

# **THE CALIPHATE AND THE TURKS, 232-256/847-870: A POLITICAL STUDY**

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**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
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A political study

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A thesis submitted to University of St. Andrews  
in application for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy



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## The Abstract

### The Caliphate and the Turks

232-256/847-870

#### A Political Study

Under the Umayyads, Muslims came into direct contact with Turks in their homeland which lay east of Khurāsān and Transoxania. However, after the Turks had submitted to the Islamic state, the Caliphs, in particular the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs, began to employ them in various roles such as guards and soldiers. They served alongside the veteran Arabs and Iranians, because the Turks, unlike these others, did not so pride themselves on their nationality that they behaved exclusively. The Turks were valued for their bravery and fidelity. The Caliph Mu'taṣim, in fact, increased their number, and his reliance on them was a result of his needs and of certain other circumstances.

After the death of Mu'taṣim, the Turks rose to positions of considerable importance in all the affairs of state. They had an even greater influence on the running of the Caliphate when they began to interfere in the appointing of the Caliph, which they did for the first time in the case of Mutawakkil. Nevertheless, none of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs from Mutawakkil onwards seemed to acquiesce readily in Turkish control, and indeed they resisted the Turks vigorously. They tried to eliminate them and their power entirely, and to restore the dignity of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate.

As the first step in escaping the interference of the Turks, the Caliphs decided to move the state capital. But when the Turks realized the Caliphs' intentions, they began to plot against them and to assassinate them. In the course of this struggle between the Turks



and the Caliphate the civil war of 251 H occurred. As a result, government authority weakened, particularly in those outlying regions furthest from its power and influence. Therefore, popular movements and attempts to gain independence emerged in many provinces, such as Hijāz, Armenia, Syria and Iran. In fact, most of these movements were not aimed against the Caliphate itself, but against the Turks who dominated affairs of state. At the same time the power of the (Wazīr) minister of state began to diminish, and his remaining in office was closely linked with the desires of the Turks. In addition, the Turks attempted to take over the Vizirate itself. Therefore, some of them, such as Waṣīf and Autāmish, occupied this office although they were quite unqualified for it.

In consequence, the Vizirate deteriorated and became powerless, just as the Caliphate had done.

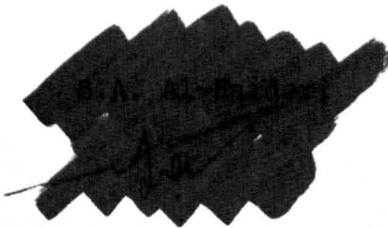
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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed by me, that the work of which it is a record was carried out by me, and that it has not been accepted in any previous application for a higher degree.



Supervisor's Statement

I certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations relevant to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read "H. Kennedy", is written over a dark, irregular, scribbled-out background.

Dr H. Kennedy

### Statement of Research

Salah Al-Haideri undertook and completed the research for the accompanying Ph.D. thesis from October 1976 to August 1979. He was admitted as a research student under Ordinance No.12 in October 1976 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. under this Resolution. The conditions of the Resolution and Regulations have been fulfilled.

## Preface

This thesis began as an examination of the Caliphate and the Turks during the time (232-256/847-870). It is concentrated on the study of the Turks, their influence and the resistance of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs to them. There is also discussion here of the political developments of the time, the attitude of the Caliphs and the Turks towards various religious groups, and then the status of the Vizirate during this period.

This study on the time of Turkish domination and its completion. I am indebted to the valuable and able guidance and supervision of Dr Hugh Kennedy. Throughout my study in the Department of Mediaeval History, St. Andrews, I found him a real friend and guide. I should thank the staff of the library in the University of St. Andrews for providing the facilities in all the years of my research. I am also very grateful to Miss Muriel Rough for typing this thesis. Finally, I owe a great debt to my wife for her support and encouragement.

University of St. Andrews

March, 1979

S.A. AL-HAIDERI

# The Caliphate and the Turks 232-256/847-870

## A political study

### Chapter One

Introductory Study of the Turkish Race, Their Home, Their ancestry, Contemporary 'Arab Opinions about the Turks, Their Economic and Social Life, Their Appearance in the Islamic State.

### Chapter Two

The Nature of Turkish Influence and its Causes

### Chapter Three

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The Role of the Turks in Political Developments;

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B. The Interference of the Harīm in the Political and Financial Affairs.

(2) The Attempts to Transfer the Capital of the Caliphate and their Causes.

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1. Introductory Study of the Vizirate. (The Vizirate),  
(Forms of the Vizirate), Formalities (Rusūm) Pertaining  
to the Vizirate.
2. The Vizirate and the Turks

1. Hārūn al-Rashīd (170-193/786-809)
2. Amīn (193-198/809-813)
3. Ma'mūn (198-218/813-833)
4. Mu'tasim (218-227/833-842)
5. Wāthiq (227-232/842-847)
6. Mutawakkil (232-247/847-861)
7. Muntasir (247-248/861-862)
8. Musta'in (248-252/862-866)
9. Mu'tazz (252-255/866-869)
10. Muhtadi (255-256/869-870)
11. Mu'tamid (256-279/870-892)



1. Hārūn al-Rashīd

3. Ma'mūn 4. Mu'tasim 2. Amīn

Muḥammad

5. Wāthiq

6. Mutawakkil

8. Musta'in

10. Muhtadi

Muwaffaq

7. Muntasir

9. Mu'tazz

11. Mu'tamid

Dūrī, Dirāsāt fī 'l-'Uṣūr al-'Abbāsiyah al-Mut'akhira

## A Survey of the Sources

The following is a rapid survey of the major sources which have been useful for this study, with special emphasis on certain of them.

### Historical Sources

Among the historical sources, the accounts of Ṭabari, Ya'qūbi, Mas'ūdi, Balādhuri and Jahshiyārī furnish the principal basis for this study. These sources are supplemented by certain valuable accounts which reflect conditions prevailing in the 3rd century A.H.

Ṭabarī, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr (d.310/923).

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He was both a theologian and an historian. His Tarikh al-Rusul wa'L-Mulūk is the principal historical source for this study. His chronicle furnishes adequate chronological data for charting the influence of the Turks on the affairs of the 'Abbāsīd state and for getting an idea of their internal conflicts. But unfortunately his information about the attitude of the Turks towards the religious sects, and in particular towards Non-Muslims (Ahl al-Dhimma), is rather scant, because of the fact that he was dealing almost entirely with political events. On the other hand, Ṭabari is regarded as being reliable, because he is an historian contemporary with the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, living during the time of Turkish domination. Nevertheless, some of the information which he adduces seems to be rather unlikely. For instance, when he states the causes which persuaded the Caliph Mutawakkil to leave Damascus and

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(1) Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Irshād, vol.6, pp.423-62, Ibn Khallikān, vol.4, pp.191-92, Dūrī, 'Ilm al-Tarikh 'Ind al-'Arab, p.55, Rosenthal - A History of Muslim Historiography, p.134

return to Sāmarrā', he says that the weather was cold, and rain and snow were falling heavily in Damascus. Yet, as a matter of fact, Mutawakkil was there between Şufar and Rabi' al-Thāni (between May and July, which is in the middle of summer)<sup>(2)</sup>.

As a traditionist Ṭabarī followed the practice of scholars (Muḥadithūn) in quoting the sources of most of his accounts. One source of his information on the period of Turkish domination is his own first-hand experience<sup>(3)</sup>, but he also drew - and in large measure - on the evidence of people who had witnessed the events of that time and had related their knowledge to him. Ṭabarī's history, with all its defects, remains one of the most important sources of information on the 'Abbāsid Caliphate in general and on those particular aspects of it which are covered in this study.

Ya'qūbi, Aḥmad b. Abī Ya'qūb Ishāq b. Ja'far b. Wahhab (d.284/895).<sup>(4)</sup>  
Ya'qūbi was a great historian and geographer. Both his Tarīkh and his Kitāb al-Buldān contain useful information about the Turks, their tribes, their country, their life and their gradual attainment of influential positions, particularly during the reign of Mu'taṣim. Although he supported the 'Alawī persuasion<sup>(5)</sup>, he did not let this influence him in his writing of history. His Tarīkh is a concise narrative, yet he mentions from time to time various historical data which could not be found in other sources. The Buldān is primarily geographical in character, but it contains much information of interest to the historian. Although he does not often refer

(2) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1436

(3) Dūrī, 'Ilm al-Tarīkh', p.55

(4) Yāqūt, Irshād, vol.2, pp.156-57, Dūrī, 'Ilm al-Tarīkh', p.51, Rosenthal, Historiography, p.106

(5) Dūrī, 'Ilm al-Tarīkh', p.52, Rosenthal, p.134

to his sources, it is obvious that Ya'qūbī derived some of his information from certain narrators such as Madā'inī, Haitham b. 'Udayy, Ibn al-Kalbī and al-Khawārizmī. As an historian living during the period of Turkish domination, Ya'qūbī was able to experience the events of that time for himself. In addition, his own wide travels and his enquiries of other travellers provided him with extensive information <sup>(6)</sup>. In conclusion, Ya'qūbī's Tarīkh and Buldān were significant sources of material for this study.

Mas'ūdi, Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ḥusain (d.346/956)

He is an 'Arab historian and geographer and one of the most versatile authors of the fourth century A.H. <sup>(7)</sup> In his Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa'l-Ashrāf he states that the object of his work is not to give a detailed account, but rather a simple and synoptic narrative which could be remembered by the reader. Thus he only gives an outline of the important events in the 3rd century A.H. In his Murūj al-Dhahab, some of his narrative is set down without mention of the intermediate link in the chain of evidence. Mas'ūdi states in the barest terms, for example, that 'Alī b. al-Jahm said that when Mutawakkil came to power, people offered him such presents as they could afford. Muḥammad b. 'Abdallah b. Ṭāhir gave him a troupe of slave women, including some who were singers. Maḥbūba, beloved slave woman of the Caliph and musician and poetess, <sup>(8)</sup> belonged to this troupe. But Mas'ūdi makes no mention of how the information <sup>(9)</sup> came to him. This sometimes mars the trustworthiness of his account

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(6) Dūrī, 'Ilm al-Tarīkh, p.51, Rosenthal, p.106

(7) The Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol.3, p.403, Rosenthal, pp.107-108

(8) Mas'ūdi, Murūj, vol.4, p.40

(9) The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol.3, pp.403-404

It seems that he contented himself with rather superficial historical investigations and accepted tales and legends without criticism. As a result Mas'ūdi did not much influence the writers who followed the historical tradition of Ṭabari, such as Ibn Miskawaih and Ibn al-Athīr. Nevertheless, in this study we are indebted to him for a good deal of valuable information about Islamic history.

Balādhuri, Ahmad b. Yahyā (d.279/892).

His Futūh al-Buldān is of particular importance for this study. He discusses the conquest of different countries and furnishes an historical and geographical account of each area. Balādhuri's geographical data in particular proved an effective stimulant to the development of Muslim (10) geography and to a large degree determined its course. Scattered pieces of historical information concerning cultural, economic and administrative affairs can be found in the accounts of events in remote provinces such as Armenia, Khurāsān and the Byzantine frontiers. Furthermore, Balādhuri is illuminating on the treatment of Ahl al-Dhimma by the Caliphs. His accounts are based in part on his own travels through the various provinces. In addition, he drew on information which he gathered from (11) various narrators. Although he was favoured by the 'Abbāsids, particularly the Caliph Mutawakkil (12), this does not seem to have influenced him in his writing, and his accounts were found to be very useful for this study.

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(10) Rosenthal, Historiography, p.107

(11) Dūrī, 'Ilm al-Tarīkh', p.49

(12) Yāqūt, Irshād, vol.2, pp.127-132, Dūrī, 'Ilm', p.50

Jahshiyāri, Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. 'Abdūs (d.331/942).

(13)

He and his father were officials of the 'Abbāsīd court . He occupied the position of Hājib for the Wazīr 'Alī b. 'Isā and then for Ḥamīd b. al-'Abbās during the reign of Muqtadir . In his Kitāb al-Wizarā' he wrote about 'Abbāsīd administrative history, set against the background of the political events which occurred during that period. His account is important in so far as it provides an 'inside-story' of the affairs of the 'Abbāsīd court and administration, as derived from officials and court associates. More importantly, he described the various administrative institutions, particularly the Vizirate, and he lists the 'Abbāsīd Wazīrs one by one and gives an account for their time in office. His narrative went as far as the reign of the Caliph Mu'tadīd, but the extant portion of his work extends only to Ma'mūn, the rest being missing. Sections were used by Tanūkhī in his Faraj ba'd al-Shiddah, by Tha'ālībī in his Kitāb al-Ta'rīd, and by Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī in his Mu'jams, as well as by others. The recent author Mikhā'il 'Awād succeeded in collecting fragments which had been lost from Kitāb al-Wizarā', and edited them in 1965 .

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Tanūkhī, Abū 'Alī Muḥassin b. 'Alī (d.384/994).

He was one of the administrative officials of the 'Abbāsīd state, and

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served in the judiciary . But he was famous as an historian and writer

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(Adīb) during the fourth century A.H. Although he was considered as one

(13) Sourdel, le Vizirat, vol.1, p.9

(14) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.6, p.294, Abū al-Maḥāsīn, vol.3, p.279

(15) 'Awād, Lost Fragments of Kitāb al-Wizarā'

(16) Yāqūt, Irshād, vol.6, pp.251-67

(17) Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Tarīkh Baghdad, vol.13, p.155

of the associates of the 'Abbāsīd court, his position did not influence his accounts. He gives valuable data relating to this study in his Kitāb al-Faraj, Jām'i al-Tawārīkh (or Kitāb al-Nishwār) and Mustajād. These works (18) contain bibliographies of people from various stations in society as well as those of the personalities connected either with the administration or with the court of the Caliph.

Tanūkhī drew much of his information from Jahshiyārī (19), and also derives material from the narrators of his time. He states, for example, that Abū al-Ḥusain 'Ubaidullah b. Aḥmad al-Khazarī al-Baghdadi told him such and such, and that 'Abdallah b. Muḥammad al-Ṣurūrī also told him such and such (20). On the whole, Tanūkhī's accounts were very useful for this study.

Iṣfahānī, Abū al-Faraj (d.356/966-67).

