

Poetry and History

The Value of Poetry
in Reconstructing
Arab History

Edited by
Ramzi Baalbaki
Saleh Said Agha
Tarif Khalidi



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Fatimid Aspirations of Conquest and Doctrinal Underpinnings in the Poetry of al-Qā'im bi-Amr Allāh, Ibn Hānī' al-Andalusī, Amīr Tamīm b. al-Mu'izz, and al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī

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For Paul E. Walker
On His Seventieth Birthday

At the high point of the Fatimids' two hundred and fifty plus years of rule, their territory spanned large parts of the Islamic realm — all of North Africa, Egypt, Sicily, Syria, Palestine, Yemen, the Ḥijāz, and even the Abbasid heartlands of Iraq, with additional covert mission cells in Byzantine Armenia and Anatolia, Central Asian lands, and places as far away as India.¹ Traditional historical sources supply ample data regarding the Fatimids' appearance on the political scene in the Maghrib, their conquest of Egypt and their move there, and their battles in Syria and Iraq. Internal histories of the Fatimid and Ṭayyibī “*da'wa*” even provide some doctrinal commentary. (The term “*da'wa*”, which denotes the Fatimid's religio-political mission of education, proselytizing, and activism, is used frequently in this paper). But neither the external nor the internal histories discuss the motivation steering these conquests, and many questions about whys and wherefores remain — such as why the Fatimids moved east from North Africa rather than continuing there or going north into neighboring Spain; in what manner they differed from other more opportunistic and locally ambitious North African dynasties like the Aghlabids whom they replaced; and the nature of the claims they made in their challenge of the Abbasid caliphate. We could turn to the Fatimid theological and philosophical tracts for answers, but although these provide detailed expositions about the imam's role in the spiritual and temporal leadership of the world, they are less concerned with factual details of political history. It is primarily the literary materials, and particularly Fatimid poetry, that systematically bring together both categories of information, the mundane and the abstract. There are limitations, of

course, to the use of poetry as a historical source, for it is dense and intense, and it alludes to actions and ideas without actually spelling out a cohesive narrative of events. But when utilized alongside the traditional sources, the poetry tells us what specific historical events mean in their ideological framework, connecting military actions with the doctrines that drove them. In this paper, I analyze the verse of four major poets spanning the heyday of Fatimid power in the 4th/10th and 5th/11th centuries — the caliph-imam al-Qā'im bi-Amr Allāh (d. 334/946), the court poet Ibn Hānī' al-Andalusī (d. 362/973), the royal prince Tamīm b. al-Mu'izz (d. 374/984), and the chief *dā'ī* (missionary and activist) al-Mu'ayyad fī l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078) — with a view to identifying the lands the Fatimids sought to rule, and understanding the multifaceted mahdist ideology of the imamate that underpinned their gradual conquest of large parts of the Islamic empire.

Within the Fatimid poetic tradition, certain types of poetry and particular brands of poets provide data particularly relevant to hegemonic aspirations. While genres such as wine and love poetry have little or no bearing on affairs of state, poems composed in praise of the caliph-imams (or certain of their commanders), and verse written in challenge to the Abbasids, offer much insight on this issue. Among these, the lines composed by poets closely connected with the Fatimid *da'wa* and its leadership — particularly our four poets noted above — afford us precious inside information about military agendas and ideological rationales.²

At the time of their original dissemination, Fatimid panegyrics and poems of challenge were a valuable public relations tool. Giving voice to aspirations of hegemony, they also played a role in realizing them. Suzanne Stetkevych has shown how the poems of Akḥṭal in the Umayyad period, those of Abū Tammām and Mutanabbī in the Abbasid era, and the verse of Ibn Darrāj al-Qaṣṭallī in Andalusia, legitimized the ruling party.³ There are differences between the ideological bases of the Fatimids and those other dynasties, and these differences are discussed later in the concluding remarks; but in a similarly legitimizing vein, the panegyrics of the Fatimid poets verbally confronted enemies, proselytized among the uninitiated or vacillating, and uplifted hopes among loyal followers and subjects. We know for certain that the Fatimid poems were read and heard by a public audience across political and sectarian lines, for poets in Baghdad composed formal retort verses (*mu'āraḍas*) confronting Qa'im's own,⁴ Ibn Hānī' expressed satisfaction at his own poems reaching Baghdad and Syria,⁵ and Mu'ayyad claimed that his poetry propagated the Fatimid *da'wa*.⁶

In addition to the few collected *dīwāns* extant (including those of three of our poets: Ibn Hānī', Tamīm, and Mu'ayyad), a quantity of Fatimid poetry (such as the verse of Qā'im) is preserved only in the later synthetic histories, mostly *da'wa* sources, such as al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's (d. 363/974) *Iftitāḥ al-*

da'wa and *dā'ī* Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn's (d. 872/1468) *Uyūn al-akhbār*. Several poems are also recorded in the *Muqaffā* of the Mamluk historian Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), and sporadic verse citations are found in his other works as well as in the writings of his fellow historians.⁷ But the authors of these medieval narratives quote poems for the most part as simple historical artifacts, as records of literary events that have political or religio-political bearings, without analyzing them for historical data, much less for issues of ideology and motivation.

Modern scholars of Fatimid poetry have established that a significant proportion of its themes were devoted to politico-historical and doctrinal issues. In his book on Ibn Hānī's poetry, Muḥammad al-Ya'lāwī discussed at length these two aspects of his *dīwān*;⁸ R. Rubinacci in the *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature* mentioned the highly political nature of Fatimid verse in general;⁹ 'Abdalraḥmān Ḥijāzī discussed in some detail the political discourse of Fatimid verse;¹⁰ and in my own work on Mu'ayyad's *da'wa* poetry, I analyzed its theological ideas, and constructed the poet's life and career largely from his verse.¹¹ Moreover, as Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn correctly pointed out in his seminal work on Fatimid belles-lettres, it was primarily due to the doctrinal references in Fatimid poetry that the succeeding Ayyubids suppressed it in a radical Sunnī backlash against the ideology it espoused.¹² A case in point is the Ayyubid scribe 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, who, as he himself tells us, deliberately omitted from his anthology the praise poetry of Āmir's *dā'ī* Ibn al-Ḍayf for its "ideological exaggeration" (*li-farḥi ghuluwwihi*), and of Zāfir al-Ḥaddād, for his being among the "panegyrists of the Egyptian" (*muddāḥ al-Miṣrī*); this, despite the high quality of their verse, again as 'Imād himself took pains to note.¹³ As this polemical source and the studies cited above confirm, many Fatimid poems combined political and religious themes. This combination is clearly visible in the verse of the poets who referenced the conquest aspirations of the Fatimids.

In their celebration of Fatimid victories, poets focused on two major religio-political themes. Firstly, they elucidated the Fatimid accession to power and subsequent expansion as a fulfillment of God's promises (*wa'd*) of victory (*fath*) and victorious aid (*naṣr*) to believers made through the Qur'ān, and through the words of earlier prophets; together with Muḥammad's pronouncements regarding the coming of the righteous savior or '*mahdī*' in his line, who would establish light and justice in the world. Several Islamic movements, both Sunnī and Shī'a, legitimized hegemony through mahdist arguments,¹⁴ but the Fatimids were arguably one of the most successful in length and compass of rule. Nu'mān in his *Sharḥ al-akhbār* provided the most comprehensive Fatimid recounting of mahdist *ḥadīth* (and prophecies attributed to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and the early Shī'a imams) foretelling the realization of the imam's terrestrial power, which may be summarized in seven main points:¹⁵ (1) The

mahdī would be from the progeny of Fāṭima (daughter of Muḥammad and wife of ‘Alī). (2) He would appear at the end of the third century A.H., as (3) the sun rising from the West (*al-maghrib*). (4) He would conquer the “eastern and western lands of the earth” (مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَغَارِبَهَا). (5) He would fill the earth with “justice and righteousness” (عَدْلًا وَقِسْطًا) after it had been enveloped in “oppression and tyranny” (جَوْرًا وَظُلْمًا). (6) God had pledged that all this would come to pass at the decreed time. (7) Some of these *ḥadīth* add that the Mahdī would conquer Constantinople and Antioch, namely, the Byzantine territories. Fatimid poets consistently referenced these motifs in their panegyrics, usually several in any given poem. The second major theme they focused on (and which they connected to the first broad theme of messianism) was that of righting past oppression. The Fatimids understood their victory as just retribution for the blood of the family of the Prophet, particularly of the Prophet’s grandson and the Fatimids’ own ancestor Ḥusayn, spilled collectively by the ruling Abbasids, and their spiritual forbears: the Umayyads and the first three Sunnī caliphs. This reckoning, too, the Fatimid poets depicted as inevitable, a realization of God’s promise. These two broad doctrinal underpinnings of Fatimid conquest aspirations — a mahdist ideology and a quest for retribution — directed the physical path of their hegemonic strategy.

The Fatimids’ aspirations for temporal leadership were based on the spiritual authority they claimed was vested in them by God. Being the “absolute (i.e., perfect) human being” in any age, the Imam of the Age was for the entire human race of his time the sole temporal ruler and spiritual master. Not just a sovereign who held the scepter of worldly power, he was the exclusive and direct conduit of God’s communication to humankind, the divinely guided guide. His seeking of conquest was thus not a pursuit of power, but rather a ruling ordained by the Creator. Even when his temporal authority was not manifest, all God’s realms in reality still belonged to him. But when the time was right, he would rule — “God’s kingdom would come through his pious servants.”¹⁶ The Fatimid poets’ underpinning of world conquest through mahdist motifs is based on this larger ideology. Through just governance and pious guidance, they say, the Imam’s rule would fulfill humankind’s quest for godly living in this world and salvation in the hereafter.

In the following pages, I explore through the eyes of the poets (chronologically, and supplemented by historical, theological, and other literary prose sources) the confluence of the Fatimids’ ideology and history as they arrived on the political scene, established their rule, and expanded their territory, and the doctrinal reasons for their continuing hopes, even as their power declined. (All translations — of poetry and other materials — are my own.) I conclude with a summary analysis of the geographic compass and doctrinal underpinnings of Fatimid aspirations of conquest.

The Establishment of the Fatimid Empire in North Africa: Verses by Pre-Empire Poets

Towards the end of the 3rd century A.H. (beginning of 10th c. C.E.), decades before the establishment of their empire in North Africa, the ancestors of the Fatimid caliphs lived in hiding in Salamiyya in northern Syria. From here, they sent *dā'īs* to proselytize in secret to far-flung places of the Islamic world and beyond.

Among these *dā'īs* was one Abū l-Qāsim Ibn Ḥawshab whom they sent in 268/881 to the Yemen, where he had much success and came to be known as the “Maṣṣūr al-Yaman” (the Victor of Yemen). Nu'mān in his *Ifṭitāḥ al-da'wa* tells us that when the *dā'ī* was praised with this epithet, he quoted a line by an anonymous earlier poet saying that the title belonged more accurately to “the *maṣṣūr* (victor) from [the Prophet] Aḥmad's progeny” who would rise and defeat the Abbasids:¹⁷

When the <i>maṣṣūr</i> (victor) from the Progeny of Aḥmad appears, say to the Abbasids, “Get up [to leave] and be fearful!”	إذا ظَهَرَ الْمَنْصُورُ مِنْ آلِ أَحْمَدٍ فَقُلْ لِبَنِي الْعَبَّاسِ قُومُوا عَلَى رِجْلِ
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The messianic underpinnings of the Fatimid movement in its pre-empire stage — in the reference to the appearance of the *maṣṣūr* — are evident in this verse. For in addition to the appellation *mahdī* (the rightly guided one), the *ḥadīth* cited by Nu'mān alternatively referred to the awaited savior as the *qā'im* (the one who would stand forth), or the *maṣṣūr* (the one aided with God's victory) — the appellation used in this verse. (The fact that the first three Fatimid caliph-imams, Mahdī, Qā'im, and Maṣṣūr, used these very epithets in their regnal titles is evidence of their subscription to this doctrine.¹⁸ Indeed, the title “Fāṭimid” may also be taken, among other things, as a mahdist appellation, for, as Nu'mān's reports maintain, the *mahdī* was expected to be a descendant of Fāṭima.)¹⁹

Dā'ī Abū l-Qāsim had sent in 280/893 a fellow missionary named Abū 'Abdallāh al-Shī'ī to North Africa. *Dā'ī* Abū 'Abdallāh had great success in converting large portions of the Maghribī populace (particularly the Kutāma Berbers) to his cause.²⁰ Lending voice to the mahdist context of pledge fulfillment and establishment of justice, he engraved his signatory seal ring with the Qur'ānic verse “The word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and justice ...” (وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صَدَقَ وَعْدًا).²¹

In North Africa, Shi'ite poets not apparently connected with the Fatimid *da'wa* had also anticipated the coming of a *mahdī* at the end of the third hijri century, as demonstrated by their references to mahdist *ḥadīth*. In 280/893, the

very year *dā'ī* Abū 'Abdallāh arrived in Kutāma territory or shortly thereafter, a poet named Muḥammad b. Ramaḍān from Billizma (in the north of present-day Algeria) prophesied: "The days of the empire of the *qā'im*, the *mahdī*, are imminent — the [prophetic] Tradition has foretold them!"²² A little before 289/902, an elderly shaykh from Tunis named al-Ḥarbī al-Ārābī declared: "God's sun will rise from the West ... a man from the sons of Fāṭima ... [will] fill God's Earth with justice."²³ In the following decades and centuries, poets of the Fatimid dynasty would tap into this more general mahdist tradition; they would consistently refer to the various themes of mahdist *ḥadīth* and highlight the mahdist titles; in their treatment of empire-related topics, they would combine the mahdist discourse with Qur'ānic vocabulary of imminent victory to produce a specific Fatimid religio-political vision.

Consolidation of the North African Empire and Campaigns to Egypt in the Reign of the Caliph-Imam al-Mahdī bi-L-lāh (r. 297-322/910-934): Poems by the Crown Prince Qā'im

In 296/909, the Fatimid *dā'ī* Abū 'Abdallāh defeated the ruling Aghlabids, who were vassals of the Abbasids and the major power in North Africa at the time. Meanwhile, the scion of the Prophet's family who would become the first Fatimid caliph-imam had traveled secretly from Salamiyya to Sijilmāsa in the western Maghrib, whence Abū 'Abdallāh conveyed him to the conquered Aghlabid capital of Raqqāda. There in early 297/909, a large portion of the notables of the Maghrib pledged allegiance to him as the Mahdī. The Fatimid empire was born. Upon Mahdī's investiture, the former Aghlabid court poet Sa'dūn al-Warjīnī (or Warjīlī) congratulated him with a clear mahdist reference, proclaiming that all Muslims had won with his triumph, for they had "won his ... justice."²⁴ Over the next sixty-three years, the first four Fatimid caliph-imams would consolidate their control of the Maghrib, but they had very early begun to look eastward. In 302/914, just five years after Mahdī's inauguration, the crown-prince and future caliph-imam Qā'im led the first Fatimid army east to Egypt; in 306/918, he commanded a second Egyptian campaign. He did not take Egypt from its Ikhshīdīd rulers, but continued to push an agenda for its conquest; his poetry confirms these hopes.

In four poems composed in the context of his Egyptian campaigns, Qā'im lengthily expounded ideologically rooted ambitions of dominion. In each of these poems, he addressed a different audience, but the (mahdist) message was the same: The Fatimid caliph-imams were the descendants of the Prophet and the righteous leaders of the Muslims; they would defeat the Abbasids and conquer the East; and God would fulfill His pledge to the prophets through them.

