

Afrīqiya before the Completion of the Conquest: A Study of Its Administrative Subordination between Damascus and Egypt

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Abstract:

This research paper addresses the issue of administering Afrīqiya prior to the completion of its conquest during the political transformations of the Umayyad period under Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān. It focuses on the nature of the administrative relationship between Afrīqiya and Damascus as the centre of the caliphate and supreme authority, on the one hand, and Egypt as an advanced administrative and military base, on the other. The study examines the problem of conflicting and inconsistent historical accounts, particularly with regard to the governors of Egypt, the administrative subordination of Afrīqiya to them, and the authority and criteria governing the appointment of conquest commanders.

This study adopts both the historical analytical method and the comparative approach, relying on early Islamic conquest narratives and general historical sources. It concludes by favouring the most consistent accounts concerning the hierarchy of governors and commanders, clarifying their administrative powers and appointment criteria during the reign of Mu‘āwiya. It also interprets the phases of shifting roles in administrative and military management between Damascus and Fustat, thereby facilitating further historical studies on the establishment of administrative traditions in the province of Afrīqiya following the completion of its conquest.

Keywords: Afrīqiya; Administrative Dependence; Appointment Criteria; Islamic Conquest.

1- Introduction

The study of the Islamic conquest of Afrīqiya is of considerable importance for understanding the very nature of how that province was originally established; yet the first difficulty a researcher encounters is the stark contradiction and extreme inconsistency among the early historical sources—compounded by the absence of local chronicles—particularly regarding the governors of Egypt during the caliphate of Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān, a period that covers the initial phase of the conquest. Moreover, there existed a complex and unstable relationship between the commanders of the conquest of Afrīqiya, on the one hand, and both the central authority in Damascus and the regional authority in Egypt, on the other, in terms of subordination. This situation raises several interrelated

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problems, beginning with the reasons for the inconsistency in the narratives and extending to an understanding of the nature of the powers with which the governors of Egypt were invested regarding the management of the conquest in Afīqīya, the criteria for appointing commanders, and then why some commanders—such as Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj and ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi‘—were appointed directly from Damascus, while others—such as Abū al-Muhājir Dīnār—were appointed from Fustat, and why the province was attached to Egypt after the foundation of Kairouan.

Therefore, this study aims to undertake a comparison of the historical narratives, to establish the chronological succession of the governors of Egypt, and to deduce the powers associated with their appointments by examining the terminology used in the historical texts—such as the authority over the prayer (ṣalāt), the land tax (kharāj), and the authority over military expeditions (ghazw)—and by clarifying their meanings. It also seeks to identify the periods during which the province’s subordination to Damascus as the centre of administrative and military authority materialised, followed by its transfer to Fustat as an advanced base for conquest and administration adjacent to the province; and then to determine the criteria for selecting governors and conquest commanders, so as to explain the nature of those powers and their impact on achieving the strategic objectives of founding the province of Afīqīya.

This study draws on early historical sources, such as the compilations on Islamic conquests (fatūḥ) and general early Islamic histories, employing the methods of historical analysis and comparative analysis to arrive at a more precise understanding of the nature of this administrative system and to grasp its dynamics within the context of the political conditions that characterised Mu‘āwiya’s caliphate—thereby contributing to the explanation of how administrative traditions later emerged in the province of Afīqīya.

1. Afīqīya and Its Relationship with Egypt before the Foundation of Kairouan

Before addressing the issue of the administrative management of the conquest of Afīqīya, we must first tackle a subject that poses an obstacle to any precise understanding of the matter: namely, the succession of governors in Egypt during the early Umayyad period and the extent of their authority. One might assume that this subject is clear and straightforward, given the great administrative responsibility borne by those governors, the importance of Egypt as one of the empire’s most significant provinces, and the fact that their reports were recorded in many local sources of the province, not to mention the encyclopaedias of general Islamic history and others, which would seem to provide sufficient scholarly material to clarify the issue. Yet the situation is entirely otherwise; for the narratives concerning the identification of Egypt’s governors during this period, despite their abundance, are extremely inconsistent. Some governors are mentioned,

others omitted, and still others are credited with the governorship without verification—in addition to the confusion regarding the years of their appointment and dismissal, as well as the precise definition of their powers. Consequently, determining the relationship between the conquest commanders in Afrīqiya and Fustat becomes exceedingly difficult. Hence, we must begin by examining the narratives pertaining to the governors of Egypt under Mu‘āwiya and comparing them in order to arrive at an accurate picture of the chronological map of these governors before we turn to the relationship between them and the conquest commanders in Afrīqiya.