His Kitāb Maqātil al-Ṭālibīyin wa Akhbārihim gives significant data concerning the 'Alawīs. Although Iṣfahānī tended to be pro-'Alawī (21) he does not seem to be biased in his historical accounts, for he quotes his authorities and gives more than one version of a described event (22). Yet, as he has been accused of an uncritical acceptance of the stories and material available to him, one should nevertheless be cautious in using his work, especially when it deals with 'Alawī uprisings. Iṣfahānī gives information about various 'Alawīs who were killed in the course of their struggles and ends by mentioning the seventieth 'Alawī to die in the reign of Muqtadir. He concentrates on the 'Alawī rebellions in Ḥijāz and Iran, but in fact he often fails to mention the dates of their occurrence.

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(18) Fahad, Al-Qāḍī al-Tanūkhī wa Kitāb al-Nishwār, p.26

(19) Tanūkhī, al-Faraj, vol.1, p.124

(20) Tanūkhī, al-Faraj, vol.1, p.126, vol.2, p.340, Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, pp.11 ff.

(21) Yāqūt, Irshād, vol.5, pp.149-68

(22) Iṣfahānī, Maqātil, p.386

Ibn Ḥaswal, Abū 'L-'Alaā' Muḥammad b. 'Alī (d.450/1058).

(23)

He is a prominent writer, well-versed in history, literature and politics .

He served the Saljuqs, and was favoured by them. They appointed him in charge of the register of state (Diwān). He then became the Wazīr of the Saljuk Sultān Ṭughril Beg. He wrote his book Tafḍīl al-Atrāk 'alā Sā'ir al-Ajnād on the wishes of this Sultān. In this book, Ibn Ḥaswal furnishes us with a good deal of material on the Turks' life, as Jāḥiz had done in his Risāla fī Manāqib al-Turk. Sometimes, however, Ibn Ḥaswal gives way to exaggeration in his description of the characteristics of the Turks when,

(24)

for instance, he compares them with lions . Nonetheless, this book, despite all its defects, remains one of the important sources for this study.

Ṣābī, Hilāl b. al-Muḥassin (d.448/1056-57).

Ṣābī was a high official who belonged to the 'Abbāsīd court. His prominence, however, rests on his qualifications as an historian and writer (Adīb) .

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In his Kitāb al-Wuzarā', Ṣābī gives information about the Wazīrs during the reign of Muqtadir, concentrating on three of them: Ibn al-Furāt, Muḥammad b. Khāqān and 'Alī b. 'Isā. He gives detailed narratives about each Wazīr and his works, with some anecdotes concerning each life. As he himself says, this was material "which histories had never mentioned before" (Mimma Lā Tataḍman al-Tawārikh Dhikrah) . His accounts cannot in fact be considered

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(23) See 'Abbās al-'Azzāwī, Muqaddima of Kitāb Tafḍīl al-Atrāk, Kahḥāla, Mu'jam al-Mu'allifīn, vol.10, p.318

(24) Ibn Ḥaswal, Tafḍīl, p.40

(25) Irshād, vol.7, pp.255-57, Ibn Khullikān, vol.6, pp.101-105, Muqaddima of Kitāb Tarīkh al-Wuzarā'

(26) Ṣābī, Tarīkh al-Wuzarā', p.29



to be coherent and annalistic history like those of Ṭabari. However, Ṣābī's Kitāb al-Wuzarā' is regarded as a supplementary source to the Kitāb al-Wuzarā' wa'L-Kuttāb of Jahshiyārī.

In his Kitāb Rusūm dār al-Khilāfa, Ṣābī gives a fair picture of the formalities (Rusūm) of the office of the Wazīr. He concentrates on the restrictions placed upon the Wazīr's authority. For example, Ṣābī states that the Wazīr might not wear red shoes, for such were regarded as suitable (27) for the Caliph alone. His account rests in part on his own direct experience, for, as he was one of the Caliphal Court officials, he had the means to see and know things for himself.

#### Geographical Sources

The geographical sources used here are Buldān of Ya'qūbi (d.284/895), Mukhtaṣṣr Kitāb al-Buldān of Hamadhānī (d.289/902), Masālik of Iṣṭakhri (d. 4th/10th), Aḥsan al-Taqāsim of Maqaddasī (d.4th/10th) and Mu'jam of Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d.626/1229). These authors furnish a good deal of material about conditions during their time. For example, Ya'qūbi describes how he collected material for his geographical work, travelling extensively and asking everybody he met for information about his particular country. He wrote down what his informants told him and took notes on the history of the (Muslim) conquests as well as on the administrative and economic history and contemporary situation of each region (28). In the course of presenting his geographical data, Ya'qūbi gives various pieces of information about the Turks and their activities, as well as about the other races such as the 'Arabs and Iranians. His Kitāb al-Buldān is a truly valuable source of historical and geographical data. As regards Iṣṭakhri, his work, too, has supplied this

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(27) Ṣābī, Rusūm, pp.75, 90

(28) Rosenthal, p.106, Dūri, 'Ilm, p.51

study with much information about the Turks and their life in their provinces. Ibn al-Faḡīh al-Hamadḡani gives historical data which have illuminated some of the material of this study. Particularly useful have been those data which relate to the Turks, their regions, and their tribes. These geographers are not to be blamed for any lack of historical information since it was not their aim to write history.

### Literary Sources

The most important literary works relevant to this study are those of Jāḡiḡ (d.255/868), Ibn Qutayba (d.276/889), Iṣṡahānī (d.356/966-67) and Tha'ālibī (d.429/1037-38)<sup>(29)</sup>. Jāḡiḡ was both historian and writer (Adīb), working in many different fields of learning. Although his main source of information concerning the period of Turkish domination is his own experience,<sup>(30)</sup> he also derives some information from contemporary narrators such as Abū 'Ubaida Mu'ammār b. al-Muthannā al-Taimī<sup>(31)</sup> and Abū al-'Abbās Tha'lab al-Aṣma'ī<sup>(32)</sup>. His Rasā'il, particularly the Risāla fī Manāqib al-Turk is of great value in supplying information about the Turks. He gives a fair picture of the Turkish race, with concentration on their mode of life and on their personal characteristics. Jāḡiḡ praised the Turks for the endurance with which they met the trials and hardships which faced them<sup>(33)</sup>. In spite of the fact that his information is unsystematic, this work is a most important authority for this present study.

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(29) Laṡā'if al-Ma'ārif, Thimār al-Qulūb

(30) Yāqūt, Irshād, vol.6, pp.56-80

(31) Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fihrist, p.53

(32) Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fihrist, p.55

(33) Manāqib, pp.47, 48

Ibn Qutayba gives historical data in his Kitāb al-Ma'ārif. He seems to have derived his information from Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqidī and Ibn al-Kalbī<sup>(34)</sup>. Isfahānī's chief work is the great Kitāb al-Aghānī; in this he furnishes a good deal of material on social life, rather than on political events in the time of the Turkish domination. He collected the songs which were popular in his time, and gave very detailed accounts concerning the poets, often giving information about the composers and singers as well<sup>(35)</sup>. Nonetheless, this is considered to be a significant source not only of literary history till into the 3rd century A.H., but also of the history of Islamic society.

#### Legal Sources

The Kitāb al-Kharāj of Abū Yūsuf (d.182/798), although it offers a theoretical discussion of the principles of taxation in the period before that covered by this study, also gives details about the various religious sects, particularly Ahl al-Dhimma, and the Caliph's attitude towards them.

#### Biographical Sources

The biographical sources used here are Tarīkh Baghdad of Khaṭīb al-Baghdadi (d.463/1071), the Wafayāt al-A'yān of Ibn Khullikān (d.681/1282), Tarīkh al-Hukamā' of Qiftī (d.646/1248), the Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadīm (d.377/987), the 'Uyūn al-Anbā' of Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'a (d.668/1270) and Irshād of Yāqūt. These biographers all lived some centuries after the period covered by this study, yet they provide much biographical material on various prominent personalities with whom our study is concerned<sup>(36)</sup>.

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(34) Dūrī, 'Ilm, p.54

(35) Irshād, vol.5, pp.149-68, The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol.1, p.85(Leyden, 1973)

(36) Rosenthal, pp.100-106

### Other Late Historians

Among the later historians Maqrīzī (d.845/1442), Irbilī (d.717/1317-18), Ibn al-Athīr (d.630/1233), Abū al-Maḥāsīn (d.874/1469), Suyūṭī (d.911/1505), Abū al-Fidā' (d.732/1331), Ibn Kathīr (d.774/1373), Ibn Khaldūn (d. 804/1406), Qazwīnī (d.682/1283), Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa (d.709/1309), Dhahabī (d.748/1348) and others are of help to this study. These historians derived their information from the accounts of historians like Ṭabari. Their usefulness lies particularly in their evaluation of earlier accounts and also in the information they derived from earlier works which were available to them but are no longer extant. In the case of information derived from Ṭabari, Ibn al-Athīr, for example, tries to make up Ṭabari's deficiencies by consulting other earlier works.

Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa in his book al-Fakhrī gives valuable data about the Turks and their domination, and he gives a clear description of the state of the Caliphate, particularly after the murder of the Caliph Mutawakkil (37) by the Turks. In addition, he mentions the office of Wazīr and its regulations, and lists 'Abbāsid Wazīrs in the reign of each Caliph. Although his account was written later (during 7th century A.H.) than the period covered by this study, a large part of our present study is covered by his. Maqrīzī's book al-Khiṭaṭ contains comprehensive information on governors, local revolts, religious sects and their celebrations and the attitude of the governors towards them. Abū al-Maḥāsīn's Nujūm is mainly concerned with Egypt from the time of the 'Arab conquest, but gives information on the other general political events which occurred in Afriqiyya, Jazīra, Khurāsān and also in the centre of the Caliphate. On the whole, these works, though informative, are not very reliable, yet they remain great and remarkable achievements.

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(37) Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, al-Fakhrī, p.243

Since completing this work, my attention has been drawn to unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, The struggle for power in the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate between 247/861 and 256/870 by Bahjat Kāmil al-Tikritī (Edinburgh, 1972) while acknowledging that this is a very full and interesting treatment of the subject I must emphasise that my thesis is different both in approach and conclusion.  
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(38) I am most grateful to Dr Ian Howard of the University of Edinburgh for drawing my attention to this work.

## Chapter One

### Introductory Study of the Turkish Race

Their Home, Their Ancestry, Contemporary Arab Opinions  
concerning the Turks, Their Economic and Social Life,  
The Appearance of the Turks in the Islamic State.

### Their Home

Historians and geographers mention that those districts east of Khurāsān and Transoxania (Mā-Warā' al-Nahr) were considered to be the original home of the Turks at the time of the 'Arab conquest'. They further tell us that there were also Turks living in other parts of Iran, in southern Russia, and in Chinese Turkistan. However, by early Islamic times, the regions of the above mentioned areas were completely or partially inhabited by Turkish people, who were concentrated in Bukhārā, Ṣaghd, Samarqand, Ashrūsna, Shāsh, Farghāna, Kish, Ṣaghniān, Nisif, Khutal and elsewhere. These diverse districts are distinguished for their vast plains, which contain numerous meadows and orchards thickly planted with fruit trees, and through which run rivers at all times of the year. They are also notable for their very high mountains, which contain large deposits of various minerals and metals. On the sides of the valleys grow walnut trees, almond trees, vines and apple trees. As for the climate of this area, it is very cold in winter and mild in summer.

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(1) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, pp.292, 295, Hamadhāni, Mukhtaṣr, p.322, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Mu'jam, vol.1, p.838, Ibn Ḥaswal, Tafḍīl al-Atrāk, p.42, Qazwīnī, Athār al-Bilād, vol.2, p.276, Gibb, The Arab conquests in Central Asia, Frye and Sayili, Turks in the Middle East before Saljuqs, Brockelmann, History of the Islamic people, pp.163 ff.

(2) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.290, Iṣṭakhri, Masālik, p.166

(3) Iṣṭakhri, pp.165, 184

(4) Iṣṭakhri, pp.174, 175, 187

(5) Iṣṭakhri, pp.162, 166

(6) Yāqūt, vol.1, p.840

### Their Ancestry

The Turks are an old people, and claimed descent from the son of  
 (7) Jafith b. Nuḥ . They looked back to a legendary ancestor called Tūr<sup>(8)</sup>, who  
 led the Turkish warriors in long wars against the Persians, the Byzantines<sup>(9)</sup>,  
 and the people of China<sup>(10)</sup>. But Tur should not be considered as the leader  
 of all the Turks, in view of the fact that the Turkish people consists of  
 many tribes, such as the Khur-lākhiah, the Tu-ghz-ghur, the Turkish<sup>(11)</sup>, the  
 Kay-māk and the Ghuz<sup>(12)</sup>; tribes which had Aryan descent according to Gibb<sup>(13)</sup>.  
 In the course of their expansion into the vast region of Transoxania, these  
 tribes had established their own kingdoms, each with its own king. The  
 kings had different titles, such as Khāqān, Akhshīd, Afshīn, Tarkhūn,  
 Ghurāk and others<sup>(14)</sup>. The kingships involved were hereditary, and power

(7) Ibn Ḥaswal, p.38, Qazwīnī, p.618, Frye, Turks, p.203

(8) Ibn Ḥaswal, p.37. It seems that the Turān district, "Transoxania or  
Mā-Warā' al-Nahr", which lay behind the Oxus river, was related to the name  
 of Tūr. In fact, the term Turān had been adduced by Gibb when he remarked  
 that, "The Oxus river came to be regarded as the boundary between Iran and  
 Turān". See The Arab Conquests in Central Asia, pp.1, 3

(9) Ibn Ḥaswal, pp.37, 38

(10) Zaydān, Tarikh al-Tamadun, vol.4, p.176

(11) Gibb and Frye render this Turgesh. See The Arab Conquests, p.5, Turks  
 in the Middle East, p.198

(12) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.295

(13) The Arab Conquests, p.2

(14) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, pp.293, 295, Birunī, pp.101-102, Ṣabī, Rusūm dār  
 al-Khilāfa, p.131, Gibb, pp.6, 59, 60



was retained in the family <sup>(15)</sup>. It seems that the Turks had so large a population that historians were unable to give any precise indication of its size. According to Hamadhānī <sup>(16)</sup>, "Their several kingdoms together <sup>(17)</sup> from a huge population, and no one but God can count them all". Iṣṭakhri remarks that, "If one of their kingdoms had been killed off or had totally died out, their massive population would make up for the loss". It was <sup>(18)</sup> also said that one of the Turkish kings had a hundred thousand warriors <sup>(18)</sup>. This is clearly an exaggeration, but one can well imagine that the combined military force of the many Turkish kings was enormous.