In a 23-verse *bā'iyya* composed during his initial military expedition to Egypt, Qā'im aggressively questioned people living under the Abbasids about the validity of their Islamic ritual practice in the absence of a legitimate imam. The questions explained why Qā'im was going to conquer them: Their ritual prayer, their *hajj*, their fighting [of the Byzantines] — in all of these deeds, he said, they were led by ungodly people, “drinkers of wine” (vv. 8-9). After the Prophet Muḥammad, he asked, then 'Alī, then Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, then the noble early imams, was it possible that the imam of the Muslims, the one who was charged with establishing God's religion on earth, would be an upstart rascal (vv. 11-12)?²⁵

O people of God's East, have your minds been lost, or have they been deceived through paucity of understanding and morals?!	v. 6	أَيَا أَهْلَ شَرْقِ اللَّهِ زَالَتْ حُلُومُكُمْ أَمْ اخْتَدَعَتْ مِنْ قِلَّةِ الْفَهْمِ وَالْأَدَبِ
Woe to you! You have opposed truth and right-guidance, and whosoever turns away from the mother-road of guidance will not hit the mark.	v. 7	فَوَيْحًا لَكُمْ خَالَفْتُمْ الْحَقَّ وَالْهُدَى وَمَنْ حَادَ عَنْ أُمِّ الْهَدَايَةِ لَمْ يُصِبْ
Who leads your prayers? Who leads your <i>hajj</i> ? Under whose [leadership] do you battle? Answer without lying!	v. 8	صَلَاتُكُمْ مَعَ مَنْ وَحَجُّكُمْ بِمَنْ وَعَزُّوَكُمْ فِيمَنْ أَجَبُوا بِلَا كَذِبِ
Your ritual prayer, your <i>hajj</i> , your battle — Woe to you! — are [led by] drinkers of wine, men who are incessant in their performance of unlawful deeds.	v. 9	صَلَاتُكُمْ وَالْحَجُّ وَالْعَزُّ وَيَلَكُمُ بِشْرَابِ خَمَرٍ عَاكِفِينَ عَلَى الرَّيْبِ
I ponder your acts and your affairs, and a fraction of what I have seen produces utmost wonder:	v. 10	أَفَكُرُّ فِي أَعْمَالِكُمْ وَأُمُورِكُمْ وَفِي دُونِ مَا عَايَنْتُهُ أَعْجَبُ الْعَجَبِ
Is it possible that after the Prophet of God, his paternal uncle's son ['Alī], his two grandsons [Ḥasan and Ḥusayn], and the rightly guiding ones, the noble chiefs [imams in Ḥusayn's line],	v. 11	أَبْعَدَ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ ابْنِ عَمِّهِ وَسِبْطِيهِ وَالْمُهَادِينَ وَالسَّادَةِ النُّجَبِ

that the imam of the Muslims, their leader, the custodian of God's religion on His earth, be rabble?	v. 12	يَكُونُ إِمَامُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَرَأْسُهُمْ وَقِيمُ دِينِ اللَّهِ فِي أَرْضِهِ شَعْبٌ
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Qā'im went on to state that he had long endured this subversion (presumably in the sense that he was the heir of the true imams who, over many centuries, had endured it); until finally, upon God's resolve to strengthen His religion, he rose up to fight (vv. 13-14), calling upon the people of the West, who answered (vv. 16-18):

I forbore, and in forbearance is success, when perhaps another commander might have rushed in — mistakenly, and without hitting the mark;	v. 13	صَبَرْتُ فِي الصَّبْرِ النَّجَاحَ وَرُبَّمَا تَعَجَّلَ ذُو أَمْرِ فَأَخْطَا وَلَمْ يُصِبْ
until such time when God decided to strengthen His rule and I stood up to establish God's religion, anticipating [His heavenly reward]. ...	v. 14	إِلَى أَنْ أَرَادَ اللَّهُ إِعْزَازَ أَمْرِهِ فَقُمْتُ بِدِينِ اللَّهِ قَوْمَةً مُحْتَسِبٌ
I called out to the people of the West, being a man trusting [in God], generous in his giving; he who follows him will not lose! ...	v. 16	وَنَادَيْتُ أَهْلَ الْعَرَبِ دَعْوَةً وَائِقٍ كَرِيمِ الْعَطَايَا مَنْ تَوَلَّاهُ لَمْ يَخِبْ
I marched towards your lands bringing God's cavalry; the face of death shining through gaps in veils.	v. 18	وَسِرْتُ بِخَيْلِ اللَّهِ تَلْقَاءَ أَرْضِكُمْ وَقَدْ لَاحَ وَجْهُ الْمَوْتِ مِنْ خَلَلِ الْحُجُبِ

Next, Qā'im brought up another fundamental motif in the Fatimid ideology of conquest, and one that all later Fatimid poets would loudly reiterate: God had fulfilled His pledge (*wa'd*), bringing "aid" (*naṣr*) and "victory" (*fath*) (v. 21). He combined in this line references to three key Qur'anic concepts: victory verses, such as "Aid from God and victory are nigh!" (نُصْرًا مِنْ) (وَغَدَّ اللَّهُ لَا) [This is] God's pledge — God does not renege on His pledge" (يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ);²⁶ and verses declaring that the godfearing would "inherit" the lands, such as "... the earth will be inherited by my pious servants" (أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ):²⁸

Until, when the [triumph] that I had been promised arrived, God's aid (<i>naṣr</i>) hastened with victory (<i>fath</i>).	v. 21	فَلَمَّا أَتَى الْأَمْرُ الَّذِي كُنْتُ مُوَعِّدًا بِهِ جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ بِالْفَتْحِ عَنْ كَثْبٍ
By the grace of God, that which you know came to pass — I won the arrow of success, victorious aid (<i>naṣr</i>), and conquest (<i>ghalab</i> — also a Qur'ānic term).	v. 22	فَكَانَ بِحَمْدِ اللَّهِ مَا قَدْ عَرَفْتُمْ وَفُزْتُ بِسَهْمِ الْفَلَجِ وَالنَّصْرِ وَالْغَلَبِ
This will be my custom — as long as I remain — and your custom, so watch out for a war that blazes like flames of fire.	v. 23	وَذَلِكَ دَائِي مَا بَقِيَتْ وَدَائِكُمْ فَدُونُكُمْ حَرْبًا تَضْرُمُ كَاللَّهَبِ

Presumably because of its challenge to the ideological bases of Abbasid rule, coupled with the military fright afforded the Abbasid vassals by Qā'im's attacks upon Egypt, this poem appears to have made quite a stir in the eastern lands. As mentioned earlier, Maqrīzī recorded in the *Muqaffā* indignant response poems in the same rhyme and meter — *mu'āraḍas* — by some of the “chief [Abbasid] poets”, including Abū Bakr al-Ṣūlī (d. c. 335/946) and Abū Bakr b. Durayd (223-312/838-933).²⁹

Also during his first expedition to Egypt, Qā'im sent two poem-letters to his father Maḥdī promising victory over Baghdad. He opened a 17-verse *lāmiyya* sent from Alexandria with the declaration that he, Qā'im, was a sword for God and for the Prophet's descendent [Maḥdī] (v.1), and that he would not cease to strike until he made God's justice manifest in Baghdad (v. 3). He used the next few lines (vv. 4-7) to laud Maḥdī's rightly guiding role, as well as his inheritance of the “robes of Revelation”, in a deliberate blending of the religious ideas in these praise verses with the political agenda of conquest expressed in verses before and after. He went on to name the countries he had on his list of future conquests, saying that his father had sent him to take Egypt, Syria, Khurasan, and the two Iraqs (v. 8), and he would vanquish, more generally, the West and the East (vv. 9-10). After some lines of *fakhr*, Qā'im ended in a beautifully flowing verse with the by-now familiar promise that God would fulfill in Maḥdī His pledge to the prophets (v. 16) of victories (*futūḥ*) and aid (*naṣr*) at the banks of the Nile, the Euphrates, and the Tigris (v. 17):³⁰

I am the sword of God and of God's Messenger's descendant, pole of right-guidance, prayer-direction (<i>qibla</i>) for the people	v. 1	أَنَا سَيْفُ الْإِلَهِ وَابْنِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ قُطْبُ الْهُدَى وَلِلنَّاسِ قِبْلَهُ
Fighting will focus on Baghdad, until God manifests His justice in Iraq and Persia. ³¹	v. 3	يُقْصَرُ الْقَتْلُ دُونَ بَغْدَادَ حَتَّى يُظْهِرَ اللَّهُ بِالْعِرَاقَيْنِ عَدْلَهُ
O imam of right-guidance, he whose branches God has perfumed, whose roots He has perfumed ...	v. 4	يَا إِمَامَ الْهُدَى وَمَنْ طَيَّبَ اللَّهُ أَفْرَعَهُ وَطَيَّبَ أَصْلَهُ
You sent me to Egypt and Syria and Khurāsān, Iraq, and Persia.	v. 8	ثُمَّ أَنهَضْتَنِي لِمِصْرَ وَشَامِ وخراسانَ والعراقَيْنِ جُمْلَهُ
I am your sword which splits the skull. If you unsheathe it, nothing can blunt it.	v. 9	فَأَنَا سَيْفُكَ الَّذِي يَفْلِقُ الْأَهَامَ فَإِن تَسْلَهُ لَهْ إِن تَسْلَهُ
The West and the East fear it. Full armies are too weak to dull it. ...	v. 10	يَفْرَقُ الْغَرْبُ وَالْمَشَارِقُ مِنْهُ وَتَكِلُ الْجُمُوعُ مِنْ أَنْ تَقْلَهُ
So await, O Caliph of God, that which God has pledged in you to Messengers earlier:	v. 16	فَانْتَظِرْ يَا خَلِيفَةَ اللَّهِ مَا قَدْ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ فِيكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ رُسُلِهِ
of victories that will meet you with [His] might and aid at the Nile, the Euphrates, and the Tigris!	v. 17	مِنْ فُتُوحٍ تَلْقَاكَ بِالْعِزِّ وَالنَّصْرِ لَدَى النِّيلِ وَالْفُرَاتِ وَدِجْلِهِ

In the juxtaposition of religious and political themes in these verses, we see a clear link between the aspiration to conquer Baghdad and the Fatimid mahdist ideology of the imam as the only just and rightful ruler of the Islamic empire.

The other poem-letter that al-Qā'im sent to Mahdī from Alexandria began and ended each of its eleven verses with the word "Allāh", emphasizing the poet's dependence on and support from God in his military endeavors. Qā'im prophesied victory in the East and West (v. 5), for God had decreed that this was the time for the emergence of "His *mahdī*" — the epithet, combined with its pronoun, clearly implying a righteous ruling of the world (v. 8).³²

God will conquer the East for us and the West — God will conquer all.	v. 5	اللَّهُ فَتَاحُ لَنَا شَرْقَهُ وَالْغَرْبِ طُورًا يَفْتَحُ اللَّهُ
God has given us [the victories] you see, a gift that God has been generous with. ...	v. 6	اللَّهُ أَعْطَانَا الَّذِي قَدْ تَرَى عَطِيَّةً مَمْنَنٌ بِهَا اللَّهُ
God has revealed his Mahdī, His proof — God has made him manifest. ...	v. 8	اللَّهُ قَدْ أَخْرَجَ مَهْدِيَّهُ حُجَّتَهُ أَظْهَرَهَا اللَّهُ
God is my sufficiency, after all this. How good is the one whose sufficiency is God!	v. 11	اللَّهُ حَسْبِيَ بَعْدَ ذَا كُلِّهِ يَا حَبْدًا مَمْنَنٌ حَسْبُهُ اللَّهُ

In 316/928, a decade after the second expedition to Egypt, Qā'im marched west to put down rebels at Wādī Ṣalāf near Tahert. In a 43-verse *lāmiyya* in a *fakhr* mode addressed to his followers, he spelled out in great detail hopes for larger (eastern) victories and their theological substrata. In the introductory segment (vv. 1-12), he offered greetings and praise to the progeny of the Prophet, then vaunted his own descent from Muḥammad, 'Alī and Fāṭima, a construction foreshadowing the ideological base of the poem. In the next twelve lines (vv. 13-21) he affirmed that he had thus far purified the West; this segment served as a bridge to the key theme of eastern conquest. In the first five verses (vv. 22-27) of that final section, he called “the followers of Truth” (*shī'at al-ḥaqq*) to arms, to answer “God’s *dā'ī*” (*dā'ī Allāh*), viz., himself; to join with his cavalry in taking Egypt and then Iraq, for out of all stopping places, he declared, “Baghdad is my goal” (*Baghdādu hammī*).³³

I have made the lands of the West prosper after their earlier corruption and purified them of every wayward and ignorant person. ...	v. 16	عَمَرْتُ بِلَادَ الْغَرْبِ بَعْدَ فُسَادِهِ وَطَهَّرْتُهُ مِنْ كُلِّ غَاوٍ وَجَاهِلٍ
Has the time not come for you to urge your mounts towards me, to come in haste unshod or slippered,	v. 23	أَمَّا حَانَ أَنْ تُزْجُوا إِلَيَّ مَطِيئَكُمْ وَتَأْتُوا سِرَاعًا بَيْنَ حَافٍ وَنَاعِلٍ

to gain from me that which you desire: protection from every fear and apprehension?	v. 24	فَتَحْظَرُونَ عِنْدِي بِالَّذِي تَأْمُلُونَهُ لَأُخَمِّكُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ خَوْفٍ وَهَائِلٍ
If you have heard the caller (<i>dā'ī</i>) to the Truth, then come to me in haste, swooping like hawks.	v. 25	إِذَا مَا سَمِعْتُمْ دَاعِيَ الْحَقِّ فَانْفِرُوا إِلَيَّ سِرَاعاً كَأَنْقِصَاضِ الْأَجَادِلِ
My cavalry has come to you hastening, traversing the lands of God, lands with many stages,	v. 26	فَقَدْ أَزْمَعْتَ خَيْلِي إِلَيْكُمْ سَرِيعَةً تَجُوبُ بِلَادَ اللَّهِ ذَاتِ الْمَرَاكِ
to the soil of Egypt and Iraq, and beyond — For Baghdad is my goal, among all stopping places.	v. 27	إِلَى أَرْضِ مِصْرٍ وَالْعِرَاقِ وَبَعْدَهَا فِبَغْدَادٍ هَمِّي مِنْ جَمِيعِ الْمَنَازِلِ

Next, Qā'im supplied vital information about his reasoning and goals in the endeavor for conquest: he would bring down the Abbasids' injustice (*jawr*, note mahdist term); moreover, it was but self-defense, for the Abbasids sought to kill the Fatimids. He continued from the earlier line about targeting Baghdad thus:

There is glaring oppression and sedition in [Baghdad], and its people are like camels pasturing without direction.	v. 28	فَإِنَّ بِهَا جَوْرًا شَدِيدًا وَفِتْنَةً وَفِيهَا أَنْاسٌ كَالسَّوَامِ الْهَوَامِلِ
They harbor enmity for us unjustly, and desire to kill us — O how many bitter cups of bereavement have they made us swallow [in the past]!	v. 29	يُعَادُونَنَا ظُلْمًا وَيَهْوُونَ قَتْلَنَا وَكَمْ جَرَعُونَا مِنْ مَرَارَةٍ تَأْكِلِ

After that, Qā'im provided a list of the lands that he meant to conquer: first and foremost, Iraq ("Babylonia", emphasized by deliberate repetition of the name, v. 30), as well as the Syrian towns of Raqqa (lit. al-Raqqatayn, comprising the adjoining cities of Raqqa and Rāfiqa in northern Mesopotamia on the Euphrates near Aleppo, later known collectively as Raqqa, v. 32),³⁴ Bālis (in Syria, between Aleppo and Raqqa, v. 32), Damascus (v. 39), Ḥims, Salamiyya, and the frontier towns (*thughūr* and *ma'āqil*), up to the highlands of Armenia (v. 40); also Kabul (v. 37). All this will happen in battles, he promised, just like the earlier battle in Egypt which he had already won (v.

41). In talking of these battles, Qā'im produced yet another rationale for the overthrow of the Abbasids: blood revenge for the Prophet's grandson and Qā'im's forbear Ḥusayn, who had been slain by the Umayyads — the Abbasids' culpability arising from their 'spiritual descent' from the Umayyads, as elaborated in some later Fatimid poems (details shortly). Note that the verse about remembering Ḥusayn (v. 35) is linked to the line about the Euphrates (v. 34), for it was at the banks of this river that Ḥusayn and his small band of family and followers were denied water for three days, and then killed.

