

= Battle of Tawahin =

The Battle of Tawahin ( Arabic : ????? ????????? Waq'at al @-@ 'aw'h'n , " Battle of the Mills " ) was fought in 885 between the forces of the Abbasid Caliphate under Abu 'l @-@ Abbas ibn al @-@ Muwaffaq ( the future Caliph al @-@ Mu 'tadid ) and the autonomous Tulunid ruler of Egypt and Syria , Khumarawayh . The battle took place near Ramlah ( modern Israel ) and ended with a Tulunid victory .

Following Khumarawayh 's ascension to power in 884 , the Abbasid central government decided to reassert its control over the provinces ruled by him and invaded northern Syria that year . By early 885 the conflict was proceeding favorably for the Abbasids , forcing Khumarawayh to personally take the field and try to stop their advance toward Egypt . In the battle that followed , the Abbasid troops initially defeated the Tulunids and plundered Khumarawayh 's camp , but were then ambushed by a Tulunid reserve force and routed in turn .

As a result of the battle , the Abbasid forces were forced to withdraw from Syria , and Tulunid control over the province was reaffirmed . In the following year the Abbasid government agreed to a treaty which formally recognized Khumarawayh 's rule over both Egypt and Syria .

= = Background = =

Ahmad ibn Tulun , a Turkish soldier , had managed to become governor of Egypt in 868 . By using the country 's immense wealth to raise an army of his own , and exploiting the instability of the central Abbasid government , over the next years he became de facto autonomous , although he continued to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Abbasid caliph ? for most of his reign the powerless al @-@ Mu 'tamid ? and to forward some tax revenue to the central government . Ibn Tulun 's power made him a major rival to the real power behind the Abbasid throne , al @-@ Mu 'tamid 's brother and regent al @-@ Muwaffaq . The latter tried in 877 to wrest Egypt from Ibn Tulun , but the attempt failed spectacularly , and in the following year Ibn Tulun extended his area of control over Syria up to the border zone with the Byzantine Empire in the north and up to al @-@ Raqqa in the western Jazira in the east , immediately adjacent to the Abbasid metropolitan province of Iraq .

Relations between Ibn Tulun and al @-@ Muwaffaq were further strained when al @-@ Mu 'tamid tried to play off the two men against each other to regain his own authority and independence . In 882 the caliph attempted to escape from his brother 's control by fleeing to Ibn Tulun 's domain , but he was apprehended en route by Ishaq ibn Kundaj , the governor of the Jazira and Mosul , and was sent back to Iraq . This led to a formal breach in relations ; al @-@ Muwaffaq ordered that Ibn Tulun be publicly cursed in mosques throughout the empire and stripped of his governorships in favour of Ishaq ibn Kundaj , while Ibn Tulun similarly had al @-@ Muwaffaq publicly cursed , declared him deposed from his position as al @-@ Mu 'tamid 's second heir and proclaimed a " holy war " against him .

When Ibn Tulun died in May 884 , he was succeeded by his second son , Khumarawayh , with the approval of the Tulunid grandees but not the Abbasid court . Immediately al @-@ Muwaffaq ended the ongoing negotiations that he had been conducting with Ibn Tulun , and refused to recognize Khumarawayh 's rule over Egypt and Syria . A prominent Tulunid general , Ahmad ibn Muhammad al @-@ Wasiti , then defected to al @-@ Muwaffaq , and urged him to make war on the " young and inexperienced " Khumarawayh and recover the latter 's provinces for the central government .

= = Prelude : Abbasid invasion of Syria = =

The initial Abbasid invasion was led by Ishaq ibn Kundaj , appointed as the nominal governor of Syria and Egypt , and another general , Muhammad ibn Diwdad Abu 'l @-@ Saj . After receiving encouragement from al @-@ Muwaffaq , who promised to send them reinforcements , the two commanders marched into Syria in mid @-@ 884 . The Tulunid governor of Damascus soon defected to their side , and they were able to take control of Antioch , Hims and Aleppo . Upon learning of the Abbasid advance , Khumarawayh sent troops to Syria . The Tulunid army first

proceeded to Damascus , where they succeeded in forcing its rebel governor to flee , and then advanced to Shayzar on the Orontes . The onset of winter , however , resulted in a lull in hostilities , and both sides remained in their camps to wait out the season .

Eventually the reinforcements that al @-@ Muwaffaq had promised arrived from Iraq , under the command of his own son , Abu 'l @-@ Abbas . The combined Abbasid forces advanced to Shayzar , where the Tulunid army was still encamped . The latter was caught completely by surprise and was defeated ; many of the Egyptians were killed in the fighting . The survivors fled to Damascus , but upon learning that the Abbasid army was headed for them they abandoned the city , allowing the Abbasids to retake it in February 885 . The Tulunid forces continued south to Ramlah in the district of Palestine , where they wrote to Khumarawayh of what had transpired . Khumarawayh now decided to personally lead his troops against the Abbasids , and departed from Egypt for Syria .

