

Bizerta

Bizerta occupies a strategic location on the northwestern coast of Tunisia, from which it commands the Sicilian Channel, but its development has sometimes suffered from its position, isolated as it is from the political centres of Qayrawān and Tunis. The city developed on the site of a good harbour, at the outlet of Lake Bizerte, a lagoon rich in fish. Following Phoenician and Carthaginian occupations, a Roman city, Hippo Diarrytus (Hippo Zarrytus), was founded on the site, which remained important until Byzantine times. Conquered in 41/661–2 by Muslims—who called it Binzart (in Arabic)—the city was reinforced to become a major element of the defence of Ifrīqiya against Christian attacks, although it never became an active commercial port during the Middle Ages. Taken by the Spanish in 1535 and by the Ottomans in 1574, it recovered its importance with the Turkish regency, profiting from the presence of the Admiralty, which made it an important base for corsairs in the Mediterranean, leading to several reprisal attacks by Christian powers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The arrival in the seventeenth century of numerous Andalusian refugees reinvigorated the economy of Bizerte and its hinterland.

Under the French protectorate it kept its role as a naval port. Important modifications were made to the harbour in 1882, after which it became a vital naval base for the French fleet, especially during the Second World War. Because of its strategic importance, Bizerte remained under French sovereignty, with an important garrison, after Tunisia gained its independence in 1956. The crisis of 1961—during which large popular demonstrations were violently suppressed by the French army

led to its retrocession to Tunisia two years later. Bizerte is today the seat of a governorship and an important commercial port, and the opening of the motorway in 2002, connecting it with Tunis and the rest of the country has contributed to its economic development.

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DOMINIQUE VALÉRIAN

Buʿāth

Buʿāth, in eastern Medina (pre-Islamic Yathrib; Illustration 1), was, in about 617 C.E., the site of a major battle between an alliance of the Khazraj, their Bedouin allies, and the Jewish Qaynuqāʿ, and an alliance of the Aws, their Bedouin allies, the Jewish Naḍīr and Qurayza, and two smaller Jewish tribes, the Thaʿlaba (i.e., the Thaʿlaba b. al-Fityawn) and the Zaʿūrāʿ, which were both of Ghassānid origin. The Khazraj were led by ʿAmr b. al-Nuʿmān, of the Bayāḍa branch, who promised his fellow tribesmen the water resources and palm orchards of the Naḍīr and Qurayza in the ʿĀliya (Upper Medina); Buʿāth was in the territory of the Qurayza.

The Aws included five branches: three of them formed the Aws Allāh group and lived in the eastern ʿĀliya; the ʿAmr b. ʿAwf lived in the town of Qubāʿ, in the western ʿĀliya; and the Nabīt lived far from the other four branches, in the Sāfila (Lower Medina), close to some branches

