

with the town of the same name in the Nile valley by a road to the Nile 200 km/130 miles long. There are main towns called al-Ḳaṣr in Farāfra and in Dakhla.

These oases (*al-bahriyya*, *al-farāfira*, *al-dākhila* and *al-khāridja*: conventionally, Bahariya, Farafra, Dakhla and Kharga) today form one of the 26 governorates of Egypt with the name of al-Wādī al-Djadīd, having an area of 45,800 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 132,000, including three administrative centres, three towns and 134 villages.

On the rather complicated dialectology of the oases, see P. Behnstedt and M. Woideich, *Die ägyptischen Oases—ein dialektogischer Vorbericht*, in *ZAL*, viii [1982], 39-71 (includes texts).

*Bibliography* (in addition to references in the text): Mas'ūdī, *Murūdj*, iii, 50-2 = §§ 894-5; Ibn Duqmāk, *Intisār*, v, 11-12; Maḳrīzī, *Khūṭat*, i, 87, 234-7; 'Alī Mubārak Pasha, *al-Khūṭat al-djadīda*, xvii, 30-1; Muḥammad Ramzī, *al-Kāmūs al-djughrāfi li 'l-bilād al-miṣriyya*, ii/4, 241-5, 256-7; H. Maspéro and G. Wiet, *Matériaux pour servir à la géographie de l'Égypte*, IFAO, Cairo 1914, 219-25; A. Fakhry, *The Oases of Egypt. I. Siwa Oasis*, Cairo 1973, *II. Bahriyah and Farafra Oases*, Cairo 1974.

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**WAHB, BANŪ**, a family of officials in caliphal service, especially noted as secretaries and viziers to the 'Abbāsids during the 3rd/9th and early 4th/10th centuries.

The majority of sources state that the family came from Wāsiṭ and were of Nestorian Christian origin before converting to Islam, nevertheless claiming a pure Arabic origin going back to the Yemeni tribe of Balḥārith of Nadjirān. The Wahbīs thus belong to the tradition of servants of the caliphs with Nestorian backgrounds who were prominent in the administrations of the 3rd/9th century (cf. L. Massignon, *La politique islamo-chrétienne des scribes nestoriens de Deir Qunna à la cour de Bagdad au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle de notre ère*, in *Vivre et Penser*, 2nd ser. [1942], 7-14). This role of the Wahbīs seems to go back to late Umayyad times, from which they passed into 'Abbāsid service and then were particularly associated with the Barmakīs. Wahb served Dja'far b. Yaḥyā [see BARĀMIKA] and then al-Ma'mūn's minister al-Faḍl b. Sahl [q.v.].

1. Sulaymān b. Wahb, Abū Ayyūb, began as a secretary to al-Ma'mūn and then acted for such generals as Mūsā b. Bughā and Aytākḥ in the reign of al-Wāṭḥik, thereby beginning a link with the Turkish military elite which was to run all through his career. At this time, his brother al-Ḥasan also was a secretary of the vizier Ibn al-Zayyāt [q.v.]. Sulaymān was twice *amīl* or financial intendant of the province of Egypt under al-Mutawakkil, apparently deriving rich pickings from the office. In the short reign of al-Muhtadī (255-6/859-60) he served as the caliph's last vizier at a time when all real power in the state had passed to the Turkish military classes and the vizierate had likewise reached a low ebb. Under al-Mu'tamid he became briefly vizier again in 263/877 and again in 264/878, at a time of intrigues and rivalries with another secretary and vizier, al-Ḥasan b. Maḳhlad b. al-Djarrāḥ [see IBN MAḲHLAD], also of Christian origin. But Sulaymān was soon afterwards dismissed, unable to satisfy the financial exigencies of al-Mu'tamid and his brother the regent al-Muwaffak, and died in prison in Ṣafar 272/July-August 885. He had, nevertheless, been the *mamdūh* of such leading poets of the time as Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī [q.v.].

2. 'Ubayd Allāh b. Sulaymān, son of the pre-

ceding, and also with long secretarial experience, shared in his father's disgrace, but had the support of the newly-nominated heir to the throne, al-Muwaffak's son al-Mu'taḍid [q.v.], and in Ṣafar 278/June 891 became al-Mu'tamid's last vizier and then, when al-Mu'tamid died the next year, vizier to the new caliph al-Mu'taḍid, remaining in office till his own death in Rabī' II 288/April 901. 'Ubayd Allāh was closely concerned with the re-imposition of caliphal power in Djibāl by military force and with various administrative reforms, and was the patron of the two brothers of the Banu 'l-Furāt [see IBN AL-FURĀT] in their efforts to secure a greater inflow of tax revenues for the state by the strict supervision of provincial agents. 'Ubayd Allāh achieved a great contemporary reputation for his honest conduct and justice, and was favoured by the caliph's addressing him by his *kunya*; also, he seems wisely to have restrained al-Mu'taḍid from putting blatantly anti-Umayyad, pro-Shī'ī measures into force, fearing the effects on public order.

3. al-Ḳāsim b. 'Ubayd Allāh, Abū 'l-Ḥusayn, son of the preceding, succeeded as vizier when his father died and acted as al-Mu'taḍid's minister until the caliph himself died in Rabī' II 289/March-April 902, and was the first vizier to the new caliph al-Muḳtafi [q.v.] until his own death in Dhū 'l-Ḳa'da 291/October 904. Al-Ḳāsim had served at his father's side, but was of lower calibre: less scrupulous, more concerned with lining the pockets of himself and his protégés, and brutal with those he regarded as hostile or potentially so. Thus he secured the execution of the governor of Fārs Badr al-Mu'taḍidī [q.v. in Suppl.], of the captive Ṣaffārid *amīr* 'Amr b. al-Layṭh [q.v.], of the poet Ibn al-Rūmī [q.v.], who had satirised the Banū Wahb, and various others, often against the will of his young master. He was planning to move against the surviving brother of the Banu 'l-Furāt, 'Alī, but fell ill and died before he could achieve this. Although only a mediocre administrator, al-Ḳāsim was an able courtier and managed to raise the prestige of the office of vizier to a new height as the directing power in the state. He received great honours from the caliph, including the new honorific title of *Walī al-Dawla* "Friend, Protector of the State" (which was to appear on coins), and one of his daughters married a son of al-Muḳtafi. His death, however, meant the eclipse of the family's influence for nearly a generation and the ensuing ascendancy of persons like 'Alī b. al-Furāt, involving *inter alia* an increase in Shī'ī influence in the state, and new figures like the latter's rival 'Alī b. 'Īsā [q.v.].

4. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḳāsim, son of the preceding, succeeded 'Ubayd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Kalwadḥānī as al-Muḳtadir's penultimate vizier in Ramaḍān 319/September 931, and filled the office for eight months till Rabī' II 320/May 932. He relied on Furātīd support against the influence of 'Alī b. 'Īsā and the powerful commander-in-chief Mu'nīs al-Muḏaffar [q.v.], and, like his father, received from the caliph an honorific title, *Amīd al-Dawla* "Mainstay of the State", which appears on coins. He endeavoured to restore the disastrous state of the caliphal finances, but fell from power, having been perhaps the last vizier to attempt to retain for the vizierate a measure of its former independence.

5. Muḥammad b. al-Ḳāsim, brother of the preceding, became vizier to al-Ḳāḥir in Sha'bān 321/July 933 in succession to Ibn Muḳla [q.v.] and at the time of Mu'nīs's fall and death, but served for only two-and-a-half months till his dismissal in Dhū 'l-Ḳa'da 321/October 933.