1.1. The Governors of Egypt during the Reign of Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (41–60 AH)

The historical accounts dealing with the succession of Egypt’s governors under Mu‘āwiya, and their relationship with the conquest commanders in Afrīqiya, are extremely inconsistent; this makes understanding the nature of the relationship between Egypt, its governor in Afrīqiya, and the commanders of the conquest of the Maghrib in general very difficult indeed. More than that, this inconsistency has cast its shadow over many issues relating to the conquest process itself—the appointment and dismissal of commanders or governors, as well as the processes of settlement in their administrative, civilisational, and even social dimensions. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the succession of Egypt’s governors through the available historical accounts, to determine the years of their appointment and dismissal in order to understand this relationship, to define its nature, and to ascertain whether Afrīqiya was independent from Egypt in this early phase of its conquest and foundation—thus linked directly to the capital Damascus and the caliphate—or whether it was subordinate to Egypt and its governor.

The earliest account we possess concerning the affairs of Egypt in this period is that of al-Wāqidī (d. 207 AH), transmitted to us by his disciple Ibn Sa‘d (d. 230 AH) in his *Ṭabaqāt*, where he wrote about the governors of Egypt. Al-Wāqidī’s narratives on this matter are themselves inconsistent: he affirms the governorship for some, while for others he does not address it at all. He mentions that ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ was governor of Egypt on behalf of Mu‘āwiya and remained so until his death on the day of *‘Īd al-Fiṭr* in the year 43 AH; he also states that ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr was with his father when death approached him, so his father appointed him governor of Egypt, and Mu‘āwiya confirmed him in the post but later dismissed him (*al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, pp. 499–501, vol. 9). However, Ibn Sa‘d does not mention the governorship of ‘Utba ibn Abī Sufyān, even though he includes a biographical entry for him; nor does he mention the governorship of ‘Uqba ibn ‘Āmir, despite having a biographical entry for him as well, stating that he resided in Egypt (pp. 503–508, vol. 9). Ibn Sa‘d also makes Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj al-Kindī governor of Egypt without specifying who appointed him or when, merely stating that his governorship

ended with the appointment of Maslama ibn Mukhallad al-Anṣārī over Egypt and Aḥīqīya, and that with this appointment ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi’'s command was terminated by order of Maslama, without giving a date (p. 141, vol. 6).

Chronologically next is the account of Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt (d. 240 AH), who reports that Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān dispatched Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj on a military expedition (*aghzā*) to Aḥīqīya in the year 45 AH (*Tārikh Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt*, p. 207), and then that Maslama ibn Mukhallad likewise dispatched him to Aḥīqīya when he became governor of Egypt in the year 50 AH (pp. 210–211). In this account, *aghzā* means that he appointed him as commander at the head of the conquest army only.

As for Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 257 AH), he mentions the death of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ in the year 43 AH, but does not mention the succession of his son ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr; instead, he records the governorship of ‘Utba ibn Abī Sufyān, dating it to the year 43 AH (*Futūḥ Miṣr wa-al-Maghrib*, p. 207). He does not mention the governorship of ‘Uqba ibn ‘Āmir, but he dates the governorship of Maslama ibn Mukhallad to the year 47 AH; he also discusses the dismissal of ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi’ by Maslama ibn Mukhallad and the appointment of Abū al-Muhājir Dīnār, which he dates to the year 51 AH (p. 244).

Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam also mentions the commanders of the conquest armies in Aḥīqīya: Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj led three expeditions—the first in 34 AH, the second in 40 AH, and the third in 50 AH (p. 221)—but elsewhere he states that ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi’ succeeded Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj in command of the war in the Maghrib in the year 46 AH, without specifying who appointed him (p. 222).

Al-Balādhurī (d. 279 AH), in his transmission from Ibn Sa‘d from al-Wāqidī, reports that when Mu‘āwiya became caliph, he appointed Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj al-Sakūnī as governor of Egypt; then, in the year 50 AH, he sent ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi’ to Aḥīqīya, who conducted a military expedition there and laid out its plan (*khaṭṭahā*) (*Futūḥ al-Buldān*, p. 225). This account indicates that Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj was governor of Egypt and that it was he who sent ‘Uqba as commander for the conquest of Aḥīqīya.

The narrative presented by al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH) appears to be a pivotal one around which the other accounts either converge or diverge, owing to the credibility that al-Ṭabarī's *Tārikh* enjoys among historians—so much so that it became a principal source, and most later historians relied upon it. However, the reality is that al-Ṭabarī's narratives concerning the Maghrib are few and highly inconsistent. We shall therefore begin our presentation of the accounts with al-Ṭabarī's version: in the context of the events of the year 47 AH, he writes: “In this year, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ was dismissed from Egypt, and Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj was appointed over it. He set out—according to what al-Wāqidī mentioned—to the Maghrib, and he was a partisan of ‘Uthmān (*‘Uthmānī*).” (*Tārikh al-Ṭabarī*, p. 229, vol. 5). And in the context of the events of the year 50 AH, he

