

generally received with marks of honour by the subject tribes who, moreover, hated to see it strike camp, for it was they who had to provision the troops on campaign.

The *maḥalla* constituted an instrument of government. It performed in effect a triple function: to consolidate the authority of the sovereign over the provinces, to ensure the levying of taxes and to suppress rebellions or the insubordination of local chiefs. In the ordinary way, it performed a simple route march, but the collection of taxes sometimes proved difficult and necessitated more than a simple demonstration of force; when the launching of a *maḥalla* had been provoked by the agitation of a tribe, it was settled on its territory, from which it put pressure on the population; finally, when serious troubles broke out, real war operations had to be mounted against the rebels, as for example in 1864 (see Kh. Chater, *Insurrection et répression dans la Tunisie du XIX^e siècle: la Mēhalla de Zarrouk au Sahel* (1864), Tunis 1978).

In Morocco, the *maḥallas* performed almost the same functions as in Tunisia, with this difference, however, that a good part of the territory totally escaped the authority of the sultan, who was furthermore constrained in organising one since, from Fez or Meknès, he used to make his way to his southern capital, Marrakesh, via Rabat.

In a general fashion, the Moroccan *maḥalla* comprised elements of the three corps of the regular army [see *DIJAYSH*], to which were added some contingents designated by the name of *harka* (*haraka*) and supplied by tribes subject to the sultan. The latter formed the vanguard (or the rearguard where an attack on the rear was repulsed) and explored the terrain, spreading out over a wide area; then came the regular troops charged with protecting the sovereign (who rode under a parasol) and his entourage, who preceded the standards and musicians.

At its resting place the camp contained in its centre the tents of the Sultan, his wives and eunuchs, surrounded by a linen screen, which, in Tunisia, bore the Berber name *afraq* (transcribed as *āfrāq* [q.v.]). Outside this enclosure were placed the ministers, secretaries, musicians, around whom the troops formed a square; within this apparatus, wandering merchants established a market, where all kinds of articles and foodstuffs were to be found, for provisioning was not ensured by regular supervision; it was the tribes who had to supply what was called the *mūna* (*mu'na*), i.e. the provisioning, and it was not uncommon for this to be insufficient, in spite of the sacrifices of the populations subject to this obligation, which often reduced them to misery. Nevertheless, some of them preferred to remain dissident, at the risk of possibly seeing a *maḥalla* settle on their territory and help itself to their flocks and cereal resources without pity.

Most of the Europeans who visited Morocco before the Protectorate had occasion to describe a *maḥalla*, in particular the one mounted to suppress the rebellion of Bū Ḥmāra [q.v.], but the richest source with reference to this is the work of Dr. L. Arnaud, *Au temps des "Mehallas"*, IHÉM, Notes et Documents, fasc. no. xii, Cadablanca 1952.

Bibliography: given in the text.

(CH. PELLAT)

AL-MAHALLA AL-KUBRĀ or MAḤALLA KABĪR is the modern name of an important town in the Delta of the Nile at some distance to the west of the Damietta arm, north-east of Tanṭa. It

lies on the Turṭat al-Milāḥ canal, a branch of the Baḥr Shībīn.

In view of the large number of Egyptian geographical names compounded with *Maḥalla* (see these listed in Muḥammad Ramzī, *al-Kāmūs al-djughrāfī li 'l-bilād al-Miṣriyya*, Cairo 1953-68, i, 404-9), the identification of the town with the names mentioned by earlier Arabic writers is a matter of some difficulty. Maspero and Wiet identify it with the Coptic Tishairi (Amélinau, *La géographie de l'Égypte à l'époque copte*, Paris 1893, 262), but this identification is rendered doubtful by the fact that al-Maḥalla is a purely Arabic name (and it also remains to be proved that it is a rendering of the Coptic name just mentioned), and because the work of Abū Ṣāliḥ on the Christian buildings of Egypt makes no mention of this town. The earliest author who knew a town called al-Maḥalla or al-Maḥalla al-Kabīra is al-Muḥaddasī (55, 194, 196, 200); he tells us that it was a town of al-Rīf built in two parts, one called Sandafā (or Sandafā), but the statement that the town was situated on the river by Alexandria (200) seems to be an error. Al-Bakrī seems to know the same town under the name Maḥallat Maḥrūm (*Kitāb al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik* Brit. Libr. ms.). Idrīsī, *Description de l'Afrique*, 158, calls the town simply al-Maḥalla and knows a canal called after it. Yāḳūt's statements are confused, for he speaks of a town called Maḥallat Daḳalā and of another Maḥallat Sharḳiyūn (iv, 428), both of which seem to refer to the same place. Maḥallat Sharḳiyān in Yāḳūt—which he also calls al-Maḥalla al-Kubrā—forms one town with Sandafā and on the other hand he says that Maḥalla Daḳalā between al-Kāhira and Dimyāṭ is the largest of the Maḥallas that he knows (cf. also Abu 'l-Fidā', ii, 160), while the geographer al-Dimishkī (231) knows Maḥalla Daḳalā as the capital of the *kūra* of Daḳahla; Ibn Duḳmāk (v, 82) says that the governorship of this town was regarded as "the little vizierate" (*al-wizāra al-saḡhīra*). Under the Mamlūk sultan Barkūk's administrative reorganisation at the end of the 8th/14th century, al-Maḥalla al-Kubrā became the centre of the *wilāya* of the *Gharb*, under an *amīr jablkhāna* (see H. Halm, *Ägypten nach den mamlukischen Lebensregistern. II. Das Delta*, Wiesbaden 1982, 311, 519).

The name Maḥallat Sharḳiyūn is again found in al-Maḳrīzī (ed. Wiet, iii, 207). It is clear from these writers that the town was an important commercial centre from the 4th/10th century onwards. It does not seem however to have played any considerable part in history, although 'Alī Pāsha Mubārak quotes some events that took place there, from al-Maḳrīzī and al-Djabartī. In Egypt in the 19th century, the town had to give way to Tanṭa, which became the capital of the *mudiriyya* of al-Gharbiyya, while al-Maḥalla became the capital of a smaller administrative area; 'Alī Mubārak estimates its inhabitants at 50,000, while the 1914 Baedeker gives it only 33,500. It is at present a centre of the cotton trade; raw cotton is there cleaned in the factories. Of the many individuals who bore the *nisba* al-Maḥallī, the most celebrated is Djalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī [q.v.], who was born here.

Bibliography: Maspero and Wiet, *Matériaux pour servir à la géographie de l'Égypte*, Cairo 1919, 164 and the bibliography there given; 'Alī Pāsha Mubārak, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-djadīda*, xv, Būlāk 1305, 18-25; Ramzī, *op. cit.*, ii/2, 10, 15-26.

(J. H. KRAMERS*)

MAHALLĀTĪ, AḤĀ KHĀN, Sayyid Ḥasan 'Alī Shāh, last of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī imāms