Go forward in the name of God, O my cavalry, and gird your loins [for the march] to Babylon, until you dismount at Babylon. ...	v. 30	فَسِيرِي عَلَى اسْمِ اللَّهِ خَيْلِي وَشَمْرِي إِلَى بَابِلَ حَتَّى تَحْلِيَ بِبَابِلَ
A day [of victory awaits] us at Raqqā, Rāfiqā, and Bālis, in which their necks will pile up, ...	v. 32	وَيَوْمَ لَنَا فِي الرَّقَّتَيْنِ وَبَالِسِ يَكُونُ لَهُمْ فِيهَا امْتِجَاعُ التَّلَائِلِ
when they gather from each woodland and come forth in haste from the opposite bank of the Euphrates.	v. 34	إِذَا أَجْمَعُوا مِنْ كُلِّ غَابٍ وَأَقْبَلُوا عَلَى الْفُورِ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْفُرَاتِ الْمُقَابِلِ
I remembered Ḥusayn, my eyes filled with tears and I said: I shall not forget my forbears!	v. 35	ذَكَرْتُ حُسَيْنًا فَاسْتَهَلَّتْ مَدَامِعِي وَقُلْتُ فَإِنِّي لَسْتُ أَنْسَى أَوَائِلِي
I will kill each leader and follower among [the oppressors], I will leave them all prostrated among the fallen rocks.	v. 36	سَأَقْتُلُ مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ رَأْسٍ وَتَابِعٍ وَأَتْرَكُهُمْ صَرَعى بِمُلْقَى الْجَنَادِلِ
My cavalry will night-march beyond the Nile, seeking the enemies of religion, until it rests in [far away] Kabul.	v. 37	وَتَسْرِي خِيُولِي مِنْ وَرَا النَّيْلِ تَبْتَغِي عَدَى الدِّينِ حَتَّى تَسْتَقَرَّ بِكَابُلِ
If I were to categorize all my battles, my explanation would be long, as would my epistles.	v. 38	وَلَوْ أَنَّنِي صَنَّفْتُ كُلَّ وَقَائِعِي لَطَالَ بِهَا شَرْحِي وَطَالَتْ رِسَائِلِي

O how many [will lie] prostrated among the rocks in Damascus; how many bereaved mourners, clusters of widows,	v. 39	وكم بدمشق من صريع مجندل ومن تاكل بك وجمع ارامل
in Ḥimṣ and Salamiyya, and the frontier towns, and those living in them, up to the mountains of Armenia, and the inhabitants of the frontier forts.	v. 40	وحمص وسلم والتغور ومن بها إلى نجد أرمين وأهل المعقل
Like a battle day in Egypt, [so grave that] “its child is not summoned” [to participate], ³⁵ when my cavalry hastens, and my troops come forth.	v. 41	كيوم بمصر لا يُنادى وليده إذا أزمعت خيلي وجاءت جافلي

Qā'im then closed the poem by making a statement about his intention to give security to all who came peacefully and to strike all those who would fight him (v. 43):

Whosoever makes peace with me moves in safety, but the one who fights will be a target in all arenas.	v. 43	فمن كان في سلمِي ففي الأمن سادر ومرمى المعادي في جميع المقاتل
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As we have seen in these poems, Qā'im consistently referred to the continuity of the imamate and the genealogy of the Fatimid imam. Doctrinal treatises of the dynasty provide further details of the cyclical conception of Fatimid religio-political ideology,³⁶ and of the inevitable arrival of God's aid for his vicegerent on earth at the right time, that Qā'im's poetry (and the poetry of our later poets) was grounded in. Conceiving of the imam as the only true salvation guide for the entire world, the authors of these works claimed that he was also its sole rightful political leader. The imamate continued in an unbroken chain from the primordial imam, father appointing son, and Muḥammad and 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib were in his line. Cosmic cycles of time were rooted largely in the manifestation or concealment of the Imam of the Age, but whether he was manifest among the people or concealed, he was the link between God and humans, his physical existence was necessary, and he was the possessor of God's trusteeship, the true caliph-imam.

Other Shi'a dynasties in the tenth and eleventh centuries C.E., such as the Hamdanids and Buyids, acknowledged the supremacy of a Sunnī caliph, but the Fatimids rejected the claims of the Abbasids, and declared themselves

the only rightful incumbents of the leadership of the Islamic world. Indeed, Qā'im himself was offered suzerainty over northern Egypt by the Abbasid commander Mu'nis if he would accept the overlordship of Baghdad — Qā'im refused in a biting letter asserting his own superior claim to the Islamic caliphate.³⁷ The Fatimids claimed to be the inheritors of the spiritual and temporal authority of their forefathers Muḥammad and 'Alī. With this mandate, declared their poets, the Fatimids would defeat the Abbasid usurpers and restore the true leadership of Islam, first in the lands of the central Islamic empire, then beyond in the frontier lands of the Byzantines as well as India and Sind, and finally in “the eastern and western lands of the earth.”

Qā'im's verse is our weightiest source of information about Fatimid hegemonic aspirations. Not only does it form the largest set of poems from this earliest period of their rule, but being from the pen of the imam-to-be, it constitutes the most direct record of how the Fatimid leadership — indeed, the Fatimid caliph-imams themselves — conceived of their messianic role.

Preserving the Empire from the Onslaught of the Khārijite Rebel “*Dajjāl*” during the Reigns of al-Qā'im bi-Amr Allāh (r. 322-334/934-946) and al-Manṣūr bi-L-lāh (r. 334-342/946-953): Sermons by the Caliph-Imam al-Manṣūr bi-L-lāh

In 322/934, six years after Qā'im composed his *lāmiyya*, Maḥdī died and Qā'im succeeded to the caliphate-imamate. In contrast to his earlier public role as the supreme military commander who consolidated the West for the Fatimids and began the push eastward, Qā'im remained during his entire twelve-year caliphate in complete seclusion in the palace city of Maḥdiyya. Also, he composed no more poems, or at least none that have come down to us.

Towards the end of Qā'im's reign began the tumultuous four-year rebellion of the Khārijite Berbers, led by Abū Yazīd Makhḥad b. Kayḍād — the “*Dajjāl*” (The Great Deceiver or The Antichrist), as he is known in Fatimid sources — which almost overthrew the Fatimid caliphate. Qā'im sent his son and successor al-Manṣūr bi-L-lāh (whom he appointed publicly at that time)³⁸ into the battlefield against the rebels. He himself died soon thereafter, and Manṣūr concealed his father's death for reasons of political prescience. After a campaign that lasted for two hard years, Manṣūr defeated the *Dajjāl* in 336/947. Upon the captured rebel's death a few days later, he made known to the people his father's demise and proclaimed his own caliphate.

While in pursuit of the *Dajjāl*, Manṣūr had composed and sent two poignant poems to his son and successor Mu'izz, in which he detailed the physical hardships he faced on the battle trail, and emphasized his willingness to endure them for God; but these poems contained no larger aspirations of

hegemony.³⁹ Similarly, none of the many poems in praise of Manṣūr composed by the eminent *dā'ī* Ja'far b. Manṣūr al-Yaman, who was present during the campaign, revealed such hopes.⁴⁰ The lacuna probably derives from the focus of Fatimid attention inward in those two years on the preservation and defense of the *da'wa* and state. During this period of civil unrest, the goal of further expansion was on hold; it had to be, for the heart of the empire was under attack.

However, at one point during the campaign in Muḥarram 335/946, when Manṣūr won a significant victory over the Dajjāl's forces and evicted the rebel from the important town of Qayrawān, he reminded the people that Fatimid imperial desires were still very much alive. Farhat Dachraoui argues that unlike Maḥdī and Qā'im, who thought of themselves as Easterners, Manṣūr and Mu'izz (until the very end of his caliphate), being born and bred in the West, had no aspirations to the East.⁴¹ But Manṣūr's sermons and letters (and those of Mu'izz, as we shall see) provide evidence to the contrary. This was not a personal identification. It was a dynastic ideology. In a public victory epistle addressed ostensibly to (the deceased) Qā'im, Manṣūr wrote that God had strengthened the religion of Qā'im's forebear, the Prophet Muḥammad (in contrast to Manṣūr's earlier private poems, the aspirational verbiage of this epistle undoubtedly had a propaganda context, as the missive was "to be read out on the pulpit"):⁴² "Today," he wrote, "the eastern and western lands of the earth have been conquered!"⁴³ We can read from this line that the Dajjāl was the major impediment to the Fatimid imperial mission; once he had been removed, they could get back to their larger plans and move on eastward. Almost a year later, on the occasion of *ʿId al-Aḍḥā* in 335/947, during what was to be the final siege of the Dajjāl in the Kiyāna mountains, Manṣūr preached a sermon in which he again spoke publicly of wider ambitions for dominion. In the ending prayer segment, Manṣūr supplicated: "May God accept my [good deeds] and yours. May He decree for me and for you [performance of] the pilgrimage to His Holy House, an arrival at His great meeting places and His noble stations, by strengthening our aid, bringing our affair to completion, and fulfilling His earlier pledge to us. Verily, He does not break [His] pledge, and what He intends does not elude Him." *تقبل الله منا ومنكم، وكتب لنا ولكم حج بيته*. "بإعزاز نصرنا وتمام الحرام، والوصول إلى مشاهده العظام ومواقفه الكرام، بإعزاز نصرنا وتمام الأمرنا وإنجاز متقدم وعده لنا، إنه لا يخلف الميعاد ولا يعجزه ما أراد".⁴⁴ The juxtaposition of the two entreaties (the plea for an opportunity to perform *hajj* alongside the plea for God to fulfill His pledge) makes clear that this was not just an appeal for the opportunity to fulfill the religious obligation of the pilgrimage. It was certainly that, but in addition it was also a prayer for political and military control over the sacred cities. This interpretation is further borne out by Manṣūr's words to an eminent North African Ismā'īlī

judge on this same day. The Mamluk historian Ibn Zāfir reports that the qāḍī Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Marwarūdhī told him the following: “I recited to [Manṣūr] some verses in which I encouraged him to take the pledge for his son Muʿizz. [Manṣūr] replied: ‘Indeed, I hope that prayers will be invoked for [Muʿizz] upon the pulpits of Mecca and Medina, and elsewhere, in addition to these places [in North Africa].’ And that came to pass.” وَأَنْشَدْتُهُ ابْنِيَّاتًا أَحْصَاهُ عَلَيَّ أَخَذَ الْعَهْدَ لَوْلَاهُ الْمُعْزُ فَقَالَ: إِنِّي لِأَرْجُو أَنْ (يُدْعَى لَهُ عَلَى مَنَابِرِ مَكَّةَ وَالْمَدِينَةِ وَغَيْرِهِمَا فَضْلًا عَنْ هَذِهِ الْمَوَاضِعِ، فَكَانَ كَذَلِكَ)⁴⁵ Manṣūr did not mention the Abbasids or Baghdad directly, but his prayers and hopes for control of Mecca and Medina were an explicit articulation of hopes for dominion over the heartlands of the Islamic empire.

The Conquest of Egypt and Hegemony over Syro-Palestine and the Ḥijāz during the Reign of al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh (r. 342-365/953-975): Poems by the Court Poet Ibn Hānīʿ al-Andalusī

Manṣūr died in 342/953. In the first *ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā* sermon his son and successor al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh delivered after his father’s death, he too prayed for the opportunity for *hajj*, spelling out clearly the connection between such a plea and aspirations of dominion. Praying that he reach the holy places “with his banners”, he asked God (just as Qāʾim and Manṣūr had) to fulfill His pledge to his forefathers promising such a victory:

O my God, help me with your victory-giving aid. Grant me success over your enemies, revivifying religion and giving might to the creed of Muḥammad, chief of the messengers. Give us the opportunity to visit his grave, to ascend his pulpit, to reside in his abode, to undertake the *hajj* to your Sacred House, to stand in those noble places with our banners, having renewed our might and the might of our followers — at a time when you have helped us and them with your victory-giving aid, honored us with triumph, given us victory over the party of oppressors, and humbled for us the necks of the disobedient rebels. A pledge came forth from you of old to [our] forebears and progenitors — and your pledge will never be broken, your command never turned away. But let us accept and submit to what you decree, [whether you] advance or postpone [our victory].⁴⁶

For the first seventeen years of Muʿizz’s reign, Fatimid fleets and cavalry consolidated the dynasty’s authority in North Africa and the Mediterranean. They were led by his Slavic general al-Qāʾid Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī. During Jawhar’s western campaign in 347/958 or 348/959, the eminent Andalusian

panegyrist Muḥammad b. Hānī' first made contact with the Fatimids.⁴⁷

Ibn Hānī' sent one of his earliest praise poems of Mu'izz to the caliph-imam in 351/962 or thereabouts, the year the Byzantines raided Aleppo, Antioch, and other frontier towns, then controlled by the Abbasids. From the very beginning of his acquaintance with the Fatimids, this professional poet got right to the heart of their larger political agenda. He declared that Syria was overrun and every place not under Mu'izz's protection was embattled (vv. 32-35), but that very soon, even in distant Armenia, the cross would relinquish its control (v. 55). The clear implication was that the Abbasids (and their Hamdanid vassals) just weren't up to the job; the Fatimids were needed to protect Islam and its domains. In sarcastic derision of both the Byzantines and the Abbasids, Ibn Hānī' addressed Mu'izz thus:⁴⁸

I have not seen a visitor of enemies like your sword — Is there greeting and welcome among Byzantine skulls? ...	v. 24	وَلَمْ أَرْ زَوَّارًا كَسِيفِكَ لِلْعَدَى فَهَلْ عِنْدَ هَامِ الرُّومِ أَهْلٌ وَتَرْحِيبُ
Perhaps what lures the [Armenian Church Patriarch] Catholicos to Aleppo is the [easy] booty to be looted there,	v. 32	وَلَكِنْ لَعَلَّ الْجَائِلِقَ يَغْرُهُ عَلَى حَلَبٍ نَهَبَ هُنَالِكَ مَنُهَوَّبُ
a frontier town on the borders of Syria laid waste, the discord of views [of its Abbasid commanders], infirm anyway, and [its] rampant destruction. ...	v. 33	وَنَعَرَ بِأَطْرَافِ الشَّامِ مُضَيِّعٌ وَتَفْرِيقُ أَهْوَاءِ مَرَاضٍ وَتَخْرِيبُ
The darkness [engulfing] the Straight Religion will be removed by pavilions of sun, set up over land and sea ...	v. 53	سَيَجْلُو دُجَى الدِّينِ الْحَنِيفِ سَرَادِقُ مِنَ الشَّمْسِ فَوْقَ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ مَضْرُوبُ
Armenia and her inhabitants will be surrendered by the cross, established [there] to corrupt the Armenians.	v. 55	وَيُسْلَمُ أَرْمِينِيَّةٌ وَذَوَاتُهَا صَلِيبٌ لِفَسْخِ الْأَرْمِينِ مَنْصُوبُ

About two years later in 353/964, the Fatimids achieved a naval victory over the Byzantines closer to home in Sicily. Ibn Hānī', who had joined Mu'izz's personal entourage that same year, composed another poem in which he stated that Syria could wipe away her tears (the ones she had shed over the recent

Byzantine attacks upon her soil). He again prophesized Fatimid victory over her frontier towns, saying these would go as far as Armenia (vv. 53-56).⁴⁹

The land [of Sicily] which the [Byzantine High Commander] Domestikos tried to attack, [was protected by] a sword drawn for God's cause.	v. 53	إِن التِّي رَام الدُّمُسْتُقُ حَرْبَهَا لِلَّهِ فِيهَا صَارِمٌ مَسْلُوكٌ
Its earth is not Aleppo, its courtyards not Egypt, [its] waterways not the Nile.	v. 54	لَا أَرْضُهَا حَلَبٌ وَلَا سَاحَاتُهَا مِصْرٌ وَلَا عُرْضُ الْخَلِيجِ النَّيْلُ
Would that [the Byzantine Emperor] Heraclius had appeared there [and stayed] till the end, [to see] the Domestikos [covered in] humiliation and abasement.	v. 55	لَيْتَ الْهَرَقْلَ بَدَا بِهَا حَتَّى انْقَضَى وَعَلَى الدَّمَسْتَقِ ذِلَّةٌ وَخُمُولٌ
That which [the Fatimid forces] have thrown upon them [in Sicily] is the chest, but it [also] has a neck in the land of the Armenians!	v. 56	تِلْكَ الَّتِي أَلْقَيْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ كَلَكَلًا وَلَهَا بِأَرْضِ الْأَرْمَنِينَ تَلِيلٌ

Sometime before 358/969, a few years later when the Fatimids were planning their next campaign to conquer Egypt, Ibn Hānī' addressed the Abbasids saying that the time to return the usurped caliphate had come (v. 9). He claimed that the Egyptians, or perhaps Egypt herself, embraced "longings for the coming of [the Fatimids]." The following are some verses from this looking-to-Egypt poem:⁵⁰

So say to the Abbasids, return that which [you] have usurped! The time to return that which was usurped has come ...	v. 9	فَقُلْ لِبَنِي الْعَبَّاسِ رُدُّوا مَظَالِمًا فَقَدْ آنَ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ تُرَدَّ الْمَظَالِمُ
O sons of the shining state [i.e., the Fatimids], look to your swords — for them I predict the Iraqi kingdom ...	v. 25	بَنِي الدَّوْلَةِ الْغَرَاءِ شَبِّمُوا سُيُوفَكُمْ فَإِنِّي لَهَا الْمُلْكُ الْعِرَاقِي شَائِمٌ