writes: “In this year, Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj was dismissed from Egypt, and Maslama ibn Mukhallad was appointed over Egypt and Afrīqiya. Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān had sent, before appointing Maslama over Egypt and Afrīqiya, ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi‘ al-Fihri to Afrīqiya; he conquered it and laid out its capital, Kairouan... Then, in this year—namely the year 50 AH—Mu‘āwiya dismissed Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj from Egypt and ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi‘ from Afrīqiya, and appointed Maslama ibn Mukhallad over Egypt and the entire Maghrib. He was the first for whom the whole Maghrib, Egypt, Barqa, Afrīqiya, and Tripoli were combined. Maslama ibn Mukhallad then appointed a *mawlā* of his, called Abū al-Muhājir, over Afrīqiya, and dismissed ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi‘, exposing him on several matters. Maslama remained governor of Egypt and the Maghrib, with Abū al-Muhājir over Afrīqiya on his behalf, until Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān died.” (*Tārikh al-Ṭabarī*, p. 240, vol. 5).

Some later historians followed al-Ṭabarī’s account, such as Ibn al-Athīr in one passage of his work—though he contradicted it elsewhere, where he transmitted what he called the narrative of the Maghribis (*al-Kāmil fī al-Tārikh*, p. 62, vol. 3)—and likewise Ibn ‘Idhārī al-Marrākushī followed al-Ṭabarī’s account (*al-Bayān al-Mughrib fī Akhbār al-Andalus wa-al-Maghrib*, p. 18, vol. 1). In this account, which al-Ṭabarī himself took from al-Wāqidī, the governorship of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ over Egypt is made to continue until the year 47 AH; then Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj al-Sakūnī succeeds him until the year 50 AH, when Maslama ibn Mukhallad comes as governor of Egypt and the Maghrib—being, according to this account, the first for whom all that was combined. Thus, it mentions neither the governorship of ‘Utba ibn Abī Sufyān nor that of ‘Uqba ibn ‘Āmir, but affirms the governorship of Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj over Egypt.

1. As for al-Kindī (d. after 353 AH), who wrote an entire work devoted to the governors of Egypt (*Kitāb al-Wulāt*), he lists the governors of Egypt in order during the reign of Mu‘āwiya and specifies the nature of each governorship, which lends particular value to his accounts. He says: “over its prayer” (*‘alā ṣalātihā*) or “over its prayer and its land tax” (*‘alā ṣalātihā wa-kharājihā*), as the following table summarises what appears in his account (*Kitāb al-Wulāt wa-Kitāb al-Quḍāt*, pp. 26–33):

No.	Governor	Year of Appointment	Year of Dismissal or Death	Nature of Appointment
01	‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ	38 AH	43 AH	Authority over prayer and land tax
02	‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr	43 AH	43 AH	Appointed by his father as successor upon the latter’s death
03	‘Utba ibn Abī Sufyān	43 AH	44 AH	Authority over prayer only

04	‘Uqba ibn ‘Āmir al-Juhanī	44 AH	47 AH	Authority over prayer and land tax
05	Maslama ibn Mukhallad al-Anṣārī	47 AH	62 AH	Combined for him the authority over prayer, land tax, and the lands of the Maghrib

As for Ibn ‘Idhārī al-Marrākushī, who represents the Maghribī narrative, his ordering of the governors of Egypt and Afīṭīqiya during this period is entirely different and marked by great inconsistency; his account includes the following (*al-Bayān al-Mughrib fī Akhbār al-Andalus wa-al-Maghrib*, pp. 18–19, vol. 1):

No.	Governor	Year of Appointment	Year of Dismissal or Death	Specification of Authority
1	‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr	—	47 AH	Appointed by his father as successor upon the latter’s death
2	Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj al-Kindī	47 AH	50 AH	Governor over Egypt and Afīṭīqiya
3	Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj al-Kindī	50 AH	55 AH	Dismissed from Afīṭīqiya but confirmed over Egypt; ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi’ appointed over Afīṭīqiya on behalf of Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān
4	Maslama ibn Mukhallad al-Anṣārī	55 AH	62 AH	Egypt and the Maghrib were combined for him; he was the first for whom the Maghrib was combined after the dismissal of Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj from Egypt and ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi’ from Afīṭīqiya

Ibn ‘Idhārī relied primarily, for the history of this early phase of the conquest, on al-Raqīq al-Qayrawānī; and unfortunately, only one copy of al-Raqīq al-Qayrawānī’s work has reached us, with its beginning missing. One is astonished at how his account of this important and early period in the history of the Maghrib could contain all this inconsistency, for one would have expected the Maghribī narrative to be the most accurate and closest to the actual situation.