#### Contemporary 'Arab Opinions concerning the Turks

The Turkish people are distinguished from others by their physical appearance and their personal characteristics. This has perhaps been the result of the constant cold to which they were exposed. The Turks, then, have rather short bodies <sup>(19)</sup>, egg-shaped faces, flat noses <sup>(20)</sup>, and small eyes, and it was said that their faces, tending to be rather red in colour <sup>(21)</sup>. Historians have, however, generally praised them for their

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(15) Iṣṭakhri, p.164

(16) Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān, p.298

(17) Masālik, p.164

(18) Yāqūt, vol.1, p.839

(19) Jāhiz, Manāqib al-Turk, p.62, Hamadhānī, p.298

(20) Ibn Ḥaswal, p.40, Hamadhānī, p.298, Yāqūt, vol.1, p.838, Qazwīnī, p.514

(21) Yāqūt, vol.1, p.838

healthy bodies and beautiful faces, especially as found in their young  
(22)  
men and women .

As regards their personal characteristics, the Turks are recognised for  
their strength and bravery, so much so that historians compared them to  
(23) lions . They were further described as being nimble, slight of body ,  
(25) (26)  
and strong of heart . The historian Jāḥiẓ seems to have been so  
impressed by the Turks that he remarks, with exaggeration, "One Turk was  
worth a whole nation of other men". Turks were also regarded as more  
steadfast in difficulties and ordeals than other people. According to  
Jāḥiẓ, Ibn Ḥaswal and Hamadhāni, they bore patiently any severe trials or  
(27)  
hardships which faced them . Consequently, they let nothing prevent them  
(28)  
from attaining their goals . At the same time, they obeyed their leaders  
(29)  
and remained faithful to them . It seems that it was these characteristics  
which induced the Caliphs to obtain the services of Turks and gradually to  
employ more and more of them. Because of their pride, however, Turks were  
not content to be inferior to their chiefs in respect of their mounts, their  
(30)  
equipment and their victuals, but demanded to be treated as equals . This

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(22) Tanūkhī, Mustajād, p.63, Shābushtī, Diyārāt, p.165, Iṣṭakhri, p.178,  
Qazwīnī, pp.235, 584

(23) Ibn Ḥaswal, p.40, Tanūkhī, Faraj, vol.1, p.345, Qazwīnī, pp.428, 514, 589

(24) Jāḥiẓ, Manāqib, pp.58-59

(25) Qazwīnī, p.589

(26) Manāqib, p.49

(27) Jāḥiẓ, Manāqib, pp.47, 48, Ibn Ḥaswal, p.41, Hamadhāni, p.316

(28) Jāḥiẓ, Manāqib, p.59

(29) Iṣṭakhri, pp.163, 176, Yāqūt, vol.1, p.839

(30) Ibn Ḥaswal, p.41

may have been a result of their tradition of tribal living, which may have caused the individual Turk to feel that he had the power to lead and to command. Another result of tribal life and its attendant dangers was the Turk's great alertness and cautiousness<sup>(31)</sup>. Among their other characteristics, some were good and some bad. It was said that Turks neither lied nor cheated. If one of them were to lie, his tongue would be cut out, while the man who cheated would be beaten in public and then put in solitary confinement<sup>(32)</sup>. On the other hand, they were considered to be a greedy people, and one with a constant desire for domination<sup>(33)</sup>.

#### Their Economic and Social Life

The Turks were a tribal people, whose important social tie was tribal<sup>(34)</sup> rather than national. We therefore see that the Turk was more closely linked to this tribe than to anything else, and that he struggled and fought for the sake of his tribe. In this he resembled the Bedouin. The Turks in Transoxania lived as nomadic tribes<sup>(35)</sup>, whose survival depended on finding fresh pasture lands as they moved from one place to another. It was therefore said that, "If you examined a Turk's life, you would find that he spent more time on his mule or horse than on the ground<sup>(36)</sup>". In reality, however, not all Turks lived as nomads, for there were certain of them settled in towns

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(31) Jāhiz, Manāqib, p.60

(32) Jāhiz, Manāqib, pp.62, 79, 80

(33) Hamadhāni, p.330, Qazwīnī, p.514

(34) Iṣṭakhrī, p.164

(35) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.80, Hamadhāni, pp.298, 299

(36) Jāhiz, Manāqib, p.48

and villages, and these had a more highly developed social and economic life,  
(37)  
as a result of their engaging in agriculture and trade .

In general those Turks who were nomads bred various livestock, such as sheep, goats and cows. These animals provided them with meat, milk, skin  
(38)  
and fur . It was said that each family had from about one hundred to five  
(39)  
hundred domestic animals . The Turkish nomads also kept horses, which they  
(40)  
rode when they made raids on neighbouring districts . They had mules, too,  
which were used as beasts of burden. Jāhiz remarks that the Turks' mules  
(41)  
worked as hard and bore hardships as well as their masters did . The  
(42)  
Turks seldom reared camels . They lived in tents made of goat's fur, and  
these were called simply Turkish tents (Qibāb al-Turkiya), according to  
(43)  
Ya'qūbi . . It seems that they used this particular type of tent because  
it was easily transportable, and quickly put up and taken down. As regards  
(44)  
their food, most of it was meat , and they preferred this above all other  
foods. They often ate roast meat which came from the game they hunted, such

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(37) Qazwīnī, pp.580, 588, Yāqūt, vol.1, p.839, Czaplicka, The Turks of Central Asia, p.46

(38) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.295, Iṣṭakhrī, p.162, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.4, pp. 204, 228

(39) Iṣṭakhrī, p.163

(40) Iṣṭakhrī, p.162, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.4, p.228, Balādhuri, Futūḥ al-Buldān, p.438

(41) Jāhiz, Manāqib, p.47

(42) Hamadhāni, p.295

(43) al-Buldān, p.295

(44) Jāhiz, Manāqib, p.48, Ibn Ḥaswal, p.40, Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.295

as birds, deer and other animals and fish which they caught from rivers  
(45) or lakes (46). In addition they ate both cultivated and wild fruit.

Some Turks who lived in towns and villages planted grain such as  
(47) millet, which they used in making wine; and grew wheat, barley,  
(48) peas and lentils. Cow's milk was their usual drink, and this they  
(49) considered to be a food as well. They also drank wine which was  
(50) made of grapes and of millet, as mentioned above. It seems that  
they drank to excess, particularly during their celebrations and  
carnivals, and when they had had a successful raiding expedition.

The social life of these people often had no stability, due to  
their living as nomadic tribes, and in fact the Turks were notable  
for the large number of inter-tribal wars and raids they had. It was  
(51) said that they would raid one another for the booty they could seize.  
Moreover, the nomads attacked adjacent regions such as Khurāsān and  
(52) Sistān. The inhabitants of these areas fled from the invading  
Turks and left their property behind, thinking chiefly of protecting  
themselves. According to Ya'qūbi, there was no territory in Khurāsān  
(53) which had not been attacked by the Turks. As a result of Turkish  
aggressiveness, Kusrā Anūshirwān the King of Persia, had married Khātūn,

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(45) Jāhiz, Manāqib, pp.48, 59, Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.295, Ibn Ḥaswal, p.41, Hamadhāni, p.299

(46) Iṣṭakhri, pp.162, 165, Birūni, p.234

(47) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.295

(48) Qazwīni, pp.582, 584

(49) Jāhiz, Manāqib, p.48

(50) Birūni, pp.235, 241

(51) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.295, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.4, p.229

(52) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.292

(53) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.295

the daughter of Khāqān, one of the Turkish kings, in order to be safe from  
 (54)  
 the attacks of the Turks . It is very important that we understand here  
 that the Turks did not fight or invade other areas for reasons of religion,  
 or for gaining more land, or because of mere tribal disputes, but that they  
 fought solely for booty (55) . For this reason it was said that they seized  
 (56)  
 everything they could lay their hands on during their invasions . The  
 (57)  
 weapons they used were bows and arrows . It seems that they had had wide  
 experience with these particular weapons, for they were said to be such  
 skilful archers that if one thousand of them were to release their arrows  
 (58) (59) (60)  
 at once, one thousand enemies would drop down dead . Spears and swords  
 were also used.

In the course of their incursions into neighbouring territory the Turks  
 (61)  
 used much cunning and stealth in order to secure victory . However, they  
 preferred to fight under a single overall leader in order to prevent dis-  
 (62)  
 agreements from arising among their chiefs . Before they started out on

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(54) Jāhiz, Manāqib, p.82, Balādhuri, p.203. According to Frye and Sayili, Khāqān was the king of the western Turks. See Turks in the Middle East, p.196

(55) Jāhiz, Manāqib, p.52

(56) Hamadhāni, p.298

(57) Jāhiz, Manāqib, p.45, Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.295, Thanūkhī, Faraj, vol.1, pp.344, 345, Yāqūt, vol.1, p.239

(58) Jāhiz, Manāqib, p.45, Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.295, Tha'ālībī, Laṭā'if al-Ma'ārif, p.213

(59) Yāqūt, vol.1, p.841

(60) Ṭabarī, Tarikh al-Rusul, vol.12, p.1833

(61) Jāhiz, Manāqib, p.84

(62) Jāhiz, Manāqib, p.55

a raid they would consult the diviner ('Arrāf)<sup>(63)</sup> in order to discover whether the time was propitious for fighting, and whether they had a good chance of success. In times of peace they would rest and look after their cattle<sup>(64)</sup>, planting grain and picking grapes to make wine<sup>(65)</sup>. They would also enjoy hunting<sup>(66)</sup> and racing on horseback<sup>(67)</sup>. One feature of their nomadic life was that there were no coppersmiths; shoemakers or tailors among them<sup>(68)</sup>. On the other hand, some Turks had had wide experience in dealing with animals and treating their ailments, and it was said that the Turk was more knowledgeable than a veterinarian<sup>(69)</sup>.

The Turks, like other people, had their own secular and religious feasts, such as Nawrūz<sup>(70)</sup>, which was considered to be the greatest feast, and the feast of Lamjūs-Bukhārā, and of Kashmīn, which lasted seven days<sup>(71)</sup>. Birūnī described the usual features of their celebrations: "On the first day of the feast, they go to their holy places, where they offer sacrifices (Qarābīn),

(63) According to Birūnī, p.238, the Turks called him Akhrūī-Nick.

(64) Jāhīz, Manāqib, p.49, Yāqūt, vol.1, p.239

(65) Birūnī, p.241, Yāqūt, vol.1, p.239

(66) Jāhīz, Manāqib, pp.48, 49, Ibn Ḥaswal, p.41, Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.295, Qazwīnī, p.514

(67) Qazwīnī, p.514

(68) Yāqūt, vol.1, p.239

(69) Jāhīz, Manāqib, pp.47, 49

(70) Birūnī, p.235. This is considered to be the national feast of the Iranians. The Turks, living in a bordering country, may have been influenced by the Iranian tradition.

(71) Birūnī, p.234

and they use incense, believing that this will keep away the devils and genii" <sup>(72)</sup> .  
 They would make special sweets and prepare festive food, and drink wine <sup>(73)</sup> .  
 All this was, in fact, more common among those Turks who had settled in towns and villages, but the nomadic Turks, too, would have celebrations on certain occasions, and particularly when they had had a successful raid <sup>(74)</sup> . As regards their religions, most of the Turks were polytheists before the time of the 'Arab conquest. They had no Turkish scriptures, such as the Bible or the Qurān, but subscribed to a variety of beliefs. These differed from one tribe to another. Some worshipped idols <sup>(75)</sup> , some worshipped the sun <sup>(76)</sup> , some the stars <sup>(77)</sup> , some worshipped the cow <sup>(78)</sup> , and some worshipped fire <sup>(79)</sup> . Certain <sup>(80)</sup> Turks were of the Manichaeans, in which cult incest was legally practised .  
 Not all Turks were polytheists, for some had been converted to Christianity <sup>(81)</sup> or to Judaism . Most of thses lived in the towns, where they had their own churches or synagogues for the observation of their rituals.

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(72) Birūnī, pp.234, 235, 237, 241

(73) Qazwīnī, p.584

(74) Birūnī, p.236

(75) Hamadhānī, pp.14, 329, Ibn al-Athir, vol.4, p.111, Qazwīnī, p.588, Yāqūt, vol.1, pp.839, 840

(76) Qazwīnī, p.581

(77) Qazwīnī, pp.582, 590

(78) Qazwīnī, p.580

(79) Yāqūt, vol.1, pp.839, 840

(80) Qazwīnī, p.582, Hamadhānī, pp.14, 329

(81) Iṣṭakhrī, pp.129, 180



The Turks had their own social traditions. According to Iṣṭakhrī, the Turk was hospitable and would give a guest food and drink, and see that he was comfortable. When a Turk built a residence for himself, he would build accommodation for guests beside it <sup>(82)</sup>. As regards their laws, a murderer was sentenced to death, a thief's hand was cut off, the tongue of a man who lied was cut out, while one who cheated was beaten in public and then sentenced to solitary confinement, as mentioned above. On the other hand, the Turks showed much grief at death, and particularly when one of their leaders died. It was their custom, after they had buried a chief, to break a thousand swords over his grave <sup>(83)</sup>, and some of them gashed their ears to demonstrate their grief <sup>(84)</sup>, although in doing this they perhaps exaggerated their sorrow. As to their marriage customs, Turkish girls would go about with their heads uncovered, and, when a young man desired to marry a particular girl, after various preparations had been made, he would formally cover her head with a piece of cloth. This action signified that she would become his wife for ever, because a Turkish girl would marry only once in her life <sup>(85)</sup>. Even if her husband died, she did not marry again <sup>(86)</sup>. For this reason, Turkish women <sup>(87)</sup> were praised by historians as loyal, brave and patient in difficulties.