In Egypt, there are longings towards you, and long have you been parted — alas for a beloved who is parted!	v. 37	بمصرِ صَبَابَاتٍ إِلَيْكَ وَطَالَمَا صَرَمْتَ وَلَهْفِي مِنْ حَبِيبٍ يُصَارِمُ
Quench her thirst with your armies, for indeed, she is the forsaken heart, and they are the brave lions [i.e., lovers]!	v. 38	فَرَوْ صَدَاهَا مِنْ جُبُوشِكَ إِنَّمَا هِيَ الْقَلْبُ مَهْجُورًا وَهُنَّ الصَّرَاغِمُ

In 358/969, the desired moment arrived, and the Fatimids began their final, successful push into Egypt, with Mu‘izz appointing Jawhar to lead an army east to Alexandria and Fustāt. Upon this occasion, Ibn Hānī’ composed a long poem describing the Fatimid army and acclaiming Mu‘izz’s honoring of Jawhar. The poem has a famous opening line: “I beheld with my eye [a sight] far beyond what I had heard” (رَأَيْتُ بَعِينِي فَوْقَ مَا كُنْتُ أَسْمَعُ). Anticipating Fatimid victories in the region, Ibn Hānī’ declared that “two Iraqs” were in panic, Baghdad (referred to here with irony by its descriptive title “The Abode of Peace”) was all a dither, and Palestine (and within it Ramla) had indicated submission; that in fact, this campaign had opened up the entire East for the Fatimids, up to the far limits of Khurasan:⁵¹

The earth of the two Iraqs felt fear such that “The Abode of Peace” (Baghdad) almost shook with it.	v. 68	وَقَدْ أَشْعَرَتْ أَرْضُ الْعِرَاقَيْنِ خِيفَةً تَكَادُ لَهَا دَارُ السَّلَامِ تَضَعُضُ
Palestine gave over her reins, as did her inhabitants, no area within her boundaries remained defended.	v. 69	وَأَعْطَتْ فَلَسْطِينَ الْقِيَادَ وَأَهْلُهَا فَلَمْ يَبْقَ مِنْهَا جَانِبٌ يَتَمَنَّعُ
Ramla the well-protected is not the first land that finds no escape from you ...	v. 70	وَمَا الرَّمْلَةُ الْمَقْصُورَةُ الْخَطْوِ وَحْدَهَا بِأَوَّلِ أَرْضٍ مَا لَهَا عَنْكَ مَفْزَعُ
You (Jawhar) journeyed to Fustāt in the most auspicious journey with the most auspicious augury for the [battle for] which you had gathered [goodly forces].	v. 75	رَحَلْتُ إِلَى فُسْطَاطٍ أَيْمَنَ رِحْلَةٍ بِأَيْمَنِ قَالَ فِي الَّذِي أَنْتَ مُجْمِعُ
When you spurred on the army, there shone forth for its soldiers a road to the far end of Khurasan, wide and clear.	v. 76	وَلَمَّا حَثَّتِ الْجَيْشَ لَاحَ لِأَهْلِهِ طَرِيقٌ إِلَى أَقْصَى خُرَاسَانَ مَهْيَعُ

In all these early praise poems, Ibn Hānī' grounded his themes of conquest in the larger Islamo-Arabic political and literary panegyric traditions. Other than the "returning of usurped territories" (v. 9 in the "looking-to-Egypt" poem), there is little specific Fatimid ideology evident. Rather, we see in these poems traditional themes of courage, strength, and auspicious auguries, and a conventional melding of love and war imagery.

Mu'izz's vast army led by Jawhar deposed Egypt's Ikhshīdīd rulers in the same year (358/969) easily and largely without the use of force. Jawhar took control of Egypt and began building a new first city for his master near Fustāt. Four years later, in 362/973, Mu'izz left the Zīrid princes in charge of North Africa and, accompanied by his books, his family, and the coffins of the first three Fatimid caliph-imams, moved to his new capital of Cairo: in Arabic, al-Mu'izziyya al-Qāhira, "The Victorious City of Mu'izz", a name clearly deriving from the Fatimids' imperial aspirations.

Ibn Hānī' composed a poem upon the conquest of Egypt which is perhaps his most famous. Offering felicitations to the caliph-imam, the poet predicted the follow-up conquest of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Contrary to his earlier poems, he proffered for these prophecies a clearly ideological context. Using theological allusions to praise the Imam as the descendent of the Prophet, he explicitly predicted the conquest of Baghdad. Declaiming in one of the strongest opening lines in Arabic poetry, Ibn Hānī' mocked the Abbasids, and their being taken completely unawares by the Fatimid victory, thus:⁵²

The Abbasids say: "Has Egypt been conquered?" Say to the Abbasids: "Your kingdom is finished!"	v. 1	تَقُولُ ⁵³ بَنُو الْعَبَّاسِ هَلْ فُتِحَتْ مِصْرُ قُلْ لِبَنِي الْعَبَّاسِ قَدْ قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ
Jawhar has confronted Alexandria, Glad tidings 'confront' him, and victorious aid comes to him ...	v. 2	وَقَدْ طَالَعَ الْإِسْكََنْدَرِيَّةَ جَوْهَرٌ تُطَالِعُهُ الْبُشْرَى وَيَقْدُمُهُ النَّصْرُ

About fifty verses of praise later, Ibn Hānī' declared that the [promised] time had drawn near. Waxing ideologically lyrical, he asserted that the fragrance of the imam who was the descendent of the builder of the House perfumed the precincts of the Ka'ba, so it was unsurprising that the House itself yearned for him (vv. 58-60). Referring to the official colors of the Fatimid and Abbasid states, white and black respectively, he stated, "If you come to it, the covers of [the Ka'ba] will be removed, and its dusky sites will shine white." In a more traditional frame, he declared that the imam's dealings with Egypt were so virtuous that Baghdad wished it could be Egypt (v. 72).

Give glad tidings to the Honored House [i.e., the Ka‘ba] of [the Imam’s] imminent coming [at the next <i>hajj</i> season] when enthusiastic circumambulation and <i>nafr</i> (departure from Minā to Mecca at the end of the pilgrimage) takes place.	v. 53	فَبَشِّرْ بِهِ الْبَيْتَ الْمُعَظَّمُ عَاجِلًا إِذَا أُوجِفَ التَّطَوُّافُ بِالنَّاسِ وَالنَّفَرُ
Lo! It is as though he has already visited it, and Tayba (Medina) and Surr (in the Hijāz) have broken away from the kingly palaces [of the Abbasids].	v. 54	وَهَا فَكَأَنَّ قَدْ زَارَهُ وَتَجَانَفَتْ بِهِ عَنِ قُصُورِ الْمُلْكِ طَيِّبَةُ وَالسُّرُّ
Is the House, the House of God, anything but his sanctuary? Can the one exiled from [his] abode bear to be away from his abode?	v. 55	هَلِ الْبَيْتُ بَيْتُ اللَّهِ إِلَّا حَرِيمُهُ وَهَلْ لِّغَرِيبِ الدَّارِ عَنْ دَارِهِ صَبْرُ
His first stopping places are the ones which long for him — He cannot endure falling short of or being restricted from them!	v. 56	مَنَازِلُهُ الْأُولَى اللَّوَاتِي يَشْفُقُهُ فَلَيْسَ لَهُ عَنْهُنَّ مَعْدَى وَلَا قَصْرُ
They are the places where his grandfather obtained grace, whence came to [Muḥammad] the words of God, and the secret and manifest.	v. 57	وَحَيْثُ تَلَقَّى جَدُّهُ الْقُدْسَ وَانْتَحَتْ لَهُ كَلِمَاتُ اللَّهِ وَالسُّرُّ وَالْجَهْرُ
If the House wishes for [the imam’s arrival], indeed, its time has drawn nigh, and “after hardship comes ease.” [Q 94:5-6]	v. 58	فَإِنْ يَتَمَنَّ الْبَيْتُ تِلْكَ فَقَدْ دَنَتْ مَوَاقِبُهَا وَالْعُسْرُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ يُسْرُ
If it yearns with longing for you, verily [that is because], its atmosphere is perfumed from your sweet fragrance.	v. 59	وَإِنْ حَنَّ مِنْ شَوْقٍ إِلَيْكَ فَإِنَّهُ لَيُوجِدُ مِنْ رِيَاكَ فِي جَوْهِ نَشْرُ
Are you not the son of its builder? If you come to it, its covers will be removed, and its dusky sites will shine white.	v. 60	أَلَسْتَ ابْنُ بَانِيهِ فَلَوْ جَنَّتْهُ انْجَلَتْ عَوَاشِيهِ وَابْيَضَّتْ مَنَاسِكُهُ الْعُبْرُ

The vale of Mecca would adore a season in which Mecca and [its holy site of the] Hījr greet Ma‘add [Mu‘izz] ...	v. 61	حَبِيبٌ إِلَى بَطْحَاءِ مَكَّةَ مُوسِمٌ نُحْيِي مَعْدًا فِيهِ مَكَّةُ وَالْحِجْرُ
It is as though I see him — having dealt with the [Egyptians so virtuously] that Baghdad wishes it could be Egypt!	v. 72	كَأَنِّي بِهِ قَدْ سَارَ فِي الْقَوْمِ سِيرَةً تَوَدُّ لَهُ بَغْدَادُ لَوْ أَنَّهَا مِصْرُ

Congratulatory odes offered to Mu‘izz on the same occasion by poets less connected with the *da‘wa* also touched briefly upon the major themes of Fatimid conquest ideology, but without contextualizing them in wider Fatimid theology, and not as fully as Ibn Hānī’ in his congratulatory *rā’iyya* cited above. A poet named ‘Alī b. ‘Abdallāh al-Tūnisī referred to God’s pledge, but he did not anticipate the conquest of Baghdad, which, as a reference to mahdist-based expansionist ideas, would have been particularly apropos at this moment of Fatimid triumph.⁵⁴ The Twelver Shi‘ite poet ‘Abdallāh b. al-Ḥasan al-Ja‘farī al-Samarqandī offered in his poem of felicitation the most detailed explanation of any Fatimid poet for the implication of the Abbasids in Ḥusayn’s blood by accusing them harshly, “you spilt the very blood [of the Prophet’s kin] for which you sought vengeance [from the Umayyads]”, and by threatening, “You must be made to drink from the same cup you made the [Prophet’s family] drink from.” Samarqandī also mentioned the Imam’s justice, a mahdist idea. But, like Tūnisī, he did not touch upon world hegemonic aspirations.⁵⁵

Ideological influence on Ibn Hānī’’s later poetry can also be noticed in a *khā’iyya* in which he mentions a future Fatimid move to conquer India and Sind. The poem is not definitively dateable, but looking mainly to Baghdad, it could be from about the time of the Egyptian conquest. Even though South Asian lands were distant from the central Islamic heartlands, the Fatimid *da‘wa* was active there; Nu‘mān tells us that Manṣūr al-Yaman *dā‘ī* Abū l-Qāsim had sent *dā‘īs* before the Maghribī appearance of Mahdī to “Hind (India) and Sind.”⁵⁶ Afterwards, Mustanṣir would also send *dā‘īs* there, again through the conduit of the Yemeni *da‘wa*. Being religio-political activists, these *dā‘īs* aspired to convert the people of those territories, and eventually also to gain political dominion. Ibn Hānī’ declared in his poem that the kings of India and Sind lay sleepless in fearful anticipation of Fatimid armies.⁵⁷

In the binding of the turban-crown [upon your head], what you are going to achieve is evident, and possession of East and West is written.	v. 52	مُبِينٌ بَعْدَ التَّاجِ مَا أَنْتَ بَالِغٌ وَمِيقَاتُ مُلْكِ الْخَافِقِينَ الْمُؤَرَّخُ
Where is the fortress that would try to block you, when your cavalry waters in the muddy waters of [the Baghdadi neighborhood of] Karkh?!	v. 53	وَأَيْنَ بَثْغٍ عَنْكَ يُبْغِي سِدَادَهُ وَخَيْلِكَ فِي طَلْحِيَّةِ الْكَرْخِ تُكْرَخُ
Indian kings and Sindi ones have been tested by nights that left the elephant [which formed an important component of the Indian armies] lowing like a young camel.	v. 54	وَقَدْ عَجَمَتْ هَذِهِ الْمُلُوكُ وَسِنْدُهَا لَيَالٍ تَرَكْنَ الْفِيلَ كَالْبَكْرِ يَقْلُخُ

In 359/970, a year after the Fatimid conquest of Egypt, when Mu'izz (and Ibn Hānī') were still in North Africa, it was feared that Mecca and Medina would be overrun by the Byzantines. In his most ideologically rooted aspirational poem yet, Ibn Hānī' encouraged Mu'izz to leave Egypt in Jawhar's hands and proceed in all haste to Iraq; presumably the Abbasids did not have the strength to protect the holy places (v. 39), and Mu'izz should now assume this role.⁵⁸

So onward to Iraq, and leave Egypt to him whom you sent there earlier [Jawhar], for this, the kingdom of Egypt, has already become pure.	v. 39	فَإِلَى الْعِرَاقِ وَذَرِ لِمَنْ قَدَّمَتهُ مِصْرًا فَهَذَا مُلْكُ مِصْرِ قَدْ صَفَا
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Addressing the caliph-imam as the descendent of the Prophet who had walked the streets of Mecca (v. 42), Ibn Hānī' predicted victories for him in the Ḥijāz, using the religious symbols of the Prophet's mantle (v. 45) and 'Alī's sword Dhū l-Faqār (v. 46). He claimed that the planks of the Prophet's pulpit would rejoice with Mu'izz's coming (v. 47). Alluding to the *ḥadīth* in which Muḥammad had stated that between his grave and his pulpit was a Paradisiacal flowerbed (*rawḍa*), Ibn Hānī' predicted that soon the Flowerbed (the imam himself, according to Fatimid esoterics) would return to its original freshness (v. 48). He further declared that the sites of the *ḥajj* rituals — Marwa, Ṣafā, Ḥijr, and Rukn — all yearned for the imam's coming (vv. 50-51):

It is as though I see [your] army, by [whose multitudes] the land of the Hijāz has become straitened, advancing slowly in the pilgrimage seasons.	v. 41	فَكَأَنَّنِي بِالْجَيْشِ قَدْ ضَاقَتْ بِهِ أَرْضُ الْحِجَازِ وَالْمَوَاسِمِ دُلْفًا
And I see you, O son of the one who walked the [Meccan] vales, become the rain cloud for the drought stricken and the seeker [of water]. ...	v. 42	وَبِكَ ابْنِ مُسْنَنٍ الْأَبَاطِحِ عَاجِلًا قَدْ صِرْتَ غَيْثٌ مَنِ اجْتَدَى وَمَنِ اعْتَقَى
[I see you] visiting the grave of your father, the grave of Muḥammad, surrounded by God's sublime angels;	v. 44	وَأَزْدَرْتَ قَبْرَ أَبِيكَ قَبْرَ مُحَمَّدٍ بِمَلَائِكَةِ اللَّهِ الْعُلَى مُتَكَنِّفًا
climbing onto the [pulpit] that he climbed, standing in the place where he stood, in a mantle, shedding copious tears [of joy];	v. 45	وَرَفِيتَ مَرْقَاهُ وَقُمْتَ مَقَامَهُ فِي بُرْدَةٍ تُذْرِي الدُّمُوعَ الذُّرْفَا
girding two swords, God's sword of victorious aid, and your own sword, the finely honed Dhū l-Faqār;	v. 46	مُتَقَلِّدًا سَيْفَيْنِ سَيْفِ اللَّهِ مِنْ نَصْرِ وَسَيْفِكَ ذَا الْفَقَارِ الْمُرْهَفَا
so that the planks of [Muḥammad's] pulpit cool [their eyes in happiness] under you, and cease their grief and agony;	v. 47	لِيَقْرَ تَحْتَكَ عُودُ مِنْبَرِهِ الَّذِي لَا يَسْتَقِرُّ تَحَسُّرًا وَتَلْهُفًا
and you return his Flowerbed (<i>rawḍa</i>) to its first appearance, being [fresher] in it than plants.	v. 48	وَتُعِيدُ رَوْضَتَهُ كَأَوَّلِ عَهْدِهَا مُتَفَوِّقًا فِيهَا النَّبَاتِ تَفَوُّقًا
I see myself reciting [the liturgical responses of the <i>ḥajj</i>], and walking gently in the alleys of Mecca and Ṣafā.	v. 49	وَكَأَنَّنِي بِي قَدْ هَزَجْتُ مُلَبِّيًا وَهَدَجْتُ بَيْنَ شِعَابِ مَكَّةَ وَالصَّفَا
I see the banner of your victory waving, hovering and fluttering between Ṣafā and Marwa,	v. 50	وَكَأَنَّنِي بِلَوَاءِ نَصْرِكَ خَافِقًا قَدْ حَامَ بَيْنَ الْمَرْوَتَيْنِ وَرَفْرَفَا

and the Hġjr leaning forward to see you in longing, and the Rukn, tremblingly bending to look at you.	v. 51	وَالْحِجْرُ مُطَّلِعًا إِلَيْكَ تَشَوُّقًا وَالرُّكْنُ مُهْتَزًّا إِلَيْكَ تَشَوُّقًا
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Most importantly from an ideological point of view, Ibn Hānī' again affirmed that God's pledge would be fulfilled, couching this affirmation in his wish to see himself preaching a sermon for the Fatimids in Mecca and Baghdad (vv. 52-56):