At the same time , Abu 'l @-@ Abbas set out from Damascus and headed for Ramlah , during which he learned of Khumarawayh 's arrival in Syria . At this point , however , the Abbasid offensive was hampered by a dispute between its commanders , which was caused when Abu 'l @-@ Abbas accused Ishaq ibn Kundaj and Ibn Abu 'l @-@ Saj of cowardice . In response to this insult , the two generals decided to abandon the campaign , and left Abu 'l @-@ Abbas to face Khumarawayh 's forces by himself .

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The two armies met at a village called at @-@ Tawahin ( " the Mills " ) , situated between Ramlah and Damascus , on 5 / 6 April 885 ( although later Egyptian sources like al @-@ Maqrizi give the date , probably erroneously , as 7 August ) . Khumarawayh reportedly had a significant numerical advantage , thanks in part to the departure of Ishaq ibn Kundaj and Ibn Abu 'l @-@ Saj ; according to al @-@ Kindi , the Tulunid army numbered 70 @,@ 000 while Abu 'l @-@ Abbas had only 4 @,@ 000 men . Despite this , the first engagement between the two armies went favorably for the Abbasids . Khumarawayh quickly lost his nerve and fled , according to al @-@ Tabari , " on the back of a donkey " back to Egypt with part of his army .

Believing that they had won the battle , the Abbasid troops proceeded to plunder the Tulunid camp , with Abu 'l @-@ Abbas installing himself in Khumarawayh 's own tent . A part of the Tulunid army , however , under Sa 'd al @-@ Aysar , had remained behind and prepared to ambush Abu 'l @-@ Abbas ' forces . Once the Abbasids , secure in their success , " had already laid down their arms and settled in their quarters " , Sa 'd al @-@ Aysar 's men attacked and routed them , inflicting severe casualties and killing several senior commanders . Abu 'l @-@ Abbas , who mistakenly thought that Khumarawayh had returned to the fight , decided to flee with what men he had left , and the Tulunids plundered his camp in turn .

= = Aftermath = =

Following the battle , Abu 'l @-@ Abbas and a " very few " of his men who had managed to escape made a disorganized retreat to the north . They first reached Damascus , whose inhabitants refused to allow him entry , and then proceeded to Tarsus near the Byzantine frontier . After spending some time at Tarsus , they were ousted from the city by its residents in mid @-@ 885 , at which point Abu 'l @-@ Abbas decided to withdraw from Syria and return to Iraq .

Khumarawayh learned of the outcome of the battle in Egypt . Rejoicing upon hearing of Sa 'd al @-@ Aysar 's victory , he quickly sent back his forces to Syria and re @-@ established his authority over it . A large part of the Abbasid army was captured and transported to Egypt , where Khumarawayh , in a gesture aimed at reconciliation with the caliphal government , allowed those soldiers who wanted to return to Iraq depart without ransom , while offering the rest the opportunity to settle in Egypt .

The victorious Sa 'd al @-@ Aysar went to Damascus , where he rebelled against Khumarawayh , but was defeated and killed .

Over the next couple of years , Khumarawayh followed up on the victory and succeeded in

considerably extending his realm . In late 886 , he launched an offensive against the Jazira ; Ishaq ibn Kundaj was defeated and forced to flee , and the province came under the Tulunid sphere of influence . Shortly after this , Khumarawayh began negotiations with al @-@ Muwaffaq , and a treaty was signed in December 886 whereby the Abbasid government recognized Khumarawayh as hereditary ruler in his possessions for thirty years . Subsequent attempts by both Ishaq ibn Kundaj and Ibn Abu 'l @-@ Saj to retake the Jazira failed , and Ishaq ibn Kundaj eventually submitted to Khumarawayh . In 890 Yazman al @-@ Khadim , the governor of Tarsus , also declared allegiance to him , thus bringing Cilicia under Tulunid control as well .

The Tulunid triumph was to prove ephemeral , however . In 893 Abu 'l @-@ Abbas , now Caliph , succeeded in regaining the Jaziran provinces by treaty , and after Khumarawayh 's death in 896 , took advantage of Tyulunid weakness to recover northern Syria and Cilicia as well . Finally , in 905 the Abbasids launched a campaign that rapidly brought about the end of Tulunid autonomy and fully re @-@ incorporated their lands into the Caliphate .