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(82) Iṣṭakhrī, p.162

(83) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1833

(84) Qazwīnī, p.236

(85) Hamadhānī, p.14, Yāqūt, vol.1, p.839

(86) Qazwīnī, p.585

(87) Jāhiz, Manāqib, p.63, Hamadhānī, p.299

### The Appearance of the Turks in the Islamic State

Relations between Muslims and the Turkish people can be traced back to the early Islamic raids into Transoxania (Mā-Warā' al-Nahr). As the story of conquest of Transoxania has already been skilfully told by Gibb (88) and by Frye and Sayili, we shall concentrate here on certain important events which have significance for our present study. It is indeed the case that under the Umayyads, Muslims came into direct contact with both the Western and Northern Turkish kingdoms. Umayyad Caliphs began to send military expeditions to Transoxania in order to spread the Islamic religion or to punish the Turks who threatened and attacked the adjacent Islamic regions, such as Khurāsān and Sistān (89). Islamic troops invading Transoxania faced many difficulties as a result of the rugged and mountainous nature of the land, and due to the turbulent, fierce nature of the nomadic Turks. Consequently, the Islamic state found it necessary to continue their campaigns against the Turks during the whole of the Umayyad period and the first 'Abbāsīd period (90).

In the years 86-96 H, under the leadership of Qutaiba b. Muslim, the famous Umayyad military commander, the Muslims won their first important victories in Transoxania. Indeed, the achievements of Qutaiba in Transoxania were held to mark the beginning of that region's systematic conquest. In 121 H, under the leadership of Naṣr b. Sayyār, the Muslims broke the power of the western Turks and amongst them that of the Turksh or Turghesh. It

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(88) Gibb, The Arab Conquests, p.15 ff, Frye and Sayili, Turks in the Middle East, pp.196, 197

(89) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.301

(90) Ya'qūbi, vol.2, p.182, vol.3, pp.46, 47, 49, 100-102, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.137, Qaramānī, p.56

was under these two capable military commanders, and others, that Muslims finally conquered Bukhārā, Samarqand, Ṣaghḍ, Farghāna, Ashrūsna, and other parts of Transoxania<sup>(91)</sup>. After these regions had been integrated into the Islamic state, their Muslim governors did not force all the Turks who were settled there to embrace Islam, but allowed those who had already adopted either Christianity or Judaism to continue practising their religion. It seems that this religious tolerance was limited to these Christian and Jewish Turks, and was observed in their cases in exchange for the payment of poll-tax<sup>(92)</sup>. If one of them were to become a Muslim, however, he would no longer have to pay the tax. The Turks who were polytheists adopted Islam enthusiastically, finding this religion, imbued with the spirit of Jihād, well-suited to their nature.

At the time of the wars between the Muslims and the Turks, many Turks fell into captivity and were then taken back and sold as slaves in the Islamic state. According to Yāqūt<sup>(93)</sup>, it was also the case that some Turkish families sold their young children into slavery. The money they acquired in this way equalled that which they would have spent on their upbringing. That this was done seems to have been a result of the difficult economic situation, which had been adversely affected by the increasing Turkish population and by the continuous warfare in which the Turks had engaged. Samarqand and other cities such as Damascus the capital, and Baghdad, were considered to be good places in which to sell slaves<sup>(94)</sup>.

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(91) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.293, Tarīkh, vol.3, p.47, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.4, pp.110, 113, 114, 131, 135, 136

(92) Iṣṭakhri, pp.129, 180, Ibn al-Athir, vol.4, pp.114, 202

(93) Yāqūt, Mu'jam, vol.1, p.239

(94) Jāhiz, Tabaṣṣur bi-'L-Tijāra, p.22, Iṣṭakhri, p.178, Tha'ālibī, Latā'if, pp.219, 225, 226

There was said to be a special slave market in Baghdad, known as Sūq al-Nakhāsīn<sup>(95)</sup> or Shāri' dār al-Raqīq<sup>(96)</sup>. Caliphs, statesmen, and the wealthy were all eager to possess many slaves. They valued Turkish slaves above all others, because of their health and strength and bravery, and the prices for these rose to 300 dinārs each<sup>(97)</sup>. Itākh had been a Turkish slave who first worked as cook to Salām al-Abrash, and then, in 199 H, had been bought by the Caliph Mu'tasim<sup>(98)</sup>.

The governors of the Eastern Islamic provinces such as Khurāsān, Samarqand, Shāsh, Farghāna, Ashrūsna and Bukhārā sent Turkish slaves to the Caliphs as presents or sometimes, as was the case with the Tāhirids, as part of the tribute they paid to the Caliph<sup>(99)</sup>. According to Baihaqī the presents sent to Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd by one of his governors in Transoxania included 1000 Turkish slaves<sup>(100)</sup>. Nuḥ b. Sāmān, the governor of Bukhārā, sent many Turkish slaves to the Caliph Ma'mūn. It was said that Aḥmad b. Tūlūn's father, who became governor of Damascus and then of Egypt during the reign of Mutawakkil, had been one of them<sup>(101)</sup>. It is important to notice here

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(95) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.245, Tanūkhī, Mustajād, p.115

(96) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.248, Amīn, Duḥā al-Islām, vol.1, p.85

(97) Tanūkhī, Mustajād, p.63. Historians have, in fact, made various estimations of the prices fetched by slaves. For example, in his book "The Ghaznavids", on p.209, Bosworth indicates a price of 300 dirhims rather than dinārs for each slave, while Ya'qūbi in his book al-Buldān, p.255, although giving a price in dirhims, estimates it at 100,000-200,000 dirhims.

(98) Tabari, vol.12, p.1383, Ibn al-Athir, vol.5, p.247

(99) Bosworth, The Ghaznavids, p.208, The Tāhirids and Saffārids, p.99

(100) Baihaqī, Tarīkh, p.432

(101) Abū al-Mahāsīn, Nujūm, vol.3, p.2, Bosworth, Ghaznavids, pp.208-209

that some Caliphs, like Mu'taṣim, were so eager to have Turkish slaves that they asked their governors in the Eastern regions to send such slaves to them, to add to those they had previously bought <sup>(102)</sup>. These slaves gradually became accustomed to the social life of Muslims. The question now presents itself: Were these Turks already Muslims when they were brought to the capital, or did their conversion follow their arrival there? There is, in fact, no direct evidence which allows us to answer this question. The Turkish slaves were all described, certainly, as non-Arabic speaking ('Ajam) <sup>(103)</sup>. Even Ashinās, Itākh, Waṣīf and Simā al-Dimashqī, who were bought in Baghdad, belonged to this group, according to the historians <sup>(104)</sup>. However, as the armies of the Caliphate had to consist of Muslims, these Turkish slaves would have had to become Muslims before entering the Caliphal armies.

When they first appeared in Islamic society, Turkish slaves worked as domestics, later called Farāshīn <sup>(105)</sup> in the houses of the wealthy and of statesmen, and in the palaces of the Caliphs. Itākh, for instance, was a cook of Salām al-Abrash, and Mu'taṣim later bought him from al-Abrash, as mentioned above. In addition, some were employed as guards at those houses and palaces, and these were later called Muṣṣāfiya <sup>(106)</sup>. Most of these

(102) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, pp.255, 256, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.233, Suyūṭī, p.336

(103) Tabari, vol.12, p.1544, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.320

(104) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.256, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.276, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.580

(105) During the reigns of Mu'taḍid, Muktafī and Muqtadir. See Ṣabī, Rusūm, p.8, al-Wuzarā', pp.23, 135, 264

(106) During the reigns of Mu'taḍid, Muktafī and Muqtadir. See Ṣabī, Rusūm, pp.8, 25, al-Wuzarā', pp.17, 41

guards were either foot soldiers or horsemen, and they had to patrol outside the palaces of the Caliphs and princes. Some also had to guard inside these palaces. Those who stood as sentries outside the various rooms were later called Hujariya <sup>(107)</sup>. In the course of time, many Muslims, among them Caliphs and statesmen, married Turkish women <sup>(108)</sup>, thus helping to bring about the integration of the Turks into Islamic society. In such ways, their social status gradually began to improve. Although the Umayyad Caliphs discriminated against the non-Arab element, and prohibited them from holding administrative posts, they did employ certain Turks, according to Irbilī <sup>(109)</sup>. But doubts have been raised as to the truth of this as there are no other sources which corroborate Irbilī's assertion. In particular, none of the contemporary historians of that period, such as Ya'qūbi, makes a similar claim. In any case, the situation changed as soon as the 'Abbāsids came to rule, for they began to employ many Turks, although the first foreigners they did employ were Iranians. The Turks were used as guards and soldiers and suchlike. It seems that the Caliphs recruited Turks to serve alongside the veteran 'Arabs and Iranians, because the Turks, unlike these others, did not so pride themselves on their nationality that they behaved exclusively. The Turks were valued for their bravery and

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(107) During the reigns of Mu'taḍid, Muktafī and Muqtadir. See Ṣabī, Rusūm, pp.8, 25, al-Wuzarā', pp.17, 41, Ṣulī, Akhbār al-Raḍī wa-L-Muttaqī, p.86, Meskawaih, Tajārib al-Umam, vol.1, p.38

(108) Jāhiz, Manāqib, p.75, Ibn al-Sa'ī, Nisā' al-Khulfa', p.100, Diyārbakrī, Tarkīkh al-Khamīs, vol.2, p.377, Irbilī, pp.221, 237, Abū al-Maḥāsīn, vol.2, p.250

(109) Irbilī, pp.45, 47, 48

(110)  
 fidelity. According to certain historians , the Caliph Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr was the first Caliph to recruit Turks for the 'Abbāsīd army. Ḥamād al-Turki was one of these. It is important to notice, though, that when the Caliph Manṣūr decided to found Baghdad, in 140 H, he specified that separate quarters (Qaṭā'i) be built for the Turks, and the 'Arabs and Iranians were similarly accommodated (111).

The Caliph Mahdī employed Turks as his father Manṣūr had done. Mubārak al-Turki was one of those to be employed by both Manṣūr and Mahdī and, later by the Caliph Ḥādī (112). We may note that Manāzil al-Turki was charged by Mahdī to be the guardian and mentor of his son 'Isā (113). As regards the Caliph Ḥārūn al-Rashīd, it was said that he employed Turks in both civil and military positions, which proves that their social status had improved. For example, in 170 H, Faraj al-Khādīm was given the responsibility of building the fortress of Ṭarsūs (114), in order that the increasing threat of Byzantine aggression could be resisted. Masrūr al-Khādīm was put in charge of military expenditure (115). Furthermore, some Turks rose to positions of great importance, such as the leadership

(110) Tha'ālibī, Latā'if, p.20, Qalqashandī, Subih, vol.1, p.415, Omar, The Composition of the 'Abbāsīd Support in the Early 'Abbāsīd Period, p.170, El-'Alī, The Foundation of Baghdad, p.96

(111) Omar, The Composition, p.172, El-'Alī, The Foundation of Baghdad, p.97

(112) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.76, Tha'ālibī, Latā'if, p.20, Qalqashandī, vol.1, p.415

(113) Balādhuri, Futūḥ, p.304

(114) Ṭabarī, vol.10, p.604, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.83, Abū al-Fidā', vol.2, p.13

(115) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.712, Abū al-Maḥāsīn, vol.2, p.136

of the armed forces. Historians mention that Rashīd, in 176 H, appointed Sindī b. Shāhik as commander of the Caliphal troops sent to quell the insurrection in Syria which had been caused by the tribal rivalries of the Yamāniya and Mudariya<sup>(116)</sup>. The Caliph put this same man in charge of the suppression of the 'Alawī insurrections<sup>(117)</sup>. In 191 H, Rashīd appointed Hamawayh al-Khādīm to be in charge of the Khurāsān post (Barīd)<sup>(118)</sup>. Turks were also employed during the reigns of Amīn and Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī.<sup>(119)</sup> It was said that Ashinās, who played an important role in subsequent events, was one of these.

It seems to have been the case that these early 'Abbāsīd Caliphs had not employed Turks in accordance with any systematic policy. Turkish influence in Baghdad grew steadily and their numbers increased, especially once the Caliphs Ma'mūn and Mu'taṣim came to the throne. Ma'mūn seems to have taken note of the fact that the 'Arabs had aided his brother Amīn during the civil war. He also realized that the fanatical pride they took in their own tribe (Ta'aṣṣub) was the cause of troubles throughout the entire state. This was especially the case with the Yamāniya and Mudariya tribes, which were causing trouble in Syria and Egypt. Ma'mūn therefore, in 214 H, sent an army, which included 4000 Turks, under the leadership of Abū Ishāq al-Mu'taṣim, to overcome the 'Arab insurrection in Egypt<sup>(120)</sup>. In addition, he sent his military leader Ḥaidar b. Kāwus, known as Afshīn<sup>(121)</sup>,

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(116) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.93

(117) Iṣfahānī, Maqātil, pp.334, 335

(118) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.712, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.136

(119) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1017, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.189

(120) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.216, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.208

(121) Afshīn was a pre-Islamic title borne by the native princes of Ashrūsna.

See The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol.1, p.241 (Old Edition - 1913)



(122)  
to Egypt in 215 H to quell a further insurrection . The Iranians as well as the 'Arabs were mistrusted by Ma'mūn, for he had noticed that they aspired to positions of power and authority. It had been the ambition of Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī, Barmakids and Banū Sahil which had alerted him to this. He therefore tried favouring the Turks in order to counteract the influence of the 'Arabs and Iranians. He recruited them in increased numbers to quell the various rebellions which had arisen against state policy.

During the reign of Mu'taṣim, Turks rose to positions of even greater importance. Mu'taṣim's increased degree of reliance on their services, both before and after his accession to the throne, was a result of his needs and of certain other circumstances. He even entrusted the leadership of the 'Abbāsid army to some of them such as, Afshīn<sup>(123)</sup>, Ashinās, Itākh, Waṣīf, Bughā and others<sup>(124)</sup>. It is indicative of the Caliph's attitude that he was said to have removed the names of 'Arabs from the register of state (Diwān), and to have written the names of Turks in their places<sup>(125)</sup>.

