immediately after his father’s death (Ramadān of AH 379 [3 Dec 989-1 Jan 990]), and was confirmed by the caliph Al-‘Azīz. He fell seriously ill and was succeeded by his son Ja’far in AH 388 (3 Jan-22 Dec 998) [Nuwayry]. Nuwayryī in BAS testo arabo, p. 442, sana 379 (BAS versione italiana, II, p. 137, Anno 379); Ibn ‘Adhārī in BAS testo arabo, p. 369, sana 379 (BAS versione italiana, II, p. 31, Anno 379); Ibn Khalḍūn in BAS testo arabo, faṣl 8, p. 483 (BAS versione italiana, II, §8, p. 199); Abū al-Fidāʾ in BAS testo arabo, pp. 410, 413, sana 336, 484 (BAS versione italiana, II, pp. 93, 96, Anno 336, 484); Ibn al-Athīr in BAS testo arabo, p. 273, sana 484 (BAS versione italiana, I, p. 442, Anno 484).

   Ja’far, son of Abū al-Futūḥ, succeeded his father as wālī when the latter became seriously ill in AH 388 (3 Jan-22 Dec 998). But the Muslims in Palermo rose against him and chose Aḥmad al-Akḥal, brother of Ja’far, as wālī in place of him on the sixth day of the month of Al-Muḥarram of AH 410 (14 May 1019) [Nuwayry]. Nuwayryī in BAS testo arabo, pp. 442, 444, sana 379, 410 (BAS versione italiana, II, pp. 137, 139, Anno 379, 410); Ibn Khalḍūn in BAS testo arabo, faṣl 8, p. 484, (BAS versione italiana, II, §8, p. 199); Abū al-Fidāʾ in BAS testo arabo, pp. 411, 413, sana 336, 484 (BAS versione italiana, II, pp. 94, 97, Anno 386, 484); Ibn al-Athīr in BAS testo arabo, p. 274, sana 484 (BAS versione italiana, I, pp. 442-3, Anno 484). No mention in Ibn ‘Adhārī.

10. Aḥmad al-Akḥal b. Abī al-Futūḥ, Tāyīd ad-Dawla (1019–1036)
   Aḥmad, son of Abū al-Futūḥ and brother of Ja’far, was chosen wālī on the sixth day of the month of Al-Muḥarram of AH 410 (14 May 1019), confirmed later by the Fāṭimid caliph Al-Ḥākim. He died in AH 427 (5 Nov 1035-24 Oct 1036) [Nuwayryī, Abū al-Fidāʾ]. Nuwayryī in BAS testo arabo, p. 444, sana 410, 410 (BAS versione italiana, II, p. 139, 141, Anno 410, 410); Ibn Khalḍūn in BAS testo arabo, faṣl 8, p. 484 (BAS versione italiana, II, §8, p. 200); Abū al-Fidāʾ in BAS testo arabo, pp. 411, 413, sana 336, 484 (BAS versione italiana, II, pp. 94, 97, Anno 336, 484); Ibn al-Athīr in BAS testo arabo, p. 274, sana 484 (BAS versione italiana, I, pp. 443-4, Anno 484). No mention in Ibn ‘Adhārī.
11. ‘Abd Allâh b. al-Mu‘izz b. Bâdis (1036-1040?)

12. Al-Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣimṣâm ad-Dawla (1040?-1044)
   Al-Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣimṣâm, son of Abû al-Futûh and brother of Ja‘far and Aḥmad, was chosen wâlî by the Muslims of Sicily, but was expelled. Nuwayrî in BAS testo arabo, p. 445, sana 410 (BAS versione italiana, II, p. 141-142, Anno 410); Ibn Khaldûn in BAS testo arabo, fazl 8, p. 484 (BAS versione italiana, II, §8, p. 200); Abû al-Fidâ’ in BAS testo arabo, pp. 411, 414, sana 336, 484 (BAS versione italiana, II, pp. 94, 98, Anno 336, 484); Ibn al-Athîr in BAS testo arabo, p. 275, sana 484 (BAS versione italiana, I, p. 445, Anno 484). No mention in Ibn ‘Adhârî.