

99.6 Sijilmāsa resembles Qayrawān in the healthiness of its climate, and its close proximity to the desert. But besides this there is at Sijilmāsa an uninterrupted trade with the land of the Sūdān and other countries, abundant profits, and the constant coming and going of caravans. The inhabitants, too, are well-bred in their actions and perfect in morals and deeds. In their manners they do not share the pettiness of the other people of the Maghrib in their dealings and customs, but act with great frankness. They are known for their ready charity and show a manly concern for one another. Though there are among them some old feuds and quarrels they put them aside in time of need and cast them away out of the nobility, forgiveness, and natural generosity which are peculiar to them, and the good manners which they have acquired in their numerous travels, long periods of absence from home, and separation from their country. I came to Sijilmāsa in the year 40 [340/951-2] and I saw there, more than anywhere else in the Maghrib, *shaykhs* of blameless conduct and devotion to scholars and scholarship combined with lofty broadmindedness and elevated and pure ambition. The notables of the other towns [of the Maghrib] are inferior to them in opulence and well-being even though they are close to them in their *esprit de corps* and their circumstances are [in other respects somewhat] similar.

I saw at Awdaghust a warrant in which was the statement of a debt owed to one of them [the people of Sijilmāsa] by one of the merchants of Awdaghust, who was [himself] one of the people of Sijilmāsa, in the sum of 42,000 dinars. I have never seen or heard anything comparable to this story in the East. When I told it to people in 'Irāq, Fārs, and Khūrasān it was considered remarkable.

100 Mu'tazz, during the period of his emirate there, continuously received revenue from taxes on caravans setting out for the land of the Sūdān, as well as tithes, land tax, and old-established dues from what was bought and sold there, such as camels, sheep, cattle and other merchandise going out and coming in from Ifrīqiya, Fez, Spain, the Sūs, and Aghmāt, along with other sums due from the Mint – to a total of about 400,000 dinars and this from Sijilmāsa and its district alone. I have already mentioned that the total income of the Maghrib from end to end