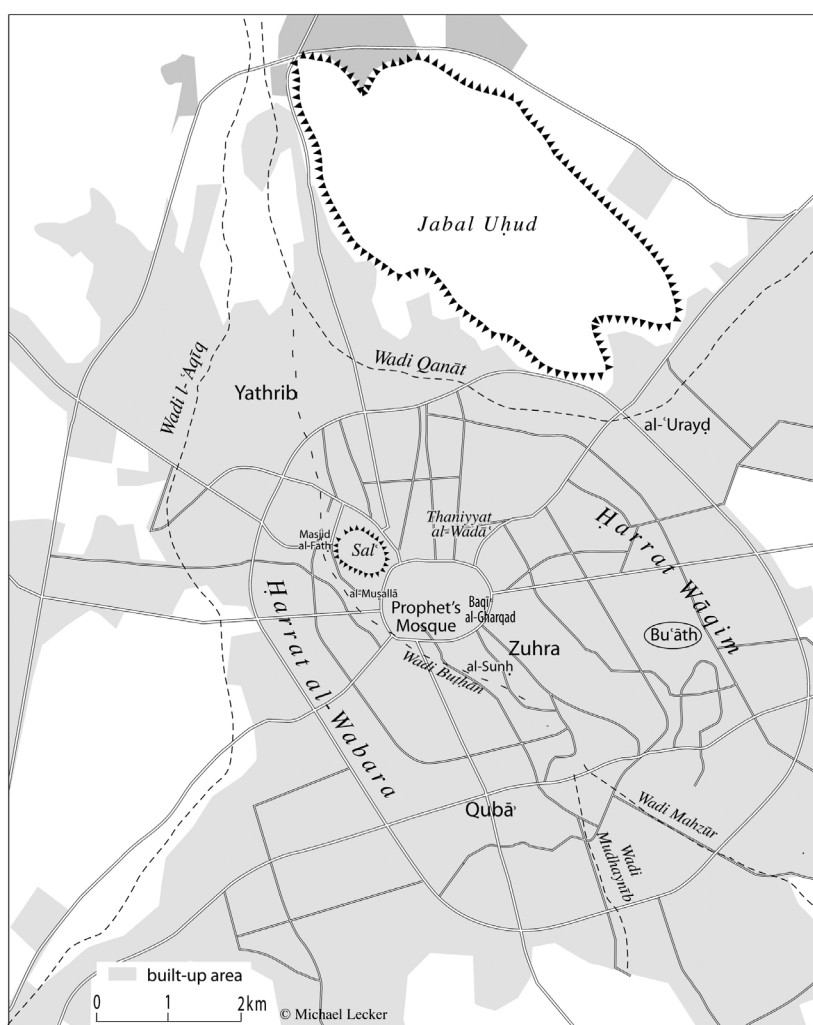


Illustration 1. Location map of Bu'āth (Yathrib, present day Medina).

of the Khazraj. Only two major subdivisions of the Nabīṭ are relevant here, namely the 'Abd al-Ashhal and the Ṣafar; another major subdivision, the Ḥāritha, did not participate in the battle. Before the battle, some families of the Nabīṭ settled with families of the Naḍīr and Qurayṣa, while others settled with the Aws Allāh. This probably indicates that they had been expelled by the Khazraj or at least threatened with expulsion.

The battle ended with the victory of the Jewish-Aws alliance, and the Nabīṭ were reinstated in their lands. However, they probably remained the weakest branch of the Aws and so gave a warm welcome to the prophet Muḥammad.

Abū Qays b. al-Aslat al-Wā'ilī (of the Aws Allāh) is credited with preparing the Aws and their Bedouin allies for war, while actual command was entrusted to Ḥuḍayr b. Simāk (of the Nabīṭ, more pre-

cisely the ‘Abd al-Ashhal). Ḥuḍayr was no stranger to the Jews: he was literate, and literacy in pre-Islamic Medina could be acquired only in the Jewish *kuttāb* (*bayt al-midrās*); and, according to the genealogist Ibn al-Qaddāḥ (fl. In the first half of the third/ninth century), Ḥuḍayr was married to a woman of the (Jewish) Za‘ūrā’, who, before Islam, bore him his son Usayd, who was also literate.

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MICHAEL LECKER

Buluggīn b. Zīrī

Buluggīn (standard Ar., Buluqqīn) **b. Zīrī** b. Manād (d. 373/984), was the first Zīrid ruler of Ifrīqiya. For distinction in the service of the Fāṭimids as *amīr* of the Ṣanhāja Berbers against the Zanāta Berbers, he was named governor of Ifrīqiya by the Fāṭimid caliph al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh (r. 341–65/953–75). As he was almost always on campaigns in the central Maghrib, he entrusted the administration of al-Qayrawān and eastern Ifrīqiya to a vice-*amīr*, ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Kātib, son of an Aghlabid prince, whose power grew continuously.

Buluggīn founded Algiers, Miliana (Milyāna), and Médéa (al-Madiyya) in 349/960, fought the Ibādī-Wahbī *shaykh* Abū Khazar in 358/968–9, and defeated the Zanāta in 360/971. His father, Zīrī, was killed by Ja‘far b. ‘Alī b. Ḥamdūn

al-Andalusī, the rebellious governor of M’sila (Masīla) and the Zāb, both in present-day Algeria, in Ramaḍān 360/June–July 971. As the new *amīr* of the Ṣanhāja, Buluggīn drove the Zanāta from the central Maghrib at the end of 360/autumn 971 and took M’sila and the Zāb. On 20 Dhū l-Ḥijja 361/2 Oct. 972 he was invested, under the name of Abū l-Futūḥ Yūsuf, with the Fāṭimid west, except for Sicily and Tripoli. He campaigned in the Maghrib in 362–3/973–4, appointed ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Kātib governor of Ifrīqiya, fought the Kutāma Berbers in 364–5/974–5, and took Tripoli, Surt, and Ajdābiya, all in present-day Libya, in 367/977–8. During his last campaign, in 368–73/979–84, he captured Fez (Fās), Sijilmāsa, and Baṣra (all in present-day Morocco), defeated the Barghawāta Berbers, and died on the return journey, on 21 Dhū l-Ḥijja 373/25 May 984. He was succeeded by his son Manṣūr (r. 373–86/984–96).

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