Nevertheless, when we trace later accounts, we find an indication in al-Maqrīzī that may lift the obscurity from the matter and define the authorities and tasks with precision. He says concerning the appointment of Maslama over Egypt: “... Maslama ibn Mukhallad ibn Ṣāmit ibn Niyār al-Anṣārī was appointed over Egypt by Mu‘āwiya, and for him were combined the authority over prayer, land tax, and military expedition (*al-ghazw*); thus his campaigns were systematically organised on land and sea” (*al-Mawā‘iẓ wa-al-I’tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khifāṭ wa-al-Āthār*, p. 95, vol. 2).

In this passage cited by al-Maqrīzī there is a very important indication: Mu‘āwiya combined for Maslama ibn Mukhallad al-Anṣārī the authority over prayer, land tax, and

military expedition, whereas his predecessor ‘Uqba ibn ‘Āmir had been appointed only over prayer and land tax. This means that there existed a distinct command of military expedition (*imārat al-ghazw*) or command of the conquering army alone, and that this came directly from the caliph in Damascus—especially in provinces where there were major frontiers of conquest. Egypt, after all, was open to two major fronts: one for conquest on the White Sea (the Mediterranean) and its major islands, and another front to the west, in Afrīqiya and the Maghrib. What is useful here is that the historians confused the command of military expedition with the governorship of prayer and land tax. Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj was appointed only as commander of the expedition—a leader of the Egyptian conquering army—just like ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi‘, who succeeded him in commanding the conquering army in Afrīqiya. It seems that this is precisely what caused the great confusion that afflicted the authors of the early sources—such as al-Wāqidī, Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, al-Balādhurī, and al-Ṭabarī, and those who came after them and relied upon them—for they assumed that Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj was governor of Egypt before Maslama ibn Mukhallad, when in fact he was only the commander of the conquering army, appointed directly by the caliph without being subject to the authority of the governor of Egypt. This changed later with the governorship of Maslama ibn Mukhallad. After this presentation and this reading of the accounts, we find that al-Kindī’s narrative is the most accurate, detailed, and expressive of the actual situation. It allows us to trace the details of the developments that took place in Afrīqiya—from the process of conquest, to its transformation into a province and administrative district, and to its shift from subordination to the central authority in Damascus to subordination to the authority of the governor of Egypt.

2.1. Appointment of the Conquest Commander in Afrīqiya between Damascus and Fustat before the Foundation of Kairouan

In the account of Ibn Khayyāt (*Tārikh Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt*, pp. 207, 210–211) there is an indication that the commander of the conquest army in Afrīqiya was dispatched directly from the capital Damascus in the year 45 AH, and that this continued until the year 50 AH; but after the year 54 AH, this became part of the prerogatives of the governor of Egypt. This is an important development in understanding the relationship between Egypt and Afrīqiya during this phase. To discuss it, we return to the circumstances through which the Umayyad state was passing: apparently, this was because conditions were stable before the year 50 AH in the Umayyad state, and the conquest operations on all fronts were proceeding at a normal pace. However, in the years 49 and 50 AH, Mu‘āwiya launched the great campaign against Constantinople, which may have

occupied him and diverted his attention from the other fronts, so he left the affairs of Afīrīqiya to the governor of Egypt, Maslama ibn Mukhallad.

This means that he granted him broader powers; appointing him as commander over military expeditions (*ta'nīruhu 'alā al-ghazw*) meant vesting him with direct authority over the commanders of the conquering armies on all fronts. During this period, Egypt had two fronts: one for war on the sea and the islands, and another, more important front in the Maghrib. Before that, the commanders of the conquering armies in the Maghrib or at sea were appointed directly by the caliph, as was the case with Mu'āwiya ibn Ḥudayj. It seems that this is what caused the great confusion that afflicted the authors of the early sources—al-Wāqidī, Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, al-Balādhurī, and al-Ṭabarī, and those who followed and drew from them—for they considered that Mu'āwiya ibn Ḥudayj was governor of Egypt before Maslama ibn Mukhallad, when in fact he was only the commander of the conquering army, appointed directly by the caliph and not subject to the authority of the governor of Egypt; and this changed with the governorship of Maslama ibn Mukhallad. However, we may pause here and open a parenthesis to ask: was this authority that Mu'āwiya granted to Maslama ibn Mukhallad—by appointing him commander over military expeditions in addition to prayer and land tax—granted from the very beginning of his governorship over Egypt, i.e. the year 47 AH, or was it an authority that he added for him only later?

It appears that this confusion and contradiction in the narratives occurred precisely because of a failure to distinguish between the governor of Egypt and the governor of Afīrīqiya, on the one hand, and between the administration of civil affairs such as land tax and prayer, on the other hand, and the command of war. Many accounts considered that Mu'āwiya ibn Ḥudayj was governor of Egypt, whereas the correct view is that he was nothing more than commander of the conquest armies during the period from the year 46 AH to the year 50 AH; then Mu'āwiya replaced him with 'Uqba ibn Nāfi' al-Fihri.