[I see] myself asking the Lord of the House, in [the name] of his Prophet's son, having taken you as the [intercessor] who brings me close to Him, thus being brought close. ...	v. 52	وَسَأَلْتُ رَبَّ الْبَيْتِ بِابْنِ نَبِيِّهِ وَجَعَلْتُكَ الزُّلْفَى إِلَيْهِ فَأُزْلِفَا
Preaching in front of the people an authoritative sermon praising you — while the pledge of your Lord has been fulfilled! —	v. 56	وَحَطَبْتُ قَبْلَ الْقَوْمِ خُطْبَةً فَيَصِلُ أُتْنِي عَلَيْكَ وَوَعْدُ رَبِّكَ قَدْ وَفَى
having preached in Zawrā' [Baghdad] another like it, having stood this very standing before you [there]!	v. 57	وَحَطَبْتُ بِالزَّوْرَاءِ أُخْرَى مِثْلَهَا وَوَقَفْتُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْكَ هَذَا الْمَوْقِفَا

In 360/971, Ibn Hānī' composed a poem in praise of Mu'izz in which he expressed happiness over the fact that the Fatimid caliph-imam had conquered Egypt and Syria all the way to Aleppo, and predicted that his cavalry would soon drink from the Euphrates in Iraq (vv. 46-48). He reiterated his earlier statement that Mecca was calling out to the imam to come perform the *hajj* (v. 63).⁵⁹

[You are the] one who subdued the East and the West in their vastness, including all residing in them, king or hero.	v. 46	مَنْ صَغَرَ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ الْعَظِيمَيْنِ إِلَى مَنْ فِيهِمَا مِنْ مَلِكِ الْأَمْرِ أَوْ بَطَلِ
[Who] covered the earth from Egypt to Syria In cavalry and infantry, and wrapped up plains in mountains.	v. 47	وَطَبَّقَ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ مِصْرٍ إِلَى حَلَبِ خَيْلًا وَرَجُلًا وَلَفَّ السَّهْلَ بِالْجَبَلِ

Whose cavalry watered at the Euphrates, not leaving until they had drunk fully and become satiated. ...	v. 48	وَأُورِدْتُ خَيْلُهُ مَاءَ الْفُرَاتِ فَمَا صَدَرْنَ حَتَّى وَصَلْنَ الْعُلَّ بِالنَّهْلِ
Freed from the business of warfare, you can now perform the <i>hajj</i> . If you were to ask Mecca, she would say “Come here!” So go!	v. 63	فَرَعَتْ لِلْحَجِّ مِنْ شُغْلِ الْهَيَاجِ فَلَوْ سَأَلَتْ مَكَّةَ قَالَتْ هَيْتَ فَارْتَحِلْ

Two years later in 362/973, when Mu‘izz had moved or was moving to Cairo, Ibn Hānī’ wrote a long 202-verse poem in his praise which is particularly interesting for its declaration that blood revenge for Ḥusayn would soon be achieved (picking up on Qā’im’s earlier threats in the same vein), for although Ḥusayn had been killed, his *waliyy al-dam*, Mu‘izz, was alive (v. 137). In these verses, the moral equivalence that Ibn Hānī’ assumed between the Umayyads and the Abbasids as perpetrators of these crimes becomes clear, for while he made Yazīd responsible for the battle of Karbala (v. 132), while he warned Marwanid women of impending widowhood (v. 130) and cited Umayyads as the killers (v. 146), he subordinated this entire Umayyad-naming section to earlier verses threatening the Abbasids in Iraq of imminent ruination at Fatimid hands (v. 123 ff.).⁶⁰

[Swords are rising in wrath to protect] the kingdom [of Islam] in Baghdad, for its throne has been turned over to an arm (<i>‘aḍud</i> = ‘Aḍud al-Dawla, the Buyid sultan) without a palm or a wrist. ...	v. 123	وَالْمُلْكُ فِي بَغْدَادَ إِذِ رُدَّ عَرْشُهُ إِلَى عَضْدٍ فِي غَيْرِ كَفٍّ وَمِعْصَمٍ
It is as though you [O Mu‘izz] have removed doubts from [these] affair[s], no right is [now] denied or swallowed up.	v. 127	كَأَنَّ قَدْ كَشَفْتَ الْأَمْرَ عَنْ شُبُهَاتِهِ فَلَمْ يُضْطَهَدْ حَقٌّ وَلَمْ يُنْهَضَمْ
The waves of the Euphrates have run bloody — it is unlawful for one who waters at it to perform ritual ablutions rather than the <i>tayammum</i> (the substitute ablution with earth)	v. 128	وَفَاضَ دَمًا مَوْجُ الْفُرَاتِ وَلَمْ يَجْزُ لِوَارِدِهِ طَهْرٌ بَغَيْرِ تَيَمُّمٍ

May stallions not bear the cavaliers of war if you do not visit the [Abbasids] with bay and dusky horses!	v. 129	فَلَا حَمَلَتْ فُرْسَانٌ حَرْبٍ جِيَادُهَا إِذَا لَمْ تَزُرْهُمْ مِنْ كُمَيْتٍ وَأَدْهَمِ
May limpid water not run sweet for [its] drinker while there is a Marwanid woman on earth who is not widowed!	v. 130	وَلَا عَذَبَ الْمَاءُ الْقَرَاخَ لَشَارِبٍ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ مَرْوَانِيَّةٌ غَيْرُ أَيْمٍ
Lo! A Hāshimite hawk hovers over them, making the butterfly-thin bones of the skull from each bodily frame fly away,	v. 131	أَلَا إِنَّ صَقْرًا هَاشِمِيًّا أَظْلَهُمْ يُطِيرُ فَرَّاشَ الْهَامِ عَنْ كُلِّ مَجْتَمٍ
Just like the battle day of Yazīd, when the captured [Hāshimite] women were sent away in exile on rough camels with swaying sides. ...	v. 132	كَيَوْمِ يَزِيدٍ وَالسَّبَايَا طَرِيدَةً عَلَى كُلِّ مَوَارٍ الْمِلَاطِ عَنَمْتَمِ
But even if the best of Muḥammad's two grandsons (Ḥusayn) has been killed, indeed, the avenger of his blood has not been killed.	v. 137	فَإِنْ يُتَخَرَّمُ خَيْرُ سِبْطِي مُحَمَّدٍ فَإِنَّ وَلِيَّيَ الثَّارِ لَمْ يُتَخَرَّمِ
Lo! Revenge for them [note the plural — Ḥusayn and the imams in his progeny] will not be lost — and seekers of revenge from among you [O Fatimids] are not asleep.	v. 139	أَلَا إِنَّ وَتَرًا فِيهِمْ غَيْرُ ضَائِعٍ وَطُلَّابٌ وَتَرٍ مِنْكُمْ غَيْرُ نَوْمٍ

This is in all likelihood Ibn Hānī's last poem. After accompanying Mu'izz on his journey towards Cairo as far as Barqa, Ibn Hānī turned back to collect his family before proceeding to Egypt; a few days later he died.

The Tunisian historian Ibn Abī Dīnār (fl. end of 5th/11th c.) reports an interesting conversation between the Fatimid Caliph-Imam Mu'izz and a Byzantine envoy to his court in Cairo, who had earlier called on him in North Africa. In this dialogue, Mu'izz reminded the ambassador Nikūlā: "Do you remember that when you visited me in Mahdiyya I told you that you would come to me in Egypt and I would be king over her? I tell you now that you will come to me in Baghdad and I will be king over her."⁶¹ Mu'izz never achieved actual dominion over the Abbasid capital, but in his time, major steps were taken towards larger Fatimid hegemony, and as we have seen

through Ibn Hānī's poetry, his takeover of Abbasid lands was particularly successful. Shortly after the conquest of Egypt, the Fatimids made their initial thrust into Syria, and the *amīrs* of Mecca and Medina also announced fealty. During the rest of Mu'izz's reign, the *khuṭba* was pronounced for him in the two holy cities, as well as in other parts of the Ḥijāz, large parts of Syria and Palestine, and in Sicily in the Mediterranean, in addition to the large stretch of land extending from the farthest Maghrib across North Africa and Egypt to the Red Sea.

The Mu'izzī conquests, particularly the events leading up to the capture of Egypt and the immediate aftermath, are nowhere better expressed than in the verse of Mu'izz's court poet Ibn Hānī, as are the specifics of the imperialist intentions that accompanied them and gained momentum under them. I have discussed nine of these poems here, and there are many more. Ya'lāwī (who edited and analyzed Ibn Hānī's *ḏīwān*) appositely commented thus: "There is no doubt that when [Ibn Hānī] prophesizes these desired victories, he is verbalizing the opinion of the caliph and announcing [concrete] upcoming military programs. It is as though his poetry were a speaking book regarding the manifest and hidden aims of the State."⁶² However, although Ibn Hānī's themes of hegemonic desires contained allusions to Fatimid ideology, they were not steeped in it in the same manner as the poems of the Caliph-Imam al-Qā'im, or the *dā'īs* Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman and Mu'ayyad Shīrāzī, or even Prince Tamīm. Ibn Hānī was not a *dā'ī* himself, and may not have been versed in the deeper Fatimid doctrines. In declarations of impending Fatimid victories in his later poems, he did use some ideas of the imamate (he had, after all, become close to Mu'izz, perhaps even converted to the Fatimid *madhhab* and studied its doctrines). But on the whole, particularly in his earlier panegyrics, his presentation grounded itself in the commonly shared literary traditions of political panegyric from the Arabic heritage.

Widening Aspirations in the Reign of al-'Azīz bi-L-lāh (r. 365-386/ 975-996): Poems by the Royal Prince Tamīm b. al-Mu'izz

During the reign of Mu'izz's son and successor al-'Azīz bi-L-lāh, Fatimid hegemony in the territories conquered by his father stayed essentially constant. Egypt remained the seat of their empire, the Maghrib and Sicily more or less loyal, and large parts of the Ḥijāz and Yemen in acknowledgement of their suzerainty. Syria and Palestine continued to be an arena of military tussle among the Fatimids, the Abbasids, the Byzantines, and the local rulers. 'Azīz personally led armies into Syrian territories and achieved victories there.

Amīr Tamīm — eldest son of Mu'izz, brother of 'Azīz, and a distinguished poet — composed several poems praising 'Azīz. During Mu'izz's reign Tamīm had perhaps been overshadowed by Ibn Hānī, but in 'Azīz's time

he came into his own. In four panegyrics for his brother the caliph-imam, he dwelt upon Fatimid hopes for dominion, particularly the conquest of Baghdad and the two holy cities of the Hijāz.

In 368/978, Tamīm composed a 76-verse poem in *alif* congratulating ‘Azīz upon a major victory under the caliph-imam’s personal command near Ramla over the former Buyid-Abbasid commander [Aftakīn] “al-Turkī.” The poet declared that news of ‘Azīz’s triumph was “making the rounds in Baghdad driving sleep from the eyes of the heretic [Abbasids]” and “scorching the souls of the Daylamite Buyid sultans” who ruled Baghdad in their name (vv. 61-66). Let them realize — said Tamīm, like other Fatimid poets before him — that “the time had drawn nigh” and the kingdom of the Abbasids would come to a “terrible end” (v. 67).⁶³

You showed them battles that exceed [in glory] the battles of the earlier ages.	v. 61	أَرَيْنَهُمْ وَقَعَاتٍ تَزِيدُ عَلَى وَقَعَاتِ الدُّهُورِ الْأَلَى
Its report is making the rounds in Baghdad, driving sleep from the eyes of the heretics.	v. 62	بِبَغْدَادٍ مِنْ ذِكْرِهَا جَوْلَةٌ تَذُودُ عَنِ الْمَارِقِينَ الْكَرَى
The souls of her Daylam[ite sultans] spend the morning and evening [scorched] by live coals of deliberate eye-closing.	v. 63	فَأَنْفُسُ دَيْلَمِهَا تَغْدِي وَنُفُوسِي عَلَى مِثْلِ جَمْرِ الْعَضَى
When they heard of [the imminent arrival of] Imam ‘Azīz, they knew the worst [would happen] and unbinding their turbans, [stood up to run].	v. 64	إِذَا سَمِعُوا بِالْإِمَامِ الْعَزِيزِ أَسَاءُوا الظُّنُونَ وَحَلُّوا الْحَبَا
Fearing from his might a battle grinding them like the pivot of the grinding stone.	v. 65	يَخَافُونَ مِنْ بَأْسِهِ وَقَعَةً تَدُورُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِقُطْبِ الرَّحَى
Būya [progenitor of the Buyid sultans] calls out to his sons [warning them] of it — he mourns them, while he himself is pledged to putrefaction.	v. 66	يُنَادِي بُوَيْهَ بَنِيهِ بِهِ وَيَنْدُبُهُمْ وَهُوَ رَهْنُ الْبِلَى
The time has drawn nigh, so let them acknowledge an imminent decline and an evil fate.	v. 67	وَقَدْ قَرَبَ الْوَقْتُ فَلْيَأْذُنُوا بِوَشْكَ الزَّوَالِ وَسُوءِ الْقَضَا

In the next few lines (vv. 68-73), Tamīm further underscored the doctrinal rationale behind such conquest by addressing ‘Azīz as the descendant of the Prophet, the son of ‘Alī and Fāṭima, and also — in an interesting use of *ta’wīl* motifs — the “son” of the holy *hajj* sites of Ṣafā, Marwa, and the Ḥaṭīm.