(122) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1105, Sālim, Tarīkh al-Iskandariyyah, p.148, Kāshif, Miṣr fī 'Ahd al-Wulāt, pp.27-28

(123) Some recent authors, however, have indicated that Afshīn was of Iranian origin, cf. Osman, Mu'taṣim and the Turks, p.20, R. Mottahedeh, The 'Abbāsid Caliphate in Iran, p.76. But doubts can be raised as to the truth of this, as there is no corroborating evidence to be found in the accounts of the contemporary historians such as Ṭabarī, Ya'qūbi and others. Moreover, Afshīn's name is always mentioned along with those of other prominent Turkish commanders of the Caliph Mu'taṣim. See Ṭabarī, vol.11, pp.1169, 1179, 1300, 1301, 1327-28

(124) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1327, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, pp.162, 168, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.266

(125) Suyūṭī, Tarīkh al-Khulafā', p.335, Qaramānī, p.40

Moreover, he made sure that the Iranians were kept from serving in the various offices of state, turned a deaf ear to their requests, and confiscated their estates <sup>(126)</sup>. All this made clear when Mu'taṣim organized the troops for the Amorion expedition. Most of the positions of command <sup>(127)</sup> in this army were held by Turks. It is important to mention here the factors which were operative in persuading Mu'taṣim to rely so heavily on these relative newcomers, the Turks.

Firstly, Turks, as mentioned above were brave, strong and had had much valuable experience in warfare. In addition, they were patient in difficulties and ordeals, and consequently stood their ground in battle more readily than other people.

Secondly, Mu'taṣim had been influenced by his mother, Mārīda, who <sup>(128)</sup> was a Turk from Ṣughd and by his wife, Shujā', who was a Turk from Tukharistān. Mu'taṣim, in fact, looked very like his uncles in physical appearance. In short, it seems likely that Mu'taṣim had been moved to favour the Turks in order that his mother and wife, both of whom were of Turkish descent, should be pleased.

Thirdly, the Turks did not take a jingoistic pride in their nationality, as did the Iranians and the 'Arabs. According to Jāḥiẓ, the Turks were a <sup>(129)</sup> group which had no partisan loyalty.

(126) Jahshiyārī, Lost Fragments of Kitāb al-Wuzarā', p.61

(127) Ṭabarī, vol.11, pp.1236, 1244; Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.286, N. Baynes, The Byzantine Empire, p.389, 'Adawī, al-Dawlah al-Islamiya, pp.101-102

(128) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1329, Mas'ūdi, Tanbīh, p.361, Suyūṭī, p.233, Diyārbakrī, vol.2, p.377, Shujā' was Mutawakkil's mother.

(129) Manāqib, p.62

Fourthly, during the reign of Mu'taṣim, the 'Abbāsid state was being threatened with many serious problems, such as the revolt of Bābak al-Khurramī which began in Adherbayjan, in 201 H, and lasted twenty years (130); and by the Byzantine threat on the frontier; and thirdly, by the discontent of the people of Syria and Egypt with the policy of the central government. In view of these problems, the Caliph was keen to recruit new troops in an attempt to restore the equilibrium of the Caliphate.

The fifth factor was a political one, and one which seems to have had great power in persuading Mu'taṣim to rely on the help of the Turks. It was said that after the death of Ma'mūn, Mu'taṣim discovered that some divisions of the army, consisting mainly of Iranian troops, were hoping to install 'Abbās b. al-Ma'mūn as Caliph in his place. These troops demonstrated in Baghdad for the recognition of 'Abbās as Caliph. They probably favoured 'Abbās because his mother had been an Iranian. A serious disturbance seemed likely to happen, and Mu'taṣim immediately sought to avoid it by calling 'Abbās to his court. 'Abbās acknowledged his uncle as Caliph, and afterwards went out to restore order among the disturbed soldiers. He then (131) dismissed them.

These seem to be the significant factors which lay behind Mu'taṣim's use of the Turks, either as volunteers or as slaves who had been first captured and then sold. As a matter of fact, however, there is nothing to indicate exactly how these slaves were purchased on behalf of the Caliph. We know only that Mu'taṣim used to send to Nuḥ b. Asad at Samarqand a certain Ja'far al-Khushshakī, who would buy Turkish slaves there and then return with a

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(130) Ṭabarī, vol.11, pp.1171, 1174, 1186, Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.467

(131) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1194, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.231, Ibn Qutayba, Ma'ārif, p.392

number of them every year. It was thus, according to Ya'qūbi, that Mu'taṣim gathered together his 3,000 Turks during the reign of Ma'mūn<sup>(132)</sup>. An important question now presents itself: how many such Turks did he have when he came to the throne? There is, in fact, no accurate answer to this question, in view of the variety of estimates which have been put forward by historians. In some sources they are said to have numbered 18,000<sup>(133)</sup>, and in other sources 70,000<sup>(134)</sup>. Doubts have been raised as to the truth of this second estimate, because if it is true, Mu'taṣim would have had no need to fear their being killed off by the veteran troops<sup>(135)</sup>. Whereas in fact the Caliph is reported to have expressed the fear that the 'Arab and Iranian soldiers might rise up in rebellion and kill all the Turks whom he had gathered around him. Therefore, 18,000 Turks is perhaps nearer to the reality. This estimate relates only to the Turkish slave troops.

Mu'taṣim not only bought Turks, but also attracted some Turkish princes and the sons of kings under his suzerainty by inviting them to live at his court. One of those who came was Jif b. Baltakīn, the son of the king of Farghāna, a man described to the Caliph as courageous and well-versed in the art of warfare<sup>(136)</sup>. Haidar b. Kāwus (Afshīn) was another Turkish prince who joined Mu'taṣim on invitation<sup>(137)</sup>. According to historians, Mu'taṣim distinguished his own Turks from the other veteran soldiers by giving them various jewels, gold-decorated belts and distinctive clothes<sup>(138)</sup>. It is

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(132) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.255

(133) Qaramānī, p.64, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.233

(134) Īrbilī, p.222, Maqrīzī, al-Nuqūd al-Islamiya, p.200

(135) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1179, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.236

(136) Zaydān, Tamaddun, vol.4, p.178

(137) The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol.1, p.241 (Old edition - 1913)

(138) Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.465, Suyūṭī, p.336

very important to take note of the fact that Mu'taṣim's Turks were responsible for civil disturbances which ultimately led to the building of Sāmarrā'. For as a result of the Turks' increasing number, concentrated largely in Baghdad, the city became congested, and, due to the Turks' uncivilized behaviour, the Baghdadis suffered greatly <sup>(139)</sup>. Their presence came to be regarded as an intolerable affliction by the Baghdadis. In order to solve this problem, Mu'taṣim decided to found a new city for these unruly Turks. Eventually, <sup>(140)</sup> he chose the site of Sāmarrā'. J.M. Rogers essentially concurs with this understanding of the sequence of events which led to the founding of Sāmarrā'. He remarks that Mu'taṣim probably had the new city built because he lived in fear of an uprising of exasperated civilians, rather than of a military rebellion.

When Sāmarrā' was begun, in 221 H, the Caliph segregated the Turks and their commanders from the other races. According to Ya'qūbi, they had separate quarters (Qaṭā'i) known by the names of their commanders, such as Qaṭī'at Ashinās, Qaṭī'at Waṣīf, Qaṭī'at Khāqān 'Arṭūj, Qaṭī'at Bughā al-Ṣaghīr, Qaṭī'at Bughā al-Kabīr, Qaṭī'at Simā al-Dimashqī, Qaṭī'at Burmish, Qaṭī'at Itākh and Qaṭī'at Afshīn <sup>(141)</sup>. There were also streets where mainly Turks lived, such as Shāri' Barghāmish <sup>(142)</sup>. On the other hand, Mu'taṣim tried to preserve the natural disposition and the roughness of his Turks, which caused them to be strong warriors, by isolating them from other elements in order to prevent them from making mixed marriages. Such mixed marriages might

(139) Tabarī, vol.11, pp.1180-81, Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.256, Khaṭīb al-Baghdadi, vol.3, p.346, Mas'ūdi, Tanbīh, pp.356-57

(140) Sāmarrā', p.129, (The Islamic City)

(141) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, pp.258, 259, 262

(142) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.262

have modified their behaviour, making them less rough and belligerent and thus less useful. It was said that to counteract such possibilities he bought Turkish women slaves and married them to his favoured Turks. He then enrolled their wives in the state Register (Diwān), and fixed constant salaries for them. No one was allowed to divorce or leave his wife (143).

Finally, it would seem unreasonable to deny that the Caliph Mu'tasim was himself responsible for creating the new element, the Turkish presence, in Islamic society. This element was later so to gain in power that it became the cause of the near downfall of the Caliphate itself, as we shall see in the following chapters.

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(143) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.259

## Chapter two

### The Nature of Turkish Influence and its Causes

We mentioned above that Mūtaṣim founded Sāmarrā', in 221 H, to keep the Turks away from the discontented Baghdadis. As soon as he finished, he removed with his Turkish corps to the new city and settled there, thus making it the capital of the Caliphate and the centre for Turkish activity for fifty years.

From that time onwards various Turks appeared in the Abbasid state who played a great role in its political affairs. Among them were Itākh, Waṣīf, Ashinās, Simā al-Dimashqī, Bughā al-Kabīr, Bughā al-Saghīr, Afshīn and others. The Turks started to gain power gradually during Mu'taṣim's reign. He charged them with the leadership of his troops and offered them high positions in the 'Abbāsīd state. Consequently, individual Turks became men of great importance and came to hold the reins of power, particularly after they rescued the 'Abbāsīd state from the danger of Babak al-Khurramī<sup>(1)</sup> and after they had assisted in

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(1) He rebelled in 201 H during Ma'mūn's reign in the mountains of Adherbayjān. He had many adherents, who were called al-Khurramiyya. They flouted the law and created much disturbance in the state. The Caliph Ma'mūn firstly, and then Mu'taṣim, sent many military expeditions to quell al-Khurramiyya. Bughā al-Kabīr and Haidar b. Kawus (Afshīn) were the leaders of these forces, and it was the latter who was able to defeat Babak after many battles. Babak was captured, brought to Sāmarrā' and hanged there in 223 H. See for more details, Tabari, vol.11, pp.1171, 1174, 1186, Mas'ūdi, Murūj, vol.3, p.467, Ibn al-Athir, vol.5, pp.184, 239, Shābushti, Diyaṛāt, p.137, Ibn Kathir, Bidaya, vol.10, p.282.



(2)  
 the conquest of Amorion . Mu'taṣim relied on the Turks more and more and increased their power, especially after 'Ujaif b. 'Anbasa, who was Iranian by birth, plotted with 'Abbās b. al-Ma'mūn against him (3) . Some Turks were very prominent during the reign of Mu'taṣim, such as Itākh who had previously been a cook of Salām al-Abrash. Mu'taṣim bought him in 199 H because of his bravery and strength. After he had proved his ability in his service, the Caliph favoured him. Mu'taṣim charged Itākh (4) with the leadership of troops and with responsibility for financial affairs . He also appointed him as governor of Yaman (5) . He continued to serve as governor of many provinces during the reigns of the Caliphs Wāthiq and Mutawakkil. Wāthiq appointed him as governor of Egypt in 230 H, in addition (6) to his post as governor of Yaman .

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(2) The conquest of Amorion in 223 H was one of the most important events in the warfare between Muslims and Byzantines. The Caliph Mu'taṣim gathered a large expedition under his own leadership and that of his Turkish generals such as Afshīn who was in charge of the right wing of the troops and Ashinās in charge of the left wing. They fought many battles with the Byzantines, the Caliphal troops winning great victories. As a result of this, they conquered Amorion, which was considered to be an important city of the Byzantines. See, for more details, Ṭabarī, vol.11, pp.1236, 1244, Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.286.

(3) The leader 'Ujaif urged 'Abbās b. al-Ma'mūn to rebel against his uncle and to take the Caliphate from him. It seems that the reason for this was that Mu'taṣim preferred his general Afshīn to 'Ujaif, and generally favoured the Turks. See Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1256, Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.473, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.251, Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.288

(4) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.282

(5) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.262, Ibn Khaldūn, Tarīkh, vol.3, part 3, p.574

(6) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.173, Abu al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.255, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.574

Mutawakkil added Hījāz in 234 H<sup>(7)</sup>, and finally appointed him as governor of Sind<sup>(8)</sup>. He also appointed him to high positions of state and he was at various times in charge of the Maghāribā, the Atrāk, financial affairs (Amwāl), the post (Barīd), the office of chamberlain (Hijāba), and the Dār al-Khilāfa,<sup>(9)</sup> and furthermore, he was known as prince (Amīr)<sup>(10)</sup>. Itākh was employed by these three Caliphs to get rid of their political rivals, and was charged with the assassinations of 'Ujaif b. 'Anbasa, 'Abbās b. al-Ma'mūn and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Zayyāt, and successfully carried them out<sup>(11)</sup>.

<sup>(12)</sup>  
Ashinās al-Turki was another well-known personality, prominent during Mu'tasim's reign, who reached a high position because of the bravery which he showed during the Byzantine war and the conquest of Amorion. As a sign of the high esteem in which the Caliph held him, Ashinas was said to have been awarded a crown and a gold-decorated belt<sup>(13)</sup> and to have had a great palace built for him<sup>(14)</sup>. He was then employed in numerous appointments such as (Hājib)<sup>(15)</sup> and governor of Egypt in 219 H<sup>(16)</sup>.

(7) Jahshiyārī, Lost Fragments of Kitāb al-Wūzara', p.68, Abū al-Maḥāsīn, vol.2, p.275

(8) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.173

(9) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1383, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.282, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.580

(10) Dhahabī, al-'Ibar, vol.1, p.416

(11) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.282, Abū al-Maḥāsīn, vol.2, p.276

(12) He had previously been a slave (Mamlūk) of Na'im b. Khāzim. Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.256

(13) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1302

(14) Balādhuri, Ftūḥ, p.305. Among the photographs is one of this palace.

(15) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.251

(16) Abū al-Maḥāsīn, vol.2, p.229

His position became even greater during the reign of Wāthiq b. al-Mu'tasim, who followed his father's policy in relying on Turks and using them in the various offices of state. Wāthiq appointed Ashinās as his deputy during his absence, and awarded him a crown of pearls <sup>(17)</sup>. Historians remark on this, "The Caliph Wāthiq was the first Caliph to appoint a Turkish deputy during his absence" <sup>(18)</sup>. The Caliph also gave him 40,000,000 <sup>(19)</sup> dirhims and appointed him as governor of all the regions from the centre of the Caliphate to the end of the Maghrib <sup>(20)</sup>. Eventually, he gave him <sup>(21)</sup> the title of Prince.