2. Criteria for the Appointment of Governors and Commanders in Egypt and Afīrīqiya during the Time of Mu'āwiya

Understanding the nature of the phase through which the Umayyad state was passing under Mu'āwiya, as well as his criteria for appointing and dismissing officials and commanders in the centres of governance and army leadership, is of considerable importance; for this facilitates answering many of the questions surrounding the foundation of the province of Afīrīqiya, then the Maghrib, and the conquest commanders therein.

2.1. Criteria for the Appointment of the Governors of Egypt

Insert the article conclusion here in the same format (font, size, line spacing). The Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (may God be pleased with him) attached tremendous importance to Egypt, owing to its geographical and strategic significance: on the one hand, Egypt was considered the southern base that protected Syria—the seat of the caliphate and the stable abode of Umayyad rule—and on the other hand, it was a financial resource for the treasury of the Muslims, ranking second only after Iraq and the Sawād region. Al-Maqrīzī mentioned the amount of financial resources that Egypt generated for the treasury during the time of Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān, saying: “In Egypt, during the caliphate of Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān, there were forty thousand [soldiers?]; among them were four thousand in groups of two hundred. What was transported to Mu‘āwiya was six hundred thousand dīnārs from the surplus after the stipends of the troops and what was spent on the people” (al-Maqrīzī, 1998, p. 176, vol. 1). Among the most important factors that directly affect financial resources is the factor of administrative organisation and stability. If we trace the criteria that Mu‘āwiya observed in appointing governors over Egypt, we find that some were purely political—relating to loyalty, political stability, and the general interest of the state—such as his appointment of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and then his brother ‘Utba ibn Abī Sufyān. Others were partly political and partly economic, such as his appointment of ‘Uqba ibn ‘Āmir al-Juhanī and then his appointment of Maslama ibn Mukhallad. However, during the phase when the Umayyad state achieved relative stability, moved away from the time of civil strife (*fitna*), and found the opportunity to undertake great works in various fields—especially administrative and military, such as the organisation of the state registers (*dawāwīn*) and the launching of major military campaigns like the campaign to conquer Constantinople in the year 49 AH, that is, towards the end of the fifth decade of the Hijra—it became imperative to move towards stabilising the administrative system in order to ensure the flow of funds into the treasury. Regarding the appointment of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ over Egypt, it is no secret to anyone what his relationship with Mu‘āwiya was, nor his stance alongside Mu‘āwiya in his war against ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib; and that in the year 38 AH, Mu‘āwiya gave Egypt to ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ as a fief (*tu‘ma*). Al-Kindī said: “Then ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ assumed its governorship for the second time, on behalf of Mu‘āwiya, beginning his governorship in the month of Rabī‘ al-Awwal of the year 38 AH; and both the prayer and the land tax were placed under his authority. Egypt had been granted to him as a fief after the stipends of its troops and the expenditure on its maintenance” (al-Kindī, 2003, p. 26). When the affairs of the East stabilised after the Year of Congregation (*‘Ām al-Jamā‘a*) in 41 AH, it was not natural that the spoils and revenues of the conquest of Egypt should belong to ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ without Mu‘āwiya having a share. Mu‘āwiya hastened to rectify this immediately after

‘Amr’s death in 43 AH: when he appointed ‘Uqba ibn ‘Āmir al-Juhanī over Egypt, he restricted his powers by appointing him over its prayer and its land tax, but separated from him the lands of the Maghrib and its warfare. “Then ‘Uqba ibn ‘Āmir was appointed over Egypt by Mu‘āwiya, and for him were combined its prayer and its land tax” (al-Kindī, 2003, p. 30).