Further elaborating these same motifs in a short *rā’iyya*, Tamīm celebrated the fact that “the *dā’ī*” had prayed for ‘Azīz “publicly” (*mu’linan*) in Mecca during the *hajj* season, such that the ritual was blessed for that year’s pilgrims (v. 1). The hills of Ṣafā and Marwa, and the well of Zamzam — all part of the *hajj* rites — longed for the caliph-imam to come, and the Rukn and the Ḥijr — also holy sites in the Ka’ba — plainly prayed for his well-being (vv. 2-3). Being the son of the Prophet who had brought Islam and the Qur’ān, ‘Azīz was the legitimate possessor of the lands in which the Qur’ān had been revealed and Islam had gained might (vv. 4-5).⁶⁴

The <i>dā’ī</i> prayed for you publicly at Mecca, and the <i>hajj</i> and its culmination became pleasing for the people of the holy season.	v. 1	دَعَا بِاسْمِكَ الدَّاعِي بِمَكَّةَ مُعَلِّنًا فَطَابَ لِأَهْلِ الْمَوْسِمِ الْحَجِّ وَالنَّفَرِ
Ṣafā and Marwa yearned for you, as did [the well of] Zamzam. The Rukn and the Ḥijr overtly pronounced benedictions upon you.	v. 2	وَحَنَّتْ إِلَيْكَ الْمَرَوَاتِ وَزَمَزَمٌ وَتَوَبَّ تَصْرِيحًا بِكَ الرُّكْنُ وَالْحِجْرُ
The pastures and meadows of the verses of the Qur’ān — In them, belief became apparent, and disbelief was overcome.	v. 3	مَسَارِحُ آيَاتِ الْقُرْآنِ وَأَرْبَعٌ بِهَا ظَهَرَ الْإِيمَانُ وَأَنْدَمَعَ الْكُفْرُ
A land in whose courtyards Revelation promenaded, and by [the hands of] whose inhabitants Islam was aided —	v. 4	وَأَرْضٌ غَدَا لِلْوَحْيِ بَيْنَ عِرَاصِهَا مَجَالٌ وَلِلْإِسْلَامِ فِي أَهْلِهَا نَصْرُ
You, O son of the Prophet Muḥammad, are worthier of it, if the shining proofs [are viewed].	v. 5	وَأَنْتَ بِهَا يَا أَبْنَ النَّبِيِّ مُحَمَّدٍ أَحَقُّ إِذَا مَا بَانَتِ الْحُجَجُ الزُّهْرُ

In using the term “*dā’ī*”, Tamīm could be referring to a Fatimid missionary, but in all likelihood he was alluding to the official *khaṭīb*, as the following contextualization of the poem by Idrīs in his *‘Uyūn al-akhbār* indicates (my paraphrase): “The *khuṭba* had earlier been proclaimed in Mecca

for al-Mu‘izz. In the reign of ‘Azīz, no *hajj* attendees — Abbasid princes included — were allowed to ‘challenge the ‘Azīzite [dominion] with their own.’ Indeed, ‘all official ceremonies (*marāsim*, presumably among them the *khuṭba* just referred to) were conducted, and the *hajj* took place, on this basis.’⁶⁵

In a longer poem in “I” combining *ghazal* with *fakhr*, Tamīm threatened the Abbasids that he would soon lead an army to defeat them (vv. 56-69). Historically, there is no evidence that Tamīm was ever involved in any military activity,⁶⁶ so this may be just a way of saying that the Fatimids — not specifically Tamīm — would soon conquer Baghdad. Using some of the by now familiar rationales for such a conquest, he threatened blood revenge (*tha’r*, v. 55) for all the Fatimid blood spilled, attributing it to the Abbasids and their spiritual forbears (vv. 47-54), and declared that the promised time for such revenge had come:⁶⁷

O progeny of ‘Abbās, you are blood revenge targets for the sons of [Fāṭima] al-Zahrā’ — and the time has drawn near.	v. 55	يَا آلَ عَبَّاسٍ أَنْتُمْ لِبَنِي الزَّهْرَاءِ تَارٌ وَقَدْ دَنَا الْأَجَلُ
May my hand not accompany me, and roads not usher me to exaltedness,	v. 56	لَا صَحْبَتِي يَدِي وَلَا اتَّسَعَتْ إِلَى بُلُوغِ الْعُلَى بِي السُّبُلُ
if I do not visit you with a wave-crashing army whose sky is [formed by] shining blades and lean spears,	v. 57	إِنْ لَمْ أَرْزُكُمْ بِجَحْفَلٍ لَجِبَ سَمَاوُهُ الْبَيْضُ وَالْقَنَا الذُّبُلُ
the East of the world and her West filled by its braves, experienced lions.	v. 58	يَسُدُّ شَرْقَ الدُّنَا وَمَغْرِبَهَا بِهِ الْكُمَاةُ الصَّرَاغِمُ الْبُرُلُ

Tamīm used “the time has approached” motif again in a *nūniyya* felicitating ‘Azīz for the ‘*Īd*, declaring that the decreed time for Fatimids to rise up had arrived (v. 9).⁶⁸

O sons of ‘Abbās, cease your defiance of us, for the time has come for us to fight in every place.	v. 9	فَكْفُوا بَنِي الْعَبَّاسِ عَنَّا جِمَاحَكُمْ فَقَدْ آتَى أَنْ نَغْزُو بِكُلِّ مَكَانٍ
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Although Tamīm penned more wine and love poems than panegyrics, the latter are beautiful illustrations of classical Arabic literature, and powerful examples of Fatimid praise poetry. As the texts cited here demonstrate, the

doctrinal aspect in Tamīm's praise verses is deep. More so, it appears, than in Ibn Hānī's poetry, for although not active in proselytizing or preaching, Tamīm was a prince of the palace; he identified closely with the family and its ideology, and one presumes that the imam and his *dā'īs* had trained him in the doctrines of Fatimid esoterics (*ta'wīl*) since childhood. Tamīm differed from Ibn Hānī in another way as well. Contrary to that court poet (and also different from Qā'im in this regard), the prince named no specific places as targets of conquest in his serenade of Fatimid victories. But (like Qā'im), he couched his laudations in Fatimid doctrine: themes of divine pledge fulfillment, holy images of Meccan *hajj* sites, allusions to the Qur'ān and Revelation, and motifs of descent from Muḥammad. And he tied these aspects firmly with the person of the Caliph-Imam 'Azīz.

The Conquest of Baghdad in the Reign of al-Mustanshir bi-L-lāh (r. 427-487/1036-1094) and the Beginning of the End: Poems by the Chief *Dā'ī* al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī

Following 'Azīz, the reigns of al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh (r. 386-411/996-1021) and al-Zāhir li-I'zāz Dīn Allāh (r. 411-427/1021-1036) did not see much further expansion, but during this period Fatimid borders remained more or less stable. There are no major poets of this era whose *dīwāns* are extant, but numismatic and epigraphic materials speak to the continuity of a Qur'ān-based mahdist conquest ideology: Ḥākim's coinage (like *dā'ī* Abū 'Abdallāh's seal ring much earlier) bore the Qur'ānic pledge fulfillment verse "The word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and righteousness. None can alter His words. He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing." (وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَعَدْلًا لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ)⁶⁹ And the plaque over the main entrance of the Ḥākim mosque (officially named *al-Jāmi' al-Anwar*) in Cairo cites another such Qur'ānic verse "We intend to bestow Our favor on those who have been made weak in the earth, to make them imams, to make them the heirs." (وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ)⁷⁰

It was during the long 58-year reign of Zāhir's son and successor al-Mustanshir bi-L-lāh (r. 427-487/1036-1094) that — as Maqrīzī tells us⁷¹ — the expanse of the Fatimid empire reached its apogee, and also began its decline. Al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī was Mustanshir's chief [spiritual] gate (*bāb al-abwāb*) and chief missionary (*dā'ī l-du'āt*). A master expounder of Fatimid doctrine, he connected it firmly with Fatimid political aspirations, as we know from his eight hundred *Majālis Mu'ayyadiyya*, where, among many

other such mahdist ideas, he praised the Fatimids as “imams for the people of the East and the West.”⁷² In 448/1056, Mu’ayyad escorted supplies to Syria in readiness for a Fatimid attack on Baghdad, to be led by a former Abbasid general, Abū l-Hārith al-Basāsīrī.⁷³ At this time, the Buyid protectorate of the titular Abbasid caliph in Baghdad had been taken over by the Saljuks and was headed by the Sultan Ṭughril Bēg. Having negotiated hard and effectively to unite the refractory Syrian princes under the Fatimid banner, Mu’ayyad declared in a stylized paronomasia filled *fakhr* poem that his campaign had been the most successful of all those aimed at felling the rival power. He coupled his vaunting of the physical blows he had dealt to the Abbasid caliphate with the verbal blows he had inflicted on their authority with his “wise” and “rational” expositions, his correspondence with the Syrian rulers, his discourses among the believers, and his poems:⁷⁴

Baghdad’s eye has never seen dust like the dust raised by my feet.	v. 8	وَعَيْنُ بَغْدَادَ مَا رَأَتْ أَبَدًا نَقْعًا كَنَقْعِ أَثَارِهِ قَدَمِي
After I stopped the palms of a tyrant [Ṭughril], my pen clipped the nails of his evil. ...	v. 9	مِنْ بَعْدِ كَفِي أَكْفَ طَاغِيَةٍ قَلَمٌ أَظْفَارَ شَرِّهَا قَلَمِي
Indeed, the salvation of souls is in my wise words, and the intellect is my arbiter in what I bring forth.	v. 11	إِنَّ نَجَاةَ النَّفُوسِ فِي حِكْمِي وَالْعَقْلُ فِيمَا أَسَوْفُهُ حَكْمِي

In 450/1058 — largely due to Mu’ayyad’s dexterous negotiating efforts — the Fatimids conquered Baghdad. The major milestone in the Fatimid hegemonic calendar had been achieved: Basāsīrī deposed the Abbasid caliph, crucified his vizier, and pronounced the *khutba* for Mustanṣir on the pulpits of the Abbasid capital.

Mu’ayyad composed a poem thereupon with an explicitly ideological register. Glorifying over his own prime role in the victory, he said he had strengthened the might of the “Children of Aaron” (v. 10, Aaron meaning ‘Alī in Fatimid esoteric interpretation, “brother” of the Moses of the Age, Muḥammad), and destroyed the edifice of the “Children of Hāmān” (second hemistich of v. 10, meaning the enemies of the Fatimids, here the Abbasids, just as Pharaoh’s vizier Hāmān was Moses’ enemy).⁷⁵

A scowling day for the son of 'Abbās, in which he met Death, appearing in person in front of his eyes.	v. 4	وَعَبُوسُ يَوْمٍ لِابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ بِهِ لَأَقَى الرَّدَى مُتَشَخَّصًا لِعَيْنِهِ
[The Abbasid caliph] spent the night stumbling in the train of humiliation[’s robes] exchanging his audience hall for the narrow confines of a cell.	v. 5	إِذْ بَاتَ يَعْثُرُ فِي ذُيُولِ مَذَلَّةٍ يَعْتَاضُ ضِيقَ الْحَبْسِ عَنْ إِيْوَانِهِ
He saw on the mast [his vizier] Ibn Muslima, from whose violence the mouth of Islam had screamed [for help].	v. 6	وَرَأَى عَلَى الصَّارِي ابْنَ مُسْلِمَةَ الَّذِي ضَجَّتْ فَمُ الْإِسْلَامِ مِنْ عُدْوَانِهِ
May God water with buckets of his mercy, the earth of the grave in which [Mu'ayyad's father] Abū 'Imrān lies!	v. 7	فَسَقَى الْإِلَهُ سَجَالَ رَحْمَتِهِ ثَرَى قَبْرِ ثَوَى فِيهِ أَبُو عِمْرَانِهِ
Indeed, how many difficult situations has his son stood firm in, with steadfast heart and tongue,	v. 8	إِنَّ ابْنَهُ كَمْ مِنْ مَقَامٍ قَامَهُ صَعْبًا بَنَيْتَ جَنَانِهِ وَلِسَانِهِ
in order to raise the banners of the Prophet and his progeny, and to strike and pierce their enemies.	v. 9	فِي رَفْعِ رَايَاتِ النَّبِيِّ وَآلِهِ وَضِرَائِهِ لِعِدَاتِهِمْ وَطِعَانِهِ
How well does he shore up the strength of the sons of [the Prophet's] Aaron, and how well does he destroy the edifice of the children of his Hāmān.	v. 10	وَلَكُمْ يَشْدُو قُوَى بَنِي هَارُونِهِ وَلَكُمْ يَهْدُو بِنَا بَنِي هَامَانِهِ

A year later, Ṭughril recaptured Baghdad and reinstalled the Abbasid caliph. For the Fatimids, this was the beginning of the end. Although their empire lasted for another century, from now on its borders rapidly diminished. Some important dates in this regard are 468/1076, when the Saljuks took Damascus away from the Fatimids for good; and 492/1099, when the Crusaders conquered Jerusalem. At the death of Mustanşir's grandson al-Āmir bi Aḥkām Allāh in 524/1130, Fatimid boundaries encompassed only Egypt. This situation continued until in 567/1171, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, the vizier of the last Fatimid (Ḥāfiẓī) Caliph 'Āḍid, offered the *khuṭba* for the Abbasids and inaugurated the sovereignty of their Ayyubid vassals in

the Fatimid heartlands. Although their spiritual *da'wa* continued in Yemen, India, and elsewhere, the political hegemony of the Fatimids, along with their immediate aspirations for world rule, came to an end.

Mu'ayyad had sadly but defiantly proclaimed in his autobiography (*Sīra*) that the Fatimids may have lost Baghdad, but their dream of universal dominion would nevertheless be realized. He asserted that God's pledge that His kingdom would come through His "pious servants" would be fulfilled. If it was not to be for Mu'ayyad's imam Mustanşir now, then such hegemony would become a reality for an imam from his progeny in the future. When the destined moment arrived, a Fatimid imam would conquer the world, and bring light and justice to all.⁷⁶

...even though what happened, happened — regarding loss after gain and overthrow of leaders — the impression of the Mustanşirite *da'wa*, and the call of "Come to the best of deeds" (حَيِّ عَلَى خَيْرٍ) (the *alْعَمَل*, a key Shi'ite formula in the call to prayer) from the tops of *mi'dhanas* and minarets remained on pulpit heights in the land of the two Iraqs. "God will complete His light despite the pagans' abhorrence" (والله مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ / Q 61:8) and He will fulfill His promise when He says "We have written in the Psalms after the Remembrance that the earth will be inherited by [our] pious servants" (وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا يَرِثُهَا) (ولقد كتبنا في الزبور من بعد الذكر أن الأرض يرثها يرثها الصالحون / Q 21:105 — if God Almighty wills.

Geographic Compass of Fatimid Conquest Aspirations: The Islamic Empire and Beyond

The Fatimids hoped for universal dominion. Qā'im's declaration that "God would conquer the East for us and the West, God would conquer all" (v. 5, "*Allāhu*"-rhymed poem),⁷⁷ was not mere rhetoric; it meant literally East and West, as the ideological context of this and other poems indicates, as does the historical record of Fatimid conquests in the East. But as their poetry also reveals, they early on had a series of specific steps in mind to reach their final goal. Notwithstanding the considerable time and resources spent on securing rule and building infrastructure in North Africa — including two new capital cities, Mahdiyya and Manşūriyya, large mosques, grand palaces, and a major harbor — they had never intended to stay on. In broad strokes, their poetry tells of the following geographic intentions: After the consolidation of their western empire, they first planned to conquer Egypt, whence they intended to overthrow the Abbasids and capture Baghdad (both of which they did, although in the case of Baghdad the dominion was short lived). Then they hoped to go on to defeat the Byzantines, secure the frontier domains, extend

their power base as far away as India, and eventually — without actually identifying places further distant — achieve worldwide hegemony.

As we have seen, the verse of Qā'im and Ibn Hānī' (and to a lesser extent Tamīm and Mu'ayyad) specifies the lands the Fatimids intended to conquer, and using concurrent ideological motifs, it frames these expected conquests in the broader Fatimid perception of themselves — the progeny of the Prophet — as the sole rightful rulers of the Islamic world.

The poets most often targeted Baghdad. Capital of the Abbasids, it was not only the physical hub of their power, but also the symbol of their caliphate. If Baghdad fell, the Fatimid caliphate would have no serious rival in the Islamic world. Beginning with the pre-establishment poets in Yemen and North Africa, we see prophecies of Abbasid downfall at the hands of the *mahdī* from the Banū Fātima, with the declaration by *dā'ī* Abū l-Qāsim, "Say to the Abbasids, get ready to leave!" These prophecies persisted and gathered specificity and strength as the decades went on — Qā'im loudly and clearly proclaimed: "Our fighting will focus on Baghdad" (v. 3) and "Baghdad is my goal" (v. 27, *lāmiyya*) — until they crescendoed in the poems of Ibn Hānī' just before and after the Fatimid conquest of Egypt, an Abbasid vassal-state. When Fustāt fell, Ibn Hānī' immediately urged Mu'izz "Onward to Iraq! Leave Egypt to [Jawhar's care]!" (v. 39, *fā'iyya*).⁷⁸ Prince Tamīm continued to emphasize the inevitability of Fatimid victory over Baghdad, pronouncing in the wake of 'Azīz's victorious battle with Aftakīn in Syria that "its report was making the rounds in Baghdad, driving sleep from the eyes of the heretic [Abbasids]." Mu'ayyad in his verse celebrated the actual victory in 450/1058, saying it had been "a scowling day for the [captured and deposed] son of 'Abbās" (v. 4, *nūniyya*) and that he, Mu'ayyad, had "raise[d] the banners of the Prophet and his progeny" (vv. 8-9, *nūniyya*) by striking at the core of the Abbasid empire.