The other powerful Turkish leader during Mu'tasim's reign was Afshīn, who played an important role during the conquest of Amorion and who overcame the revolt of Bābak al-Khurramī as mentioned above. It seems that these events and others resulted in Afshīn attaining to high position during Mu'tasim's reign. The Caliph Mu'tasim even awarded him a crown of pearls and two gold-decorated belts <sup>(22)</sup>. He placed a golden necklace studded with pearls around his neck too, <sup>(23)</sup> and gave him 20,000,000 dirhims <sup>(24)</sup>.

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(17) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1452, Qaramāni, Akhbār al-Duwal, p.65, Maqrīzi, al-Nuqūd, p.201, Abū al-Mahāsīn, vol.2, p.252

(18) Suyūṭī, p.340, Qaramāni, p.65

(19) Ibn al-'Adīm, Zubdat al-Ḥalāb min Tarikh Ḥalb, vol.1, p.69

(20) Although Ya'qūbi says (in vol.3, p.169) "to the end of the Maghrib", Abbasid authority did not in fact extend beyond Egypt at that time. It may be that Ya'qūbi meant Egypt alone by Maghrib.

(21) Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.229

(22) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1233, Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.471, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5 p.246

(23) Ṣābī, Rusūm, p.94

(24) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1233, Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.471, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.246

Eventually, Afshīn was appointed as governor of Armenia<sup>(25)</sup> and of Sind<sup>(26)</sup>.

In point of fact, however, although Mu'taṣim relied on Turks and was very generous to them, he was careful to prevent them from encroaching on his authority and interfering in the affairs of state. He was successful in overcoming their ambitions for domination and authority. For instance, he eliminated his general Afshīn in 226 H after he had noticed him becoming a great danger to the state<sup>(27)</sup>. In his later years Mu'taṣim was reported to have expressed regret that he had favoured Itākh, Ashinās, Afshīn and Waṣīf, who were, according to him, as nothing compared to the four men who had been favoured by his brother Ma'mūn<sup>(28)</sup>. He therefore established a new non-Turkish division in the hope of getting himself rid of Turkish influence, and called them Maghāribā<sup>(29)</sup>. Yet although Mu'taṣim attempted to limit Turkish influence, he was unable to do so entirely, because the Turks were a great military power whose influence was difficult to evade. Their hold on politics, the army, financial and administrative affairs became stronger and stronger, particularly after the death of Mu'taṣim and during the reign of Wāthiq, who was considered to be a weak ruler, and who therefore presented them with a splendid opportunity for increasing their influence on all the affairs of state.

(25) Balādhuri, p.218

(26) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1233, Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.471, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.246

(27) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1314-18

(28) Mu'taṣim is reported to have expressed this opinion to Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm. Ishāq his brother Muḥammad, his uncle Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusain, and the latter's son 'Abdullah, are designated as the four proteges of Ma'mūn. Ishāq was governor of Khurāsān. See Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1327-28.

(29) This consisted of Egyptian 'Arabs (of the Yaman and Qais tribes). See, Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.465, The Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol.1, p.241 (see Afshīn).

We may consider Wāthiq's reign as the turning point of the 'Abbāsīd state's attitude towards the Turks and their interference in the affairs of state. Instead of confining their activities to military operations only, Wāthiq made it possible for them to attain high positions in the state. They controlled the office of Hijāba, believing that as the Caliph held the real power in the state, he ought to be under their control, and that the Hājib was the person with the best opportunities for observing the Caliph and passing on the resulting information about the affairs of state to those Turks who might wish to take action about them. They held this position during the reign of Mu'taṣīm and his successors. Waṣīf and Simā al-Dimashqī were Hājibs during Mu'taṣīm's reign<sup>(30)</sup>, while Itakh was Hājib to Wāthiq and Mutawakkil<sup>(31)</sup>. Waṣīf was Hājib to Wāthiq, Mutawakkil and Muntaṣir<sup>(32)</sup>. According to Irbili, Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf and Mūsā b. Bughā were Hājibs to Mu'tazz and Muhtadī<sup>(33)</sup>.

The other office which Turks occasionally filled was that of the Vizirate. Autāmish was the Wazīr of Musta'in<sup>(34)</sup> and Waṣīf was the minister (Wazīr) of Mutawakkil, despite the fact that he had not been officially given this title<sup>(35)</sup>.

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(30) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.168

(31) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1383, 1384, Tanūkhī, Mustajād, p.142, Dhahabī, vol.1, p.416

(32) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1384, Irbili, pp.225, 227, 228, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.580, Sabī, Rusūm, pp.33, 73

(33) Irbili, p.233

(34) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1508, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.312, Abū al-Maḥāsīn, vol.2, p.327, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.600

(35) Tanūkhī, Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh, vol.8, p.11, Ṣabī, Rusūm, p.33

All official documents issuing from the government bore their signature. As Turkish influence gradually increased, the Caliphs began to grant them the governorship of various provinces, for instance of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Yaman, Sind, Armenia and others.<sup>(36)</sup> Although the revenues from these provinces were paid to their Turkish governors, these men in turn, it seems, had to give some of this money to the central treasury in return for having been given the provinces by the Caliph.

It is noteworthy the Turkish governors did not actually go to the provinces which the Caliphs had given them to govern, but preferred to stay in Sāmarrā', the capital, in order to be near the Caliph and so to retain their supervision and domination of the affairs of state. They therefore sent deputies out to the provinces to rule in their names. When Mu'taṣim appointed his military leader Afshīn as governor of Adherbayjan and Sind, Afshīn authorized his cousin Mankajūr to govern there in his stead<sup>(37)</sup>. According to Ya'qūbi, when Wāthiq appointed Ashinās as the governor of various western regions, among them Syria and Egypt, Ashinās sent deputies to rule in his name<sup>(38)</sup>. Itākh authorized 'Anbasa b. Ishāq al-Ḍabbi<sup>(39)</sup> to govern Sind, and Harthama Shīr-i-Bamyān<sup>(40)</sup> to govern Yaman after the Caliph Wāthiq had given them the governorships<sup>(41)</sup>.

(36) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1422, 1508, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, pp.169, 173, 186, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, pp.257, 312, Abū al-Mahāsīn, vol.2, pp.229, 255, 256, 275, 327

(37) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1301, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.257

(38) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.169, Abū al-Mahāsīn, vol.2, p.231

(39) During the region of Mutawakkil, 'Anbasa had been sent to Egypt as the deputy of Muntaṣir when the latter had been made governor of Egypt by his father Mutawakkil. See, Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1417-18, 1430-31

(40) Shīr-i-Bamyān is a Persian title meaning Lion of Bamyān. Harthama may well have been a ruler of Bamyān.

(41) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1335, vol.12, p.1373, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, pp.169, 173

Finally, Baikabāk authorized Aḥmad b. Tūlūn to rule in Egypt after the Caliph Mu'tazz had appointed him as its ruler <sup>(42)</sup>.

It seems that these men who were authorized by the Turkish governors to rule in the various provinces had more respect for their masters than for the Caliphs. In this way, the links and the loyalty which were found between the Caliphs and their governors were gradually reduced. A sign of this loss of respect for the Caliph was that these deputy governors prayed for their Turkish masters after praying for the Caliph during the Friday prayer, and <sup>(43)</sup> that they had their masters' names stamped on the coinage. This situation grew to be a dangerous one for the state, because certain of the deputies were ambitious men who attempted to gain independence, as did Mankajūr b. Qārin for instance <sup>(44)</sup>. Later, Aḥmad b. Tūlūn succeeded in becoming an independent ruler <sup>(45)</sup> in Egypt and established the Tūlūnid state. However, the Turks who were in control of the various offices of state in Sāmarrā' employed secretaries (Kuttāb) to assist them, as they themselves were illiterate. Accordingly, <sup>(46)</sup> everyone who held an office had a private secretary.

As for the financial affairs, the Turks dominated them, too. In fact, the Turks were not satisfied with the grants and gifts which were offered to them by the Caliphs, but gained control of the central treasury, and thereby amassed huge fortunes. It seems that was a result of encouragement from the

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(42) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1697, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.186

(43) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1318, vol.12, p.1383, Abū al-Maḥāsīn, vol.2, p.275, Kāshif, Miṣr fī 'Ahd al-Wulāt, pp.28, 29

(44) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1301-1302

(45) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1697, vol.13, pp.2011, 2028, 2038, 2048

(46) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1535, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.173, Tanukhi, Faraj, vol.1, pp.134, 157, 158, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.269

Caliphs themselves. It is mentioned that Musta'in, upon coming to the Caliphate, allowed Autā'mish and Shā'hik al-Khādīm to use the central treasury freely. His mother also joined them in this. In fact, all the revenues which were paid into the state treasury were used by them<sup>(47)</sup>. Moreover, the Caliph melted gold and silver vessels for them and restricted his own expenditure in order to be able to satisfy their desires and ambitions<sup>(48)</sup>.

Historians mention the wealth which was amassed by various Turks, and report that when Itā'kh died in 235 H, he left gold to the value of about 1,000,000 dinārs<sup>(49)</sup>. When Bughā al-Kabīr died in 248 H, he left great estates and goods whose value was estimated at about 10,000,000 dinārs. He left also ten pearls estimated at being worth about 3,000,000 dinārs<sup>(50)</sup>. As for Waṣīf<sup>(51)</sup> (who died in 253 H), 1,000,000 dinārs were found buried in his courtyard. Naturally, this aspect of Turkish dominance affected the central treasury, which often suffered bankruptcy, as occurred during the reign of Mu'tazz. It was said that when he came to the throne he found only 500,000 dinārs in the treasury<sup>(52)</sup>. As a result of the miserable condition to which the state was reduced by the increase of Turkish influence and by their control of the central treasury, the government was unable to provide troops to combat the Byzantines who seized this opportunity of attacking the borders of the state in 249 H. This in turn forced the government to turn to the rich of Baghdad and Sāmarrā' in order to secure funds for supporting an army<sup>(53)</sup>.

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(47) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1512-13, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.313

(48) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1544

(49) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1384-87, Dhahabī, 'Iḥṣān, vol.1, p.416

(50) Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.2

(51) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1659

(52) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1545, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.320, Abū al-Maḥāsīn, vol.2, p.332

(53) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1511, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.181



Turkish influence in Sāmarrā' had an even greater impact on the running of the Caliphate itself when they began to interfere in the appointing of the Caliph. Wāthiq (227-232 H) was the last to be chosen in the traditional way. Up to this time, Caliphs had always been designated by their predecessors, but during his reign, Wāthiq did not even desire to take the responsibility of nominating a successor. He was reported to have said, "God does not hold me responsible for it (The Caliphate) either in this life or the next."<sup>(54)</sup>

After his death a meeting of the men who held the reins of power was called to decide the question of succession. The dominant members were the chief judge (Qāḍī) Ahmad b. Abī Duwād and three high civilian officials, the Wazīr Muḥammad b. al-Zayyāt, Ahmad b. Khālīd, and 'Umar b. Faraj, and the two most prominent military commanders Waṣīf and Itākh. In this we see clearly the extent of Turkish influence in the state at that time. When Ahmad b. Abī Duwād and Muḥammad b. al-Zayyāt nominated their candidate Muḥammad b. al-Wāthiq, the Turks rejected this. Waṣīf led the opposition against them. He announced that, in his opinion, Muḥammad b. al-Wāthiq was a minor and was unable to manage the Caliphate<sup>(55)</sup>. When those present were convinced by this argument, the Turks announced their candidate, Ja'far b. al-Mu'taṣim, who was twenty six years old and the meeting recognised him as Caliph. The chief judge clothed Ja'far in the official robe of the Caliphate, and then all those present<sup>(56)</sup> acknowledged him as Caliph, and gave him the title of Mutawakkil. This established a precedent for the Turks to install other Caliphs. In this way, they gained full control of the reins of power, and consequently had freedom of action in all affairs of state.

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(54) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.171

(55) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1368, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.171, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5 p.278

(56) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1369, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.172, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5 p.278

The new Caliph Mutawakkil (232-247 H) tolerated Turkish interference at the outset of his reign because he felt that he was indebted to them for his installation as Caliph. We see that he allowed them to reach high positions in the government. Later, however, he came to feel that they constituted a great danger to the Caliphate itself, and resolving to put an end to their influence, he began to resist them and gradually restricted their involvement in the running of the state. It was reported that Mutawakkil in 247 H ordered the confiscation of Waṣīf's estates in Iṣfahān and Jibāl and gave them to (57) Fatih b. Khāqān. There is other evidence of Mutawakkil's hostility to the Turks; in, for instance, the fact that he was successful in having Itākh (58) killed in 235 H, and also arranged to have Waṣīf and Bughā similarly (59) eliminated. As soon as the Turks realised Mutawakkil's policy towards them had changed they resolved to kill him. They discovered that his son (60) Muntaṣir was willing to be their ally in this. As a result of Muntaṣir's (61) hostility towards his father's policy, he sided with the Turks, and particularly with their leader Waṣīf, who was the one to decide to kill the Caliph. Their plan was successful and they murdered him on Tuesday, the third of (62) Shawwāl in 247 H. Afterwards they went to Muntaṣir and hailed him as Caliph. They then asked all high officials of state and other military

(57) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1452, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.301

(58) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1384-87, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.173

(59) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1456, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.302. More details on this point are given on the following chapter

(60) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1458, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.34

(61) More details on this point are given in the following chapters

(62) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1452-60, Diyārbakri, vol.2, p.378, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, pp.302, 303

leaders to support him. His two brothers Mu'tazz and Mu'ayyad were forced to acknowledge his authority. Finally, the Turks threatened reprisals (63) against anyone who refused to recognize the new Caliph .