Then Mu‘āwiya appointed Maslama ibn Mukhallad over Egypt, and in this appointment he observed several criteria that he deemed suitable and required by the phase the Umayyad state was going through—still in the process of emergence and foundation—as well as by the governorship of Egypt itself. He took into account administrative competence, experience, absolute loyalty, and reward for having stood with him in his war against ‘Alī (may God be pleased with him) and for demanding the blood of ‘Uthmān (may God be pleased with him), in addition to righteousness and piety. Consequently, he confirmed him over Egypt until his death. Al-Maqrīzī mentions how Maslama was appointed over Egypt, saying: “Then ‘Uqba ibn ‘Āmir ibn ‘Abs al-Juhanī was appointed over Egypt by Mu‘āwiya, and he gave him its prayer and its land tax; he was a reciter of the Qur’ān, a jurist, a scholar of inheritance law, a poet, one of the emigrants, a Companion, and a man of precedence. Then Maslama ibn Mukhallad al-Anṣārī came to Mu‘āwiya, so he appointed him over Egypt... and combined for him the prayer, the land tax, and the military expedition; thus his campaigns were systematically organised on land and sea” (al-Maqrīzī, 1998, p. 95, vol. 2). The narratives precisely highlight the criterion for appointing Maslama over Egypt, as mentioned by Mu‘āwiya himself when he justified that appointment to ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi’, who had come to him complaining of the injustice of his dismissal. Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam reports Mu‘āwiya as saying: “You know the standing of Maslama ibn Mukhallad with regard to the wronged Imām (i.e., ‘Uthmān), his preference for him over others, his seeking retribution for his blood, and his offering of his own life...” (*Futūḥ Miṣr wa-al-Maghrib*, p. 225). Ibn ‘Asākir added some details, quoting Mu‘āwiya as saying: “You know the standing of Maslama ibn Mukhallad with regard to the wronged Imām, may God have mercy on him, his preference for him above all others, then his seeking retribution for his blood and his offering of his own life, seeking God’s reward, patiently, alongside those of his people and his clients who obeyed him” (*Tārikh Dimashq*, p. 532, vol. 40). It is thus clear that the services Maslama had rendered to Mu‘āwiya in his conflict with ‘Alī and his stance regarding the murder of ‘Uthmān were among the criteria for appointment. But not only that: Maslama also possessed experience, knowledge, companionship, tribal support, and numerous clients (*mawāḥ*). All these could be taken into account as reasons for Mu‘āwiya’s choice of him; then, when we examine the criteria for appointing the commanders of Afīṭqiya, we shall understand much more concerning this point.

2.2. Criteria for the Appointment of the Conquest Commanders in Afrīqiya

The first to be sent for the conquest of Afrīqiya was Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj, in the year 45 AH. This man was a partisan of ‘Uthmān (*‘Uthmānī*), as mentioned by Ibn Khayyāt (*Tārikh Khaṭīb ibn Khayyāt*, p. 207); he was the one who oversaw the incitement of the people in Egypt against the killers of ‘Uthmān, and he was the one who eliminated Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr—the governor of Egypt appointed by ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. In addition, he was a Companion, possessed experience in commanding armies (Ibn Sa‘d (d. 230 AH), p. 508, vol. 9), and Mu‘āwiya appointed him directly from Damascus without the governor of Egypt having any authority over him.

As for ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi‘ al-Fihri, he appeared on the scene when he launched the conquest process in the year 41 AH. Ibn al-Athīr states regarding the events of that year: “In this year, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ appointed ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi‘ ibn ‘Abd Qays—who was the son of ‘Amr’s maternal aunt—over Afrīqiya. He reached the Lawāta and Mazāta tribes; they submitted, then apostatised, so he fought them that same year, killing and taking captives. Then in the year 42 AH he conquered Ghudāmis, killing and capturing; and in the year 43 AH he conquered several districts of the Sudan” (Ibn al-Athīr, 1997, p. 17, vol. 3). Ibn Taghrībirdī follows him, stating in the context of the events of 43 AH: “In this year, ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi‘ al-Fihri conquered several districts of the land of the Sudan” (Abū al-Maḥāsin, n.d., p. 125, vol. 1). From this text it appears that ‘Uqba was appointed by ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, and that he possessed the qualifications of competence, Qurashī lineage, kinship, in addition to righteousness and piety. However, his stance regarding the killers of ‘Uthmān was absent from this appointment; it seems that this criterion was of consideration to the central authority in the caliphal capital—at least in this early phase, so close to the event of ‘Uthmān’s murder.

It appears that ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi‘ remained resident in Barqa and Zawīla until Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān commissioned him with the ambition of completing the conquest of Afrīqiya in the year 50 AH, after he had proven his competence in military leadership during the time of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. Ibn al-Athīr mentions regarding the events of this year: “What the Maghribī historians have mentioned is that the governorship of ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi‘ over Afrīqiya was in this year, and he built Kairouan; then he remained until the year 55 AH, and Maslama ibn Mukhallad assumed it. They are more knowledgeable about their lands, and I shall mention what they have recorded in their books. They said: Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān dismissed Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj from Afrīqiya only, and appointed ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi‘ al-Fihri over it. ‘Uqba had been residing in Barqa and Zawīla since its conquest in the days of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, and he had waged jihad and conquests in those lands. When Mu‘āwiya appointed him, he sent ten thousand horsemen to him;

he entered Afīqīya, and those Berbers who had converted to Islam joined him, so his forces multiplied” (Ibn al-Athīr, 1997, pp. 62–63, vol. 3).