Egypt was another key land mentioned as a potential conquest by the Fatimid poets. Not only was it a necessary capture if the Fatimids wanted to take Baghdad, but in its own right, it was a wealthy, self-sustaining province strategically placed in the center of the Islamic lands — the perfect hub from which to launch a program of universal dominion. Early on in the dynasty, Qā'im had led two expeditions to Alexandria in 302/914 and 306/918, and had declared in his poetry that he would conquer Egypt. In one of his poems he said, "My cavalry hastens towards ... Egypt" (vv. 26-27, *lāmiyya*) and in another, he invited his father Mahdī who had "sent [him] to Egypt" (v. 8) to "await victories at ... [the banks of] the Nile (and the Euphrates and Tigris)" (vv. 16-17, *lāmiyya*). In 358/969, Qā'im's grandson Mu'izz conquered Egypt. Ibn Hānī' celebrated the victory, portraying it as the prelude to the conquest of Baghdad. Mocking the Abbasids, he intoned "The sons of 'Abbās ask: 'Has Egypt been conquered?' Say to the sons of 'Abbās: '[Your

kingdom] is finished.” (v. 1, *rā'īyya*). In a variant reading of the same verse, he connected the Egyptian victory even more directly to a larger plan: “Make ready to attack Baghdad, for Egypt is conquered!” (v. 1, *rā'īyya*). The later Fatimid poets Tamīm and Mu'ayyad had no need to express hopes of its conquest for the obvious reason that Egypt was already subjugated.

Mecca and Medina had symbolic value. Earlier maintained for the Abbasids by their vassals from Egypt, they came into the Fatimid fold along with their conquest of Egypt. As the two holiest places of Islam, all Muslims were required to visit them at least once in their lifetime. The Fatimid poets inverted the metaphor. Ibn Hānī' and Tamīm declared that it was not only the Fatimid imam who yearned to visit the House, but the House itself, and the sacred sites of the *hajj*, all ardently desired the imam's coming. Ibn Hānī' avowed, “The vale of Mecca would adore a season in which Mecca ... greet[ed Mu'izz]” (v. 61, *rā'īyya*), and Tamīm declared to 'Azīz, “Šafā and Marwa yearn for you, as does [the well of] Zamzam” (v. 2, *rā'īyya*). The poets enhanced the hegemonic symbolism of Mecca and Medina by images of the imam, with his banners of triumph, arriving in Medina, and after long centuries of darkness reinstating the true rule of God. Ibn Hānī' envisaged Mu'izz “visiting the grave of [his] [fore]father Muḥammad surrounded by angels” (v. 44, *fā'īyya*) and “climbing [Muḥammad's] pulpit ... wearing a mantle and ... the sword Dhū l-Faqār” (vv. 45-46, *fā'īyya*). Although the Fatimid imam was never able to personally visit the Ḥijāz, the amīrs of Mecca and Medina proclaimed the *khuṭba* for him on and off for about a hundred years in the second half of the fourth and the first half of the fifth centuries A.H., from the reign of Mu'izz through half of Mustanṣir's. Tamīm expressed joy at one such instance of recognition, saying to 'Azīz: “The *dā'ī* prayed for you publicly in Mecca” (v. 1, *rā'īyya*; probably, as I said earlier, referring to the preacher's invocation for the ruling caliph in the official *khuṭba*).

Syria, with its adjacent lands northward up to Armenia, was an arena where the Muslims and the Byzantines constantly struggled for control; as was the comparatively less consequential Mediterranean island of Sicily. Qā'im expressed intentions to conquer several Syrian towns in the interior of the *dār al-Islām* and the imams' earlier *da'wa* center Salamiyya, but he as well as Ibn Hānī' focused more on Syrian towns on the frontier with Byzantine dominions, portraying them as crying out for the Fatimid imam's help. Qā'im declared “A day [of victory awaits] us at Raqqa, Rāfiqa, and Bālis ... How many [of our enemies will lie] prostrated among the rocks in Damascus ... and Ḥimṣ, and Salamiyya, and the frontier towns ... up to the mountains of Armenia ...” (vv. 32, 39-40). In two poems targeting the Byzantines, Ibn Hānī' also mentioned Aleppo, proclaiming to Mu'izz: “I have not seen a visitor of enemies like your sword — Is there greeting and welcome among

Byzantine skulls? What lures the Catholicos to Aleppo is the [easy] booty to be looted there ... [But] the darkness ... will be removed ... the cross will relinquish control over Armenia” (vv. 24, 32, 53, 55, *bā'iyya*). Elsewhere, Ibn Hānī' compared the Fatimids' success against the Byzantines in Sicily to the Abbasids' poor record in Syria: “The land which the Domestikos attacked (i.e., Sicily) was protected by a sword drawn for God's cause (i.e., the Fatimid imam). Its earth is not Aleppo (which, being under the Abbasids, is poorly defended) ...” (vv. 53-54, *lāmiyya*). The Fatimids, said their poets, would safeguard the domains of Islam from the marauding Christian armies in a way that the Abbasids could not.

Palestine and its city of Ramla (near Jerusalem) were singled out by Ibn Hānī', who declared in his tribute to Jawhar's forces (which were then moving towards Egypt) that “Palestine has given over her reins, no area within her boundaries remains defended. Ramla the well-protected is not the first place to find no refuge from you[r strike]” (vv. 69-70, *'ayniyya*).

Khurasan, Kabul, Sind, and India — lands successively east of the central Islamic lands — also figured in the Fatimid scheme of conquest. After defeating the Abbasids and taking control of Iraq and Persia, the Fatimids hoped to extend their control ever further eastward. Early on in the dynasty, Qā'im addressed his father saying, “You sent me to conquer Egypt, Syria, Khurasan, Iraq and Persia (lit. the two Iraqs) in their entirety” (v. 8, *lāmiyya*). Half a century later, Ibn Hānī' declared in the same vein that with Mu'izz's taking of Egypt “there [had] shone forth ... a road to the far end of Khurasan” (v. 76, *'ayniyya*). Eyeing lands yet further east, Qā'im in another poem avowed “My cavalry will night-march beyond the Nile seeking the enemies of religion until it rests in Kabul!” (v. 37, *lāmiyya*). “Kabul” fits the rhyme scheme of his *lāmiyya* poem, and this could be the literary reason Qā'im brought it up, but seen as a logical subsequent step east from Khurasan towards India, it could also have been a real target. The next eastern country of consequence was India, and Ibn Hānī' connected the awaited defeat of the Abbasids with a forward march east, prophesying in one verse Baghdad's fall, then asserting that “Indian kings and Sindi ones have been tested by nights [of fearful anticipation of the Fatimids' coming]” (v. 54, *khā'iyya*). As mentioned earlier, the western and north-western parts of the Indian subcontinent were home to a covert Fatimid mission overseen by the *da'wa* in the Yemen.

In addition to the lands that the Fatimids aspired to, it is interesting to think about which ones did not interest them as much and why, particularly the obvious one just across the Mediterranean to the north from the Maghrib — Andalusia. At the onset of the Fatimid empire, Muḥammad b. Ramaḍān prophesied the downfall of the Spanish Umayyads, the “Banū Marwān” (v. 12, *rā'iyya*) and later, Ibn Hānī' assured Mu'izz that “the Umayyads ... are

stunned [by Jawhar's victories in the western Maghrib c. 348/959], such that they imagine you appearing" (v. 42, *ḥā'iyya*).⁷⁹ But by and large, Andalusia does not appear to have figured as an important target conquest in Fatimid poetry. In addition to possible military and political reasons for the Fatimids' relative indifference to Spain, our poetry highlights an ideological one: their long-term plan to move eastward. Spain was too far away from the central Islamic realms to play a role in aspirations for the conquest of the latter, and the Fatimids saw themselves not just as a peripheral dynasty, but as rulers of the Islamic world.

Doctrinal Underpinnings of Aspirations of Conquest: Retribution for Earlier Injustices Suffered and Fulfillment of God's Pledge

While poets of other early Islamic dynasties also ascribed their patrons' dominion to God's will and aid, their verse was relatively less oriented towards religion, and generally did not bear messianic overtones. Moreover, although these poets celebrated their patrons' immediate victories, they do not seem to have laid out plans for future conquests by him or his progeny. This difference becomes clear if we glance at victory odes composed by some of the preeminent poets of the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Spanish Umayyad dynasties (translated and analyzed by Stetkevych in her work on poetic legitimation mentioned earlier). Akḥṭal, in his poem "The Tribe Has Departed", asserted that "God made [the Umayyad Caliph 'Abdalmalik] victorious [over the rebelling Ibn al-Zubayr]," where rather than the Qur'anic terms *fath* and *naṣr* he used the word *ẓafar* to mean victory, and where, although he used the weighty appellation "Caliph of God" for his patron, he applied no other overt religious doctrine.⁸⁰ Abū Tammām, in his famous poem celebrating the Abbasid Caliph Mu'taṣim's conquest of the Byzantine fortress of Amorium that begins "The sword is more voracious than books", utilized relatively more religious allusion: he used Qur'anic references saying the caliph was "nourished on victory (*naṣr*)" and in his line "God hurled you against her two towers";⁸¹ and he connected his patron's triumph over the Christians with the Prophet's defeat of the Meccans, claiming that "The closest lineage connect[ed] the days of Badr to [the caliph's] victorious days".⁸² But despite this relatively copious religious base, Abū Tammām's legitimation was quite different in character from that of the Fatimids messianic imamate doctrine. Unlike them, he used no references to the establishment of just rule on earth, or of expectations of retribution for past oppression; nor did he bring in allusions to universal hegemony and the fulfillment of God's pledge. The later Abbasid poet Mutanabbī played on his patron's title and constantly referred to him as the "Sword of God", as in his poem celebrating Sayf al-Dawla's defeat of the

Byzantine domesticus Bardas Phocas that began “Each man’s fate is fixed by his own custom”; but the sword-of-God motif is almost the full extent of theological thematizing in Mutanabbī’s poem.⁸³ Although the Abbasids had come to power largely through a Shi‘ite call for retribution which was itself underpinned by messianism (both of which were symbolized in their black banners), these two galvanizing themes appear to have disappeared from the Abbasid propaganda vocabulary after their accession to power, perhaps as a result of their early distancing of themselves from the Shi‘a movements, which had formed the groundswell of their revolt. This ideological shift is clear in the absence of mahdist and retribution motifs from the poetry of their major panegyrists. As for the Spanish Umayyads, one of their famed poets, Ibn Darrāj, writing in Andalusia at the very time of the Egyptian Fatimid caliphate, came closer to the Fatimid doctrinal hegemonic motif of God’s pledge when he said to Sulaymān, his prince of Qurashī Meccan lineage, “Your house found repose in Mecca’s broad valley until the return of days whose promised time drew near”; but Ibn Darrāj’s “promised time” was for “processions of cavalry” and other items of military glory with no clearly professed religious connection: no reference to justice or other mahdist ideas, no references to the Ka‘ba or *hajj* rites, and no other Islamic references.⁸⁴

In contrast, the Fatimids had a distinctive religious ideology driving their conquest aspirations. Their poets grounded hopes for conquests in Egypt, Iraq, Syria and elsewhere, as well as their broader desire for universal hegemony, firmly in their mahdist doctrine of the imamate. They characterized their anticipated conquests as the fulfillment of God’s pledge to humankind — to provide retribution for past injustices, and to realize divine rule on earth — through the victorious re-emergence (*zuhūr*) of the imam.

The set of poetic motifs that looked to the past sought retroactive justice for the collective Hāshimite blood spilled in the years following the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, particularly blood revenge (*tha‘r*) for his grandson Ḥusayn. Fatimid poets viewed the Abbasids as spiritual heirs of the Umayyad perpetrators, and as successors of the first three Sunnī caliphs who “laid the foundations” for the killings.⁸⁵ On the other hand, the Fatimid poets regarded their imams as spiritual heirs of the victims, heroes who sacrificed their lives to save humankind. Yazīd’s army had slaughtered Ḥusayn, along with a small group of family and companions, after denying them water for three days on the banks of the Euphrates in Karbala. In our poetry, that river was often the symbol that glued together the two themes of rule and revenge, being at once the site of Ḥusayn’s suffering, and a symbol for Abbasid lands, for it flowed physically through them. In one poem, Qā’im mentioned the banks of this river as the site of a looming battle with the Abbasids: “Our souls shall be ‘quenched’ with their delicious blood ... when they come [to fight us] ... from the opposite bank of the Euphrates!” (vv. 33-35, *lāmiyya*),

and he followed this forecast with a line about the martyr who had died thirsty on its banks: "I remembered Ḥusayn, my eyes filled with tears, and I said: I shall not forget my forbears! I shall kill each leader and follower among the [enemy] ..." (v. 36, *lāmiyya*). Ibn Hānī' used the very terms *tha'r* and *witr* (both meaning blood-revenge) to validate fighting the Abbasids, affirming ominously that "revenge (*witr*) for [al-Ḥusayn's killing] would not be lost" (v. 139, *mīmiyya*). He declared that the Euphrates would run red with Abbasid blood, then lamented the suffering of Ḥusayn and his family, and affirmed in climax that "even if the best of Muḥammad's two grandsons ha[d] been killed, indeed, the avenger of his blood [*waliyy al-tha'r*, Mu'izz] is alive" (v. 137, *mīmiyya*). He went on to announce: "More worthy of blame than Umayya ... are men who are the root of the disease ... who nominated Taym [to the caliphate] (alluding to Abu Bakr who was from this clan) ..." (v. 157, *mīmiyya*).⁸⁶ The Twelver Shi'ite poet Samarqandī, in his praise of Mu'izz upon his conquest of Egypt, accused the Abbasids of spilling the very blood — i.e., of the same family, the Prophet's kin — for which they had claimed to seek vengeance when they revolted against the Umayyads: "You have spilt the very blood that you sought vengeance (*tha'r*) for ..." (v. 20, *rā'iyya*). Prince Tamīm too, applied the term *tha'r* to the Abbasids when he stated: "O sons of 'Abbās, you are blood-revenge targets (*tha'r*) for the sons of [Fāṭima] al-Zahrā'" (v. 55, *lāmiyya*).

In speaking of the immediate oppression of the Abbasids, the righting-of-earlier-injustices theme was channeled into the poets' present. Qā'im explained why he was intent upon conquering Baghdad by saying that "there is glaring oppression and sedition there ... [the Abbasids] harbor unjust enmity for us, they wish to kill us, O how many bitter cups of bereavement have they made us drink [in the past]!"

In tandem with this retrospective rationale, the set of motifs that looked to the future anticipated the fulfillment of God's pledge to His prophets that their heir, the righteous imam, the *mahdī* in the line of the last Prophet and his legatee, would one day rule the earth. The kingdom belonged to him, and God would restore it to him. Within this philosophy of cyclical time, the Fatimid poets emphasized a dual suite of aspects: the injustice of Abbasid usurpation of the caliphate, and the imminence of its replacement with a reign of justice and light. At the beginning of the dynasty in a challenge poem to the Abbasids after his march on Alexandria, Qā'im used Qur'ānic phraseology to signal realization of the Almighty's assurance, declaring: "When the [triumph] that I had been promised (*kuntu mū'adan bihi*) arrived, God's aid (*naṣr*) hastened [to me] bringing victory (*fath*)" (v. 21, *bā'iyya*). In the last few years of the North African phase, Ibn Hānī' belligerently instructed the Abbasids to return what they had stolen: "Say to the Abbasids, return that which you have usurped (*ruddū maẓāliman*), for the time for

you to return usurped things has arrived!” (v. 9, *mīmiyya*), and anticipated invoking Mu‘izz’s name on the pulpits of Mecca and Baghdad “while the pledge of [Mu‘izz’s] Lord ha[d] been fulfilled” (v. 56, *fā’iyya*). Decades later in Egypt, Tamīm added his assertions — several times over — that the moment of triumph had approached. In a poem of congratulation to ‘Azīz, he intoned “The time has drawn nigh (*qad qaruba l-waqt*), so let [the Abbasids] acknowledge their imminent decline ...” (v. 67, *alifiyya*).⁸⁷ Elsewhere, he connected the arrival of the awaited moment with the obligation upon his own Fatimid family to take up arms, stating “The time has come (*fa-qad āna an naghzū*) for us to fight in every place” (v. 9).

The poets pointed out that the imam was not undertaking this mission for personal gain. It would be the people who benefited from his just rule; it was they who longed for him to reveal his auspicious self. Indeed, not only people, but — inverting the metaphor as mentioned earlier — the very land of Egypt, the Ka‘ba, and the holy places of Mecca and Medina, all anxiously awaited his goodly presence among them. As Tamīm put it: “Ṣafā and Marwa yearn for your coming!” (v. 2, *rā’iyya*) and as Ibn Hānī’ beseeched: “Egypt longs for you ... so quench her thirst ...!” (v. 38, *mīmiyya*).