The murder of Mutawakkil was the first attack on an 'Abbāsid Caliph by the Turks, and it served to confirm their influence. The murder of Mutawakkil was virtually the murder of the authority of the Caliphate, and a victory for the Turks. Although the Caliphs continued to make efforts to resist Turkish control, they found this extremely difficult, and they were installed and (64) dethroned whenever the Turks wished. As Ibn al-Ṭaṭṭaqa describes, "Turks held the reins of power in the state after the murder of Mutawakkil, and they found the Caliphs weak. The Caliph was a captive. When they wished they let him live; when they wished they dethroned him; when they wished they killed him".

Muntaṣir, whose regime lasted six months (shawwāl 247-Rabī' al-Thāni 248 H), was recognized as Caliph by the murderers of his father, and the next day the (65) people were forced to acknowledge him as Caliph too . Naturally, Muntaṣir was completely under Turkish dominance. His two brothers, Mu'tazz and Mu'ayyad had been designated as his heirs, but the Turks were anxious about them as they had been responsible for the death of their father. They therefore obliged Muntaṣir to remove them from the succession, and to give the Turks freedom to choose the person whom they wished to have as Caliph. It was reported that Ahmad b. al-Khaṣīb advised Waṣīf and Bughā, "We can expect no security from those two young men [Mu'tazz and Mu'ayyad] after the death of Muntaṣir, because if Mu'tazz ever becomes Caliph he will kill us all. It is

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(63) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1473-75, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, pp.303, 307

(64) Fakhri, p.243

(65) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1471

(66)  
 therefore best if we prevent them from ever coming to power ". Waṣīf and Bughā asked Muntaṣir to remove his two brothers from the succession. Muntaṣir was unable to refuse and reluctantly obeyed. He was said to have ordered his two brothers to present themselves at his court, and then he asked them to give up their rights to the succession. It is said that Mu'tazz vehemently refused, whereupon the Turks threatened him with death. Mu'ayyad exclaimed, "Dogs! You attacked our family before and now you are wanting to attack your master again. Let me have a talk with him (67) . He finally persuaded Mu'tazz that it was futile to refuse: "Because they are determined to kill you if you do".

As for their brother Muntaṣir, he expressed his remorse for what he had just done and apologized to them. He said, "Do not think that I have done this because I want to live until my son grows up and then appoint him Caliph. By God, that has never been my ambition! I swear to God that I would rather appoint my father's sons rather than any of my cousins. But these Turks forced me to remove you and I feared that, if I refused, they might come and kill you" (68) . It seems from this that Muntaṣir was angered by the blatant interference of the Turks in the affairs of state, even though he had previously been on their side. He probably began to feel that he had no power in his own regime, and to regret the murder of his father. It was reported that some of his friends saw him crying and, upon asking him the reason, were told, "I dreamt that my father told me "Beware Muḥammad! You killed me and seized my Caliphate. By God you will only enjoy your ill-gotten position for a few days, and then you will go to hell" (69) . As a result of all this Muntaṣir began to challenge

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(66) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1485-86, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.309

(67) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1488, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.310

(68) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1488, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.310, Musta'in, for example, was one of his cousins.

(69) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1496-97, Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.353

the Turks openly, and they became anxious to assassinate him as soon as possible. They seized the opportunity offered by an illness, and bribed his doctor Ibn al-Taifūri to poison him <sup>(70)</sup>. He died in 248 H. He was twenty six years old and his reign had lasted only six months.

The Turks then met in order to decide who should be made the new Caliph. They agreed firstly to accept the opinion of Bughā al-Kabīr, Bughā al-Ṣaghīr, Autāmish and Ahmad b. al-Khaṣīb <sup>(71)</sup>. However, Bughā al-Kabīr advised, "We should choose someone of whom we are afraid, because if the person we decide upon is afraid of us, we will vie with each other in trying to obtain as much power as possible, and we will end up by killing one another" <sup>(72)</sup>. The Turks did not agree with this, and eventually decided not to choose one of Mutawakkil's sons in case he should kill them in revenge. They agreed rather to have Ahmad b. al-Mu'taṣim as Caliph and they gave him the title of Musta'in <sup>(73)</sup>. Yet not all the Turks were satisfied with the election of Musta'in, and some of them did not recognize him as Caliph. Conflict broke out among them and lasted three days, but eventually the supporters of Musta'in were victorious and then all the generals and people acknowledged him as Caliph <sup>(74)</sup>. Dūrī <sup>(75)</sup> remarks, "Turkish control of the government and

(70) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1495, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.50, Diyārbakri, vol.2, p.378, Dhahabi, 'Ibar, vol.1, p.453, Suyūṭī, p.357, Qaramāni, p.77

(71) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1501, 1502, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.311, Ibn al-Taḡtaqa, p.240

(72) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1502

(73) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1501, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.180, Abū al-Fidā', vol.2, p.44

(74) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1503-1504, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.180, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.311

(75) Dūrī, Dirāsāt fī al-'Uṣūr al-'Abbāsiyah al-Muta'khira, p.15

their appointing of Caliphs were the result of their ambitions and desire for power, and were not guided by high ideals or principles. They therefore chose those men who would be acquiescent and submissive to their desires".

Turkish influence increased greatly during the reign of Musta'in (248-252 H). In 248 H he appointed Autā'mish as governor of Egypt, and his Wazir. He appointed Bughā al-Sharābi (al-Ṣaghīr) as governor of Ḥulwān, Masbadhān and Mahrajānqudhaq, and Shāhik al-Khādim as supervisor of his palace, goods and treasuries. He favoured these two men above all others (76). The Turks were not satisfied with the positions which the Caliph had given them, but obliged him to imprison his two cousins Mu'tazz and Mu'ayyad, still fearing reprisals for the murders of their father and brother. Musta'in (77) did as they demanded.

Bughā al-Kabīr, Bughā al-Ṣaghīr, Autā'mish, Bāghir and Waṣīf dominated the government. They began persuading the Caliph to eliminate their Turkish rivals and enemies. For example, they asked him to exile 'Ubaidullah b. Yahyā b. Khāqān (78). Again Musta'in complied with their demand. He exiled

(76) Tabarī, vol.12, p.1508, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.312

(77) Tabarī, vol.12, p.1507, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.327

(78) Ibn Khāqān was a Turkish civilian, who disliked the Turkish military leaders, probably because of their disrespect for the Caliphs, who were after all, Muslims. He had proved his loyalty in long service under the 'Abbāsids. He occupied various positions in the state. The Caliph Mutawakkil favoured him and appointed him as his own minister (Wazir). In addition, he appointed him as the commander of the new military division "Shakiriyya", which was organised by the Caliph in order to resist the influence of the Turkish military commanders. It was due to the very favourable attitude with which Mutawakkil treated Ibn Khāqān, and due to the latter's influence upon the Caliph that the Turkish leaders were antagonistic towards him.

'Uбайдullah to Burqa. Ahmad b. al-Khaṣīb, whose exile they had also asked for, he sent to the island of Crete<sup>(79)</sup>. Thus, during the reign of Musta'in the Turks were the true masters of the 'Abbāsid state. Yet though they came to high positions during his reign, we find that their attitude towards him changed rapidly, due to rumours that he wanted to be done with them. The fact is that Musta'in had not originally had any desire to be Caliph, but had simply been chosen by the Turks, who were in the habit of installing and deposing Caliphs whensoever they wished. In the end, Musta'in decided to leave Sāmarrā' and to get far away from the power of the Turks there in order to protect himself and to attempt a new and from a safer position to combat them. He went to Baghdad because he knew that in that city he would get the support of the Baghdadis and Tāhirids. Furthermore, he had the support of certain Turks, such as Waṣīf and Bughā, who accompanied him to Baghdad. Then began a time of many disturbances, conflicts and of civil war<sup>(80)</sup>. According to Ibn al-Taṭṭaqa, "Musta'in's reign and his state were chaotic in the extreme."<sup>(81)</sup> The poets of the time reflected this condition and described it as full of the confusion which had been brought about by Turkish interference<sup>(82)</sup>. When the civil war was over, the Sāmarrān Turkish troops held the upper hand, and the unlucky Caliph Musta'in was exiled to Wāsiṭ in accordance with the agreement which had been decided upon by the two sides. But it seems that the Turks of Sāmarrā' were not completely satisfied with this, and they decided to have Musta'in killed. They sent someone, who succeeded in assassinating him in his place of exile<sup>(83)</sup>.

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(79) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1508, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.312

(80) We give more details concerning this in Chapter four.

(81) Fakhri, p.241

(82) Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.61

(83) It was said that the person sent by the Turks to carry out the assassination was Sa'īd b. Ṣāliḥ al-Turki, who killed the former Caliph by cutting his head while he was at prayer. See, Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1670-72

The circumstances of the Caliphate during the reign of Mu'tazz (252-255 H) were not better than those of the previous period. The Caliphate returned to Sāmarrā', and once again came under Turkish control from which Musta'in had attempted to escape. We now see Turkish power increasing greatly, and they soon dominated all the affairs of state as before. Mu'tazz held the Caliphate just as long as the Turks remained satisfied with him. That this was generally recognized we can see in the following story recounted by Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa (84) : "When Mu'tazz held court for the first time, surrounded by courtiers and by entertainers (Durafā'), diviners ('Arrāfūn) were summoned before him and were asked, 'Tell us how long he will live and how long he will remain as Caliph'. One of the entertainers spoke up and said, 'I can divine from the Turks both how many years he will live and the duration of his Caliphate.' When asked how he could do this he replied, 'It's just as long as the Turks want it to be!'. Everyone in the court laughed." Bughā al-Sharābi (al-Ṣaghīr), Baikabāk, Waṣīf and his son Ṣāliḥ dominated the government and treated the state as their private property. Their power increased to the point that the Caliph could neither give them orders nor object to what they did. It was reported, for instance that Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf arrested many statesmen. Some of them were secretaries (Kuttāb), and one was Aḥmad b. Isrā'īl, the minister (Wazīr) of the Caliph. When Mu'tazz learned of this he intervened to secure the release of his Wazīr, but Ṣāliḥ simply ignored him and his demand (85).

Some historians reveal Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf's influence and control of Caliphal affairs by saying, "All official documents which were issued by the government were signed with his name" (86). As a result of the insulting

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(84) Fakhri, p.243

(85) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1706-1707, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.626

(86) Mas'ūdi, Tanbih, p.365, Ibn al-'Imad, Shadharāt al-Dhahab, vol.2, p.128



attitude of the Turks towards the Caliphate, both ignoring the orders of the Caliph and imposing their own will on all the affairs of state, the inevitable conflict occurred between them and the Caliph. Mu'tazz began to take measures against them and he succeeded in having Waṣīf murdered (87) in 253 H and Bughā al-Ṣaghīr in 254 H (88). It seems that the main obstacle to his fully carrying out his plan to eliminate all the powerful Turks was a shortage of money, for all the state treasuries were almost empty. As a result of this, some military corps such as Maghāriba and Farāghina, which in the beginning had sided with the Caliph, joined forces with the Turks, and this made the whole problem worse. These military corps had asked the Caliph to pay their salaries, which totalled 50,000 dinārs, but he was unable at that moment to raise such a sum. He was said to have asked for help from his mother, Qabiḥa, but she denied having that much money. (89) The troops therefore all agreed to dethrone him. They crowded in front of his palace and asked him to come outside to meet them, but he apologized, saying that he had been taking medicine and was therefore feeling weak. Some Turks, such as Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf, Muḥammad b. Bughā and Baikabāk, then entered his palace and took him forcibly to the palace yard. The ground was very hot, and the Caliph, who had been taken from his palace without having been given a chance to put shoes on, began lifting his feet up one by one in order to escape the heat. One of the Turks began to strike his face. The man who was hitting him demanded that he abdicate.

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(87) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1687-88, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.185, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.335, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.619

(88) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1709, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.338, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.14

(89) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1709, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.187, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.92, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.341, Suyūṭī, p.360, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.632

They then put him in a room and tortured him further until he gave in to their demand<sup>(90)</sup>. Finally, they brought the judge Ibn Abī al-Shawārib and some witnesses before him in order to legalize his abdication<sup>(91)</sup>. It was said that Mu'tazz had agreed to abdicate on the understanding that the Turks would not further molest him, and would respect his properties and his family. But the Turks, as was their habit, were afraid to leave him alive, and they broke their promise. They tortured him yet again, and he was not allowed to eat or drink for three days. Finally he was imprisoned in an underground room. He died in Sha'bān 255 H<sup>(92)</sup>. Immediately after his death they punished his family too. They arrested his mother Qabiḥa, jailed her, and later exiled her to Makka<sup>(93)</sup>.

After getting rid of Mu'tazz the Turks chose Muḥammad b. al-Wāthiq as the next Caliph. They brought him from Baghdad to Sāmarrā' and had him installed, and then gave him the title of Muhtadi. The Caliph Muhtadi (255-256 H) was described as a godly man who had a great desire to reform the Caliphate, whose affairs were full of corruption as a result of instability<sup>(94)</sup>. Although he began to plan for many reforms, the measures he took came to nothing, due to the continual interference of the Turks in the affairs of state. However, Muhtadi realized quite clearly from the

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(90) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1710-11, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.92, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.342, Suyūṭī, p.360, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.16

(91) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1710, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.3, p.24

(92) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1711, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.92, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.342, Ibn al-Taḡṭaqa, p.342, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.3, p.24

(93) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1717, Dhahabi, 'Ibar, vol.2, pp.10-11

(94) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1736, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.187, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.103, Irbilī, p.231, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, pp.628, 631

beginning that the Turks were the dominant force in the state, having appointed him Caliph. He therefore attempted to decrease their power by encouraging the rivalry that existed between them. He was said to have finally succeeded in having Salih b. Waṣīf and Baikabāk murdered <sup>(95)</sup>. It soon became clear that he had engineered their demise, and the Turks unified themselves under the leadership of Mūsā b. Bughā in order to overthrow the Caliph. Ibn Bughā led the Turks in a great battle against the Caliph and his supporters, and in the ensuing fighting Muhtadi was mortally wounded. He died, in 256 H, after a reign of only eleven months.

The Turks, who had the upper hand in Sāmarrā', now brought out of prison Abū al-'Abbās b. al-Mutawakkil and proclaimed him Caliph, giving him the title Mu'tamid <sup>(96)</sup>. Although they did not realize it, their choice of Mu'tamid was one which, in the end, was to result in the total eclipse of Turkish domination, and which was to pave the way to the restoration of the authority of the Caliphate. This will be examined in the following chapter.