If this text is authentic, it answers the question we raised earlier regarding the time when Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān attached the authority over military expeditions (*al-ghazw*) to Maslama ibn Mukhallad. It is very clear that this did not happen immediately after Maslama’s appointment over Egypt in 47 AH; otherwise, Mu‘āwiya would not have personally appointed ‘Uqba in 50 AH over the expedition to Afīqīya. Most likely, he granted Maslama this authority in the year 55 AH—the same year in which Maslama ibn Mukhallad would dismiss ‘Uqba from the war in Afīqīya and appoint in his place Abū al-Muhājir Dīnār.

It is stated in *al-Bayān al-Mughrib*: “In the year 55 AH, Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān appointed Maslama ibn Mukhallad al-Anṣārī over Egypt and Afīqīya, dismissed Mu‘āwiya ibn Ḥudayj from Egypt, and dismissed ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi’ from Afīqīya—so his governorship over it lasted four years. Mu‘āwiya had appointed Maslama over Egypt; when Maslama now assumed Afīqīya, he dismissed ‘Uqba from it and appointed over it his *mawlā* Abū al-Muhājir Dīnār, while he himself remained as governor of Egypt. Mu‘āwiya combined all of this for him, from the extremities of the province of Egypt to Tangier; he was the first for whom the whole Maghrib was combined. He remained governor over it until Mu‘āwiya died” (Ibn ‘Idhārī, 1983, p. 21, vol. 1).

After the foundation of Kairouan, Afīqīya began to become a fully established province of importance; the new city became the nucleus of the conquered region, just as Fustat was the nucleus of Islamic Egypt. It was therefore natural that the governors of Egypt would covet it and seek to make it part of their jurisdiction, as it had been in the days of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. The arena of Afīqīya was wider than that of Egypt, for there the field was open for *jihād* in the path of God and for conquest—a virtue that became a source of competition among governors and commanders. The governor of Egypt since the year 47 AH was Maslama ibn Mukhallad al-Anṣārī, an Umayyad notable for his role in supporting ‘Uthmān (may God be pleased with him); he was highly favoured by Mu‘āwiya and by those in authority in those days. Afīqīya at the beginning of his governorship was different from what it became after eight years of his rule. At first, it was an unlimited field where the Arabs had neither properties, nor subjects, nor cities; so he paid it no attention and saw no harm in allowing ‘Uqba to be appointed commander of the war there directly by Mu‘āwiya without seeking his own opinion. But now, after the establishment of Kairouan, the new province began to attract his attention. He was displeased with ‘Uqba’s turning away from him, his disregard for him, and his acting independently without paying him any heed; this angered him against ‘Uqba and increased his desire to control Afīqīya, and he kept biding his time for that opportunity (Mu’nis, n.d., p. 147).

This was the explanation given by Dr. Ḥusayn Mu'nis for the attachment of Afrīqiya to Egypt. Yet there appears to be another aspect that our doctor overlooked: namely, that before the foundation of Kairouan, Afrīqiya was merely a theatre of military operations, even if it required a provisional settlement of the Arab element in the form of families accompanying the fighters; but it did not require an administrative organisation or the rooting of a particular model of administrative traditions. Once a new city was built and became the capital of the province, it became necessary for it to submit to administrative traditions and for these to be rooted there; and it is perfectly logical that this would be done with the assistance of the Egyptian administration. This is dictated on the one hand by the geographical reality, and on the other hand by the social reality, since a large part of the fighters who settled in Kairouan—and whose families joined them—came from Egypt. Moreover, Egypt had already rooted Islamic administrative traditions that had benefited from the remnants of Byzantine administration. Above all, there was the historical circumstance that the caliphal state was going through in this period: the capital—the caliph—was occupied with establishing the foundations of his rule and appointing his son Yazīd as heir apparent. For this reason, if we take into account that Maslama ibn Mukhallad al-Anṣārī (may God be pleased with him) was a Companion of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him), how could we accept an interpretation that reduces his goals to material aspects—spoils, booty, and the trinkets of this world—given his religious standing, his social standing, and his administrative standing? This is something in which we disagree with Ḥusayn Mu'nis.

Nor do we agree with his interpretation of the reason for the dismissal of 'Uqba ibn Nāfi', where he argued that the cause was 'Uqba's preoccupation with everything except the planning of the city during the five years from 50 AH to 55 AH; that he did not undertake what Arab commanders were accustomed to doing—conquering cities and farms and thereby obtaining abundant spoils—and consequently, the abundance of spoils and wealth that the Arabs had been accustomed to receiving from Afrīqiya ceased. Since this was the measure by which the effort of the conquerors was judged, and since the importance of Kairouan was clear only to 'Uqba himself, it was easy for Maslama and those with him to belittle 'Uqba's standing in the eyes of the caliph by that means; they finally convinced him to abandon 'Uqba and replace him with someone else over the governance of the country (Mu'nis, n.d., p. 147).