In the preceding pages, I have read Fatimid poetry for historical information, and shown it to be a dynamic interface between political ambitions and religious ideology. The verse of the Fatimid poets records their aspirations — even as they first came on the scene in North Africa — to overthrow the Abbasids, claim the full Islamic empire in progressive eastward stages, then go beyond to conquer the world. Furthermore, it tells us that they anticipated these victories in a mahdist frame, as retribution for past injustices suffered by their forbears, and as a fulfillment of God’s pledge to humankind in the Revealed Books that a righteous imam would one day establish just rule on earth. In this manner, the case of the Fatimids speaks for the vital relevance of poetry to the construction of a nuanced historical narrative.

Notes

- ¹ For a comprehensive and careful evaluation of the medieval and modern sources of Fatimid history, see Walker (2002). Detailed modern histories of the Fatimid caliphate in North Africa and Egypt include: Dachraoui (1970), Ḥasan (1991), Surūr (1994), Sayyid (2000), Brett (2001), Halm (1996, 2003), and Daftary (2007).
- ² In contrast, praise poems by the later non-Ismāʿīlī Ḥāfiẓī poets, Ẓāfir al-Ḥaddād (d. 528/1134) and ʿUmāra al-Yamanī (d. 569/1174), appear to be relatively less consequential for our purposes.
- ³ Stetkevych (2002: 80-109, 144-179, 180-240, 241-282).
- ⁴ Maqrīzī, *Muqaffā* VI, 186-187.
- ⁵ Ibn Hānī, *Dīwān* 278-279.
- ⁶ Qutbuddin (2005: 278-281).
- ⁷ Some poems are also cited in Nuʿmān, *Sharḥ al-akhbār*, Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāz*, and *Khiṭaṭ*; Muʿayyad, *Sīra*, Ibn Ḥammād, *Akhhbār*, and Dawādārī, *Kanz*.
- ⁸ Yaʿlāwī (1985: “historical allusions”: 141-202, “theological themes:” 239-270, “political themes”: 271-304; and in his ed. of Ibn Hānī’s *Dīwān*, 1994: 207, n. 39; 290, n. 34).
- ⁹ Rubinacci (1990: 199-200).
- ¹⁰ Ḥijāzī (2005).
- ¹¹ Qutbuddin (2005: “life and career”: 1-100, theological themes: 105-117, 143-218, and *passim*).
- ¹² Ḥusayn (1950: 137-140).
- ¹³ ʿImād, *Kharīda* XII, 3, XI, 285.
- ¹⁴ The earliest mahdist movement was probably the one espoused by Mukhtār al-Thaqafī (d. 67/687) who proclaimed Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya (d. 81/700), son of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the *Mahdī*. For a broad history of mahdist beliefs and political movements in Islam, as well as details of Sunnī and Shīʿī sources of prophetic *ḥadīth* foretelling the coming of the *mahdī*, see Madelung (2008).
- ¹⁵ Nuʿmān, *Sharḥ al-akhhbār* III, 355-431; *Urgūza* 196, 201.
- ¹⁶ Q 21:105, regularly referenced by our poets.
- ¹⁷ Nuʿmān, *Iftitāḥ* 3. Trans. in Haji trans. of *Iftitāḥ* (2006: 21).
- ¹⁸ The Abbasid caliphs had used these same titles, an indication of their own subscription to the mahdist doctrine.
- ¹⁹ Undermining the prevalent theory that the term “Fatimid” was a later back projection, we find the phrase “the Fatimid imam” (*al-imām al-Fāṭimī*) as early as 297/909, the very year the Fatimid caliphate was established, in a poem of the former Aghlabid poet Saʿdūn al-Warjīnī. Nuʿmān, *Iftitāḥ* 301; Idrīs, *ʿUyūn* V, 174;

- Maqrīzī, *Muqaffā* IV, 566; idem., *Itti'āz* I, 73. Cited in Ya'lāwī (1986: 37). Trans. by Haji in his trans. of Nu'mān, *Ifitāḥ* (2006: 209).
- ²⁰ Nu'mān (*Sharḥ al-Akḥbār* III, 413) reports that in 145/762, the fifth Fatimid Imam Ja'far al-Šādiq had sent two *dā'īs* named Ḥulwānī and Abū Sufyān to North Africa, to "till the ground" in readiness for the one who would "sow the seeds" of Fatimid dominion.
- ²¹ Nu'mān, *Ifitāḥ* 251; Haji trans. (2006: 179).
- ²² *Ibid.*, 73; idem., *Sharḥ al-Akḥbār* III, 426; Idrīs, 'Uyūn V, 55-56. Cited in Ya'lāwī (1986: 24). Trans. by Haji in his trans. of Nu'mān, *Ifitāḥ* (2006: 72). Nu'mān (and following him Idrīs) tell us that Muḥammad composed this poem when he heard that Ibrāhīm II had treacherously killed a thousand Billizmians to whom he had given shelter in Raqqada; Ibn 'Idhārī (*Bayān* I, 123) says this incident happened in the year 280/[893].
- ²³ Nu'mān, *Ifitāḥ* 65-66; idem., *Sharḥ al-Akḥbār* III, 419-421, citation of poem and context information, including poet's name; Idrīs 'Uyūn V, 52. Cited in Ya'lāwī (1986: 15-16). Verses also trans. in Haji trans. of *Ifitāḥ* (2006: 68), and Brett (2001: 174-175).
- ²⁴ Nu'mān, *Ifitāḥ* 301; Idrīs, 'Uyūn V, 174-176; Maqrīzī, *Muqaffā* IV, 566-567; idem., *Itti'āz* I, 73. Cited in Ya'lāwī (1986: 37). Trans. by Haji in his trans. of Nu'mān, *Ifitāḥ* (2006: 209). Also trans. and briefly commented on by Smoor (1998: 134-137). Nu'mān, Idrīs, and the Mālikī judge 'Iyād b. Mūsā (*Tarīḥ* I, 104) call the poet 'Sa'dūn al-Warjīnī' with a *nūn*; al-Maqrīzī called him 'Sa'dūn al-Warjīlī' with a *lām*. These sources do not cite the full poem, so I am unable to provide verse numbers.
- ²⁵ Maqrīzī, *Muqaffā* VI, 183. Cited in Ya'lāwī (1986: 81-84). Some verses also trans. by Halm (1996: 196-213), Canard (1942-47: 172-173) and Rubinacci (1990: 199).
- ²⁶ Q 61:13.
- ²⁷ Q 30:6. More than fifty Qur'ānic verses assert the idea of God's pledge being fulfilled; cf. *w'd* in any Qur'ān concordance.
- ²⁸ Q 21:105.
- ²⁹ Maqrīzī, *Muqaffā* VI, 186-187.
- ³⁰ Idrīs, 'Uyūn V, 197-198. Cited in Ya'lāwī (1986: 94-95). Some verses also trans. by Halm (1996: 204).
- ³¹ Literally "the two Iraqs". Passim.
- ³² Maqrīzī, *Muqaffā* VI, 184. Cited in Ya'lāwī (1986: 101). Unfortunately, the impact of the echoing rhetorical trope of anticipating the rhyme word (*radd al-'ajuz 'alā l-ṣadr*) indicating this emphasis is lost in the translation. Due to differences in standard word order between the English subject-verb and the Arabic verb-subject sequence, the translation is unable to maintain the repetition of the word "God" at the end of each line.
- ³³ Idrīs, 'Uyūn V, 226. Cited in Ya'lāwī (1986: 95-100).
- ³⁴ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam* III, 15, 60.

- ³⁵ “Its child is not called out to” is a proverb meaning “a grave matter in which the young are not called upon to participate, rather, [mature] middle-aged and older men are summoned.” Maydānī, *Majmaʿ* II, 390 (#4516).
- ³⁶ Fatimid doctrines of the imamate are expounded in detail in *daʿwa* treatises, including: Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim* I, 3-78 (ch. on “Allegiance”); idem., *Taʿwīl al-daʿāʾim*, passim; Kirmānī, *Maṣābīḥ* 36-75; Muʿayyad, *Majālis*, passim.
- ³⁷ See text of letter in Idrīs, *ʿUyūn* V, 206.
- ³⁸ Idrīs, *ʿUyūn* V, 338.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 402. Cited in Yaʿlāwī (1986: 160-161).
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 409, 474, 488, 813. Cited in Stern (1958: 148-152) and Yaʿlāwī (1986: 189-200).
- ⁴¹ Dachraoui (1970: 250).
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ Idrīs, *ʿUyūn* V, 45-46, 381-382. Cited in Yaʿlāwī (1986: 157-159).
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 429; Maqrīzī *Muqaffā* I, 147. Cited in Yaʿlāwī (1986: 169).
- ⁴⁵ Ibn Zāfir, *Akhbār* 19.
- ⁴⁶ Idrīs, *ʿUyūn* V, 541-548, relevant lines on p. 548. Cited in Yaʿlāwī (1986: 256-264, relevant lines on p. 263).
- ⁴⁷ For Ibn Hānī’s dates, see Yaʿlāwī (1985: 117, 122).
- ⁴⁸ Ibn Hānī, *Dīwān* 41-47.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 282-294.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 387-327.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 202-209; Idrīs, *ʿUyūn* VI (Yaʿlāwī ed.), 668-669.
- ⁵² Ibn Hānī, *Dīwān* 136-143. Also cited by Idrīs, *ʿUyūn* VI (Yaʿlāwī ed.), 687-688. The opening line, as cited here from the *Dīwān* and Idrīs’s *ʿUyūn*, is quite famous. But the 7th/13th c. historian Ibn Ḥammād (*Akhbār* 46-47) cites it differently, with a more direct statement of intent to attack Baghdad:

Get supplies ready for Baghdad, for Egypt has been conquered, The dealing of the Age has fulfilled that which the Age had pledged		تَجَهَّزْ إِلَى بَغْدَادَ قَدْ فُتِحَتْ مِصْرُ وَأَنْجَزْ صَرْفُ الدَّهْرِ مَا وَعَدَ الدَّهْرُ
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Ibn Ḥammād also gives the next two lines, which are identical to the lines in the *Dīwān* and Idrīs’s *ʿUyūn*.

- ⁵³ Idrīs in the *ʿUyūn* has *taqūlu*, while the *Dīwān* has *yaqūlu* (both ed. by Yaʿlāwī).
- ⁵⁴ Idrīs, *ʿUyūn* VI (Yaʿlāwī ed.), 689.
- ⁵⁵ Idrīs, *ʿUyūn* VI: Yaʿlāwī ed. 689-691, Ghalib ed. 161-162. Cited in Yaʿlāwī (1986: 344-347). Cited by the Ṭayyibī *dāʿī* Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn in *Risālat masarrāt al-fath al-mubīn*, pp. 139-142; where there are variants in the above editions, I have followed the Sayf al-Dīn edition, as it is based on the earliest manuscripts of the *ʿUyūn*, perhaps even an autograph copy. Samarqandī’s verses about seeking vengeance are as follows:

If you say you have killed the Umayyads by removing their errant seducer and nullifying their disbeliever.	v. 18	فَإِنْ قُلْتُمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا أُمَيَّةَ بِتَبْدِيلِ غَاوِيهَا وَكَفْرِ كَفَوْرِهَا
We have found you to walk after them in worse paths and walks than theirs.	v. 19	فَإِنَّا وَجَدْنَاكُمْ تَسِيرُونَ بَعْدَهَا بِأَفْيَحٍ مِنْ مَنَاجِيهَا وَمَسِيرِهَا
You have spilt the very blood that you sought vengeance for — Can the palm of the perpetrator grasp retribution?	v. 20	سَفَكْتُمْ دِمَا قُلْتُمْ طَلَبْنَا بِثَأْرِهِ فَهَلْ يُدْرِكُ الْأَوْتَارَ كَفُّ وَتَوْرِهَا
Blood of noble ones, whose blood cannot go unavenged — the whole world is not sufficient compensation for the death of the smallest one among them.	v. 21	دَمٌّ مِنْ كِرَامٍ لَمْ تُطَلِّ دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَا تَعْدِلُ الدُّنْيَا تَوَى لِصَغِيرِهَا
You must be made to drink from the same cup you made them drink from — by the hands of its slashers and destroyers.	v. 22	وَلَا بَدَّ أَنْ تُسْقَوْا بِكَأْسِ سَقَيْتُمْ بِهَا مِنْ يَدَيِ مَجْتَنِّئِهَا وَمُبِيرِهَا
Lo! Give up those borrowed items [the caliphate]! They belong — Despite your intense dislike — to their lenders!	v. 23	أَلَا سَلِّمُوا تِلْكَ الْعَوَارِي فَإِنَّهَا وَأِنْ رَغِمَتْ أَنَا فُكْمِ لَمُعِيرِهَا

⁵⁶ Cf. Nu‘mān, *Ifitāh* 18. Haji trans. (2006, 34).

⁵⁷ Ibn Hānī, *Dīwān* 88. The editor Ya‘lāwī tentatively dates this poem in the N. African period in 350/961, but demurs that it could also be of much later provenance.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 223-228.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 309-317.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 352-353. Ibn Hānī attributed the killing of Ḥusayn, and the killing of Ḥusayn's father ‘Alī before him, to the foundation that had been laid for such oppression by the “election of the man from Taym [Abū Bakr]” (vv. 146-148).

⁶¹ Ibn Abī Dīnār, *Mu‘nis* 66-67. Trans. of this episode in Walker (1977: n. 65).

⁶² Ya‘lāwī (1985: 161).

⁶³ Tamīm, *Dīwān* 11-12.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 161-162; Idrīs, *Uyūn* VI (Ghālib ed.), 217.

⁶⁵ Idrīs, *Uyūn* VI (Ghālib ed.), 216.

⁶⁶ From the medieval sources, for example, Maqrīzī does not mention any such activity in his biography of Tamīm (*Muqaffā* II, 588-600). Neither do the modern scholars who have worked on Tamīm. On the contrary, A‘zamī in the introduction

to his edition of Tamīm's *Dīwān* (1971: 13) asserts that Mu'izz was careful not to give Tamīm any post or specific function in the state.

⁶⁷ Tamīm, *Dīwān* 328-334.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 449-451.

⁶⁹ Q 6:115. See photograph and discussion of Ḥākim's coin inscription in Merchant (2008: 114).

⁷⁰ Q 28:5. From personal observation in 2009.

⁷¹ Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz* II, 257; cited in Walker (2002: 50).

⁷² Mu'ayyad, *Majālis* III, 436, *majlis* #298.

⁷³ While campaigning in Syria to unite its refractory princes under the Fatimid banner, Mu'ayyad (*Dīwān* 268) composed a poem of *fakhr* challenging Fatimid officials unfriendly to himself, in which he declared that Baghdad's eye had never had to contend with dust such as the dust his feet had stirred up (v. 8). Text, trans. and contextualization in Qutbuddin (2005: 73-74).

⁷⁴ Mu'ayyad, *Dīwān* 268. Text, trans. and contextualization in Qutbuddin (2005: 73-74).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 281. Text, trans. and contextualization in Qutbuddin (2005: 75-76).

⁷⁶ Mu'ayyad, *Sīra* 183-184. Earlier, Nu'mān (*Sharḥ al-akhbār* III, 393) had quoted a prophecy by 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib that there would be two messiahs: al-Mahdī bi-L-lāh, who would appear first (and who, according to Nu'mān, had indeed emerged in the person of the first Fatimid caliph-imam), and al-Marḍī bi-L-lāh, who would be from his progeny, and who would come at the end of time.

⁷⁷ References of verses cited in this section have been provided where first cited; to facilitate cross referencing, verse numbers where known, and the rhyme letter of the poem, are provided here.

⁷⁸ Ibn Hānī' also expressed aspirations for the conquest of Baghdad in the lines "Your cavalry will water in ... al-Karkh [Baghdadian suburb]" (v. 53); "Baghdad wishes it were Cairo" (v. 72); and "The earth of the two Iraqs felt such fear the 'Abode of Peace' (Baghdad) almost shook with it" (v. 68).

⁷⁹ Ibn Hānī', *Dīwān* 75. Ya'lāwī tentatively dates this poem's composition in 350/961, *ibid.* 72, n.* (sic). Ibn Hānī' also mentioned the Spanish Umayyads in seven other poems: *ibid.*, 75, 196, 200, 262, 355, 403.

⁸⁰ Stetkevych (2002: 90, vv. 18-19).

⁸¹ Q 8:17.

⁸² Stetkevych (2002: 160, 163, vv. 38, 41, 70).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 188, 189, vv. 4, 14.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 274, v. 5.

⁸⁵ Ibn Hānī', *Dīwān* 355.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ In a revenge line he followed his naming of the Abbasids as targets with the phrase "... and the time has drawn near (*qad danā l-ajal*)" (v. 55.).

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