It is clear that this interpretation lacks evidence and is based on conjecture. However, if we start from another perspective in interpreting this, and if we delve deeply into the character of 'Uqba ibn Nāfi' and his conquest strategy, as well as into the character of his successor and replacement, Abū al-Muhājir Dīnār, and his conquest strategy, and if we keep before our eyes the policy that the Umayyads were following during this formative

period regarding appointment and dismissal in sensitive positions, then the picture will become clear to us; we will perceive a logical explanation for the replacement of the former by the latter, without being content with the materialistic interpretation that does not befit the men of this period. For ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi’—despite the victories he achieved on the military front, the defeats he inflicted on both Byzantines and Berbers alike, and despite his foundation of Kairouan and the emergence of a new province at his hands—his strategy was fundamentally based on confrontation. He considered everyone who was not a Muslim an enemy, whether Berber or Byzantine, pagan or Christian, and he tarred them all with the same brush; his treatment of the defeated was characterised by a certain harshness according to the accounts of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, even if we doubt their precision. It is certain that reports were reaching the governor of Egypt, Maslama ibn Mukhallad al-Anṣārī, in succession; moreover, the man’s conduct was not hidden from him. On the other hand, Maslama had among his men someone he deemed more suitable for the phase, and, above all, more loyal and more deserving of reward if we measure the matter by the criterion that Mu‘āwiya and the rest of the Umayyads adopted during this period for administrative appointments—namely, having stood with them in their war against ‘Alī (may God be pleased with him) and their demand for the blood of ‘Uthmān (may God be pleased with him). This is the same criterion by which Maslama himself was rewarded and on the basis of which he was appointed to a governorship as important as Egypt. Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam is the first to indicate Mu‘āwiya’s justification for the dismissal of ‘Uqba, saying: “Then ‘Uqba came to Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān and said to him: ‘I have conquered lands, built houses and the congregational mosque, and people have submitted to me; then you sent a servant of the Anṣār who has wronged me in my dismissal.’ Mu‘āwiya apologised to him and said: ‘You know the standing of Maslama ibn Mukhallad with regard to the wronged Imām, his preference for him, his seeking retribution for his blood, and his offering of his life. I have restored you to your position.’” (Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, 1995, p. 225). Ibn ‘Asākir added some details, stating in his book: “‘Uqba ibn Nāfi’ came to Mu‘āwiya and said: ‘By God, I have conquered lands, they submitted to me, I have built houses and built the congregational mosque, and settled men; then you sent a servant of the Anṣār who has wronged me in my dismissal.’ Mu‘āwiya apologised to him and said: ‘You know the standing of Maslama ibn Mukhallad with regard to the wronged Imām, may God have mercy on him, his preference for him above all others, then his seeking retribution for his blood and his offering of his own life, seeking God’s reward, patiently, alongside those of his people and his clients who obeyed him.’” (Ibn ‘Asākir, 1995, p. 532, vol. 40). And in *al-Ḥulla al-Sīrā* it is stated: “Then ‘Uqba came to Mu‘āwiya and said to him: ‘I have conquered lands, built houses and the congregational mosque; then you sent a servant of the Anṣār

who has wronged me in my dismissal.’ Mu‘āwiya apologised to him and said: ‘You know the standing of Maslama ibn Mukhallad with regard to the wronged Imām, his preference for him, his seeking retribution for his blood, and his offering of his life.’” (Ibn al-Abbār, 1985, p. 325, vol. 2).

CONCLUSION

In concluding this research paper, we may say that the process of conquering Afrīqiya, settling therein, appointing governors over it, and assigning authority in this early phase was subject to the circumstances through which the Umayyad state passed during its foundation and the consolidation of the pillars of its rule. Within this process, certain criteria for selecting men and commanders became deeply entrenched—criteria that were tied to the very bases of the state’s emergence and its legitimacy. These related essentially to the overturning of the legitimacy of the caliphate in Islam *per se*, which the Umayyad state’s men considered to have ended with ‘Uthmān (may God be pleased with him); in their view, their own legitimacy derived from him and from fulfilling the obligation of avenging his blood by pursuing his killers and those who had rebelled against him. This matter therefore left its imprint on their appointments of commanders and governors. Consequently, the administration of the conquest of Afrīqiya became divided between two administrative spheres: a central administration linked to Damascus, the seat of the caliphate, and another administration linked to Egypt, the launching point of the campaigns and armies. What is moreover recorded in the historiography of this subject is a considerable opacity that afflicted the historical narratives—especially in the absence of a local account—caused by the historians’ confusion between different types of authority (*imāra*): namely, the command of military expeditions (*imārat al-ghazw*) on the one hand, and the governorship of prayer and land tax (*imārat al-ṣalāt wa-al-kharāj*) on the other.

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