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(95) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1787, 1791, 1813, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.99, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.355, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.23

(96) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1813, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.188, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.99, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.355, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.22

### Chapter Three

#### The Resistance of the Caliphate to Turkish Influence

Through our study in the previous chapter we saw that Turkish influence increased greatly and that the Turks dominated 'Abbāsīd affairs of state. Some of the Turks were men whose high ambitions were a serious threat to the general welfare of the state. This was made clear when some among them began to establish separate states, which they ruled either under the sovereignty of the Caliphate or quite independently of it. Others went so far as to take over political power in the very centre of the Caliphate. As an instance of Turkish subversion we may note that Mu'taṣim's commander Afshīn secretly sent presents and gifts of money which he had been given to (1) Ashrūsna, and also was in contact with men who sought power and who wanted to rebel against the state. He contacted Mazyār b. Qārīn, the ruler of Jibāl, and persuaded him to revolt against the 'Abbāsīd state. When Mazyār was defeated and finally captured he admitted in the presence of Mu'taṣim that, "Afshīn wrote to me and persuaded me to disobey your orders and to start a rebellion against your authority" (2). After a special trial which was arranged for Afshīn by Mu'taṣim, the Caliph's accusations were proved correct and Afshīn was removed from the leadership of the Caliphal guards and the army. The Caliph then appointed Ishāq b. Yahya b. Mu'adh (3) in his place, and Afshīn was imprisoned until his death in Sh'abān 226 H. (4). It seems that Mu'taṣim realized the danger of Turkish ambitions and of the Turks' increasing influence. He was aware that the balance between the

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(1) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1303, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.259

(2) Ṭabarī, vol.11, pp.1268, 1303, The Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol.1, p.241 (see Afshin)

(3) His family probably came from Rayy. His grandfather, Mu'adh b. Muslim, was governor of Khurasan in 160 H. See Ṭabarī, vol.10, p.477, Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.276

(4) Ṭabarī, vol.11, pp.1303, 1314-18, The Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol.1, p.241

authority of the central government on the one hand and the power of the Turks on the other had changed, and that this heralded the loss of Caliphal dignity and control. Therefore, feeling that he had to thwart the ambitions of the Turks, he eliminated his general Afshīn, as mentioned above, as an example to others. In his later years Mu'taṣim was reported to have expressed regret that he had used Itākh, Ashinās, Waṣīf and Afshīn<sup>(5)</sup>. Consequently, he established a new non-Turkish corps in order to reduce Turkish influence, and called them Maghāribā<sup>(6)</sup>. Although Mu'taṣim succeeded in resisting the Turks and their aspiration to overthrow authority, he was unable to remove them entirely due to their having a great degree of control over the army.

After the death of Mu'taṣim, and during the reign of his son Wāthiq, the Turks again regained control of the state and influence in it, to the extent that they began to take part in choosing the Caliph, which they did for the first time in the case of Mutawakkil. However, none of the 'Abbāsid Caliphs who came after Wāthiq seemed to acquiesce readily in Turkish control, and indeed they resisted the Turks vigorously. They tried to eliminate them and their power entirely, and to restore the dignity of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate. We therefore see that the period which followed the reign of Wāthiq was one of struggle between the Caliphs and the Turks.

When Mutawakkil was appointed to the Caliphate by the Turks, he realized that they dominated the administration and the general policy of the state. He tried hard to put an end to this. Because it had been the Turks who had installed him in the first place, and because he feared what they would do if they found out, his resistance to them was carried out in secret. Most of his reign was therefore a matter of struggling covertly against them. In the end, however, they discovered his intentions and

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(5) See Chapter Two, p.29

(6) See Chapter Two, p.29

assassinated him. Mutawakkil tried many tactics during his fight against the Turks. He had noticed that the majority of the people, among them the theologians ('Ulamā'), hated the doctrine concerning the creation of the Qura'n (Khalq al-Qura'n) which was called Mu'tazilism and which the Caliphs Ma'mūn, Mu'taṣim and Wāthiq had adopted. They had punished many people who had refused to accept the doctrine, and had forced them to renounce their belief in the divine origin of the Qura'n. Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was one of these (7). Mutawakkil decided in 232 H to drop this whole controversial issue and declared the official return to Ḥadīth wa-l-Sunna in order to make himself popular and to gain support for his plans. Accordingly, he issued an edict to this effect throughout the whole empire (8).

The second tactic adopted by Mutawakkil was that of tax reform. He found that the majority of people, particularly the peasants, suffered from the way taxes had been levied on their harvest since Umayyad times. The peasants had had to pay this tax at the beginning of the Persian new year (Nawrūz), by which time their crops had not always been harvested and sold, in which case they were usually without sufficient money to pay the taxes. They were then obliged to borrow money, for otherwise they might lose their land (9). In Muḥarram 243 H Mutawakkil to gain the support of these people, ordered that the first day of Nawrūz be delayed by seventeen days so that the peasants would be able to pay their taxes. This measure pleased the people and poets began to praise him (10).

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(7) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1131, Qaramānī, pp.56, 58

(8) Ṭabarī mentions (in vol.12, pp.1412-13) this under the year 237 H, but says that it happened at the beginning of Mutawakkil's reign (232 H).

(9) Birūnī, Athār al-Bāqiya, p.31

(10) Birūnī, p.32

The Caliph now initiated some very far-reaching measures. He organised a military division, called Shakiriyya, which was to consist of twelve thousand men, who were to be recruited from regions such as Syria, Jazīra, Jibāl, Iraq, Adherbayjān, Armenia and the Caucasus. There were even some men (Abnā') from Baghdad who enlisted alongside this motley collection of 'Arabs and non-'Arabs from different regions. The troops were under his supervision, and he gave the leadership of the new division to his two sons, Mu'tazz and Mu'ayyad, and to his faithful Wazīr 'Ubaiddullah b. Yahya b. Khāqān<sup>(11)</sup>. Mutawakkil then divided his kingdom among his three sons. He gave the western part to his son Muntaṣir, the eastern part to his son Mu'tazz and the whole of Syria to Mu'ayyad<sup>(12)</sup>. It seems that his aim here was to prevent the Turks from interfering in the choosing of the Caliphs.

After accomplishing these various measures, Mutawakkil set about fulfilling his plans to counteract and nullify Turkish influence. He decided firstly to eliminate Itākh, who, because he was in charge of the Jaish, Maghāribā, Atrāk, Barīd, Hijāba and Dār al-Khilāfa<sup>(13)</sup>, in addition to being supervisor of the state treasuries, held power which could seriously endanger the Caliph's rule. Mutawakkil also felt that Itākh was disrespectful towards him. It was said that Mutawakkil and Itākh once went for a picnic to the district of Qāṭūl. Mutawakkil drank and revelled, and then quarrelled with Itākh, with the result that Itākh attempted to kill him. The next morning, when sober, Mutawakkil was informed about all this, and felt he had been insulted by Itākh<sup>(14)</sup>. He began to plot to have him murdered. In the end

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(11) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1389, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.284, Mas'ūdi, Tanbīh, p.362, Tanūkhī, Jāmi' al-Tawarīkh, vol.8, p.13

(12) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1394-96

(13) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1383, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.282

(14) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1383, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.282



he sent someone to Itākh and this man finally succeeded in persuading him to make a pilgrimage. As soon as Itākh set off, Mutawakkil began to transfer his offices to Waṣīf and then conspired with the ruler of Baghdad, Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Ṭāhiri, to have Itākh imprisoned when he returned from his pilgrimage. This plan was successful and Itākh, along with his two sons Muẓaffar and Manṣūr, were arrested and put in prison. Itākh died there in 235 H<sup>(15)</sup>. Baghdad seems to have been a suitable place for this plot to have been consummated because of the dislike the Baghdadis felt for the Turks, and also because there Itākh was far from his supporters.

Mutawakkil continued his struggle against the Turks, and determined to have them murdered one by one. After Mutawakkil eliminated Itākh, he began to plot against Waṣīf as well. In 247 H he ordered his estates and goods in Iṣfahān and Jibāl to be confiscated, and granted them to Fatih b. Khāqān<sup>(16)</sup>. At the same time he decided that he would have Bughā<sup>(17)</sup>, Autāmish<sup>(18)</sup> and others killed on Thursday, the fifth of Shawwāl, 247 H (in the event, Mutawakkil was assassinated two days before this date)<sup>(19)</sup>. When the Turks got to know of Mutawakkil's plans for them, they decided to kill him, and found in Muntaṣir, the heir apparent, a good ally. Seizing the opportunity presented by disagreement between Mutawakkil and his son Muntaṣir, they began to conspire with the latter against his father<sup>(20)</sup>. This was a very important

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(15) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1384, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.173, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.283, Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.313

(16) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1452, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.562

(17) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1456

(18) Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.38

(19) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1456, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.302, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.38

(20) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1457-59, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, pp.302-303

point in the life of the 'Abbāsīd state, for if Mutawakkil were to succeed, the power of the Turks would decline and Caliphal authority would return. But if the Turks were to succeed, Turkish influence would increase further and Caliphal authority would be quite lost. In the end, fate decreed that Turks should be successful, for they had set the earlier date for the enactment of their assassination plot. They killed him and his secretary Fatih b. Khāqān. Among those involved were Bughā al-Saghīr and Bāghir, the Caliph's (21) guards .

After the death of Mutawakkil, the Turks installed his son Muntaṣir as Caliph, but it soon became obvious to him that he was powerless. He began to feel, too, that the murder of his father would encourage the Turks to further murders, and so after six months Muntaṣir's attitude towards the (22) Turks began to change. Mas'ūdi mentions that Muntaṣir decided to encourage dissention among the Turks, and that he called them "The murderers of the (23) Caliphs" . He showed his hostile feelings towards them openly. It was said that once, when Muntaṣir saw Bughā al-Ṣaghīr coming towards him with some of his followers, he said, "May God punish me if I do not set these (24) Turks at one another's throats and kill all the murderers of my father" . Here he seems to be expressing regret for the murder of his father. Muntaṣir also adopted the tactic of dispersing the Turks geographically. For instance, in 248 H, he sent Waṣīf and his adherents off to the Byzantine frontier, where they were to be in charge of the Caliphal troops who were protecting the

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(21) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1460, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.178, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, pp. 302-303 .

(22) Murūj, vol.4, p.50

(23) Suyūṭī, p.357, Diyārbakrī, vol.2, p.378

(24) Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.50

state from attack. He ordered the Turks to remain there for four years<sup>(25)</sup>

The Caliph's hostility towards the Turks convinced them that they should  
(26)  
assassinate him as soon as possible . But it seems that, being afraid of  
him, they felt unable to accomplish this by killing him directly. Historians  
(27)  
comment, "He was a very astute, cautious and brave man" . However, the  
(28)  
Turks did finally succeed in assassinating him, in 248 H .

After this, they chose Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Mu'taṣim as Caliph and  
gave him the title of Musta'in. During the reign of the new Caliph, it can  
be seen that the strategy that Muntaṣir had started, of both setting the Turks  
against one another and separating them geographically, was continued. The  
following Caliphs also adopted this plan. At the beginning of his reign,  
when Musta'in began to use this new strategy, he gave Autāmish and Shāhik al-  
(29)  
Khādim freedom to use the state treasuries . He appointed Aḥmad b. al-  
Khaṣīb as his own secretary, and made Autāmish governor of Egypt, and then  
(30)  
appointed him as minister (Wazīr) . Shāhik al-Khādim he made supervisor of  
(31)  
his palace, goods, treasuries and the other Caliphal affairs . As for  
(32)  
Waṣīf and Bughā, it was said that the Caliph removed them from their positions

(25) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1480, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.50, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.307,  
Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.353, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.326

(26) Mas'ūdi, vol.5, p.50

(27) Suyūṭī, p.357, Diyārbakrī, vol.2, p.378

(28) See Chapter Two, p.38

(29) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1512, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.313

(30) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1508, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.60, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.312,  
Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.327, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.600

(31) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1508, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.312

(32) See Chapter Two, p.39

and appointed them as rulers of distant provinces. They began therefore to seek the downfall of Autāmish, believing that he had had a hand in their change of position. According to historians, they accused him of embezzling their salaries and those of their followers, and finally they decided to murder him. Hearing that he was with the Caliph in his court, they surrounded the palace of Jawsaq. When Autāmish realized what was happening, he tried to escape but was unable to do so. They then burst into the palace and killed him in 249 H<sup>(33)</sup>. The Caliph Musta'in seems to have taken some direct responsibility for the murder of Autāmish, for it was said that when the Turks were about to attack the latter, he appealed to the Caliph for help, but Musta'in refused to help him<sup>(34)</sup>. Ya'qūbi mentions, too, that the murder of Autāmish met with the approval of the Caliph, who made it known throughout the state that Autāmish was to be cursed<sup>(35)</sup>.

Waṣīf and Bughā next conspired against Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb, whose power had meanwhile increased. After they persuaded Musta'in to eliminate him, the Caliph arrested Ibn al-Khaṣīb, confiscated his wealth and that of his son, and then exiled him to Crete<sup>(36)</sup>. After the death of Autāmish and the exile of Ibn al-Khaṣīb, the Turkish leadership continued to be torn by internal conflicts, for Bāghir gained the most powerful position among the Turks, and was envied by Waṣīf and Bughā. According to Ṭabari and Ibn al-Athīr, "Bāghir, being one of the murderers of Mutawakkil, had had his salary increased and had been given many estates"<sup>(37)</sup>. Waṣīf and Bughā therefore began to plan how

(33) Ṭabari, vol.12, p.1512, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.181, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.313

(34) Ṭabari, vol.12, p.1513, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, pp.313, 328

(35) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.181

(36) See Chapter Two, p.40

(37) Ṭabari, vol.12, p.1535, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.318

they might murder Bāghir. It seems, though, that Bāghir was in a very strong position, and that everyone was afraid of him <sup>(38)</sup>. When he realized that his rivals were plotting against him and that the Caliph was on their side, he gathered together those adherents of his who had supported him at the time of Mutawakkil's murder <sup>(39)</sup>. After making sure that they would support him, he ordered them to be ready to assassinate the Caliph Musta'in, to kill Bughā and Waṣīf, and then to install 'Alī b. al-Mu'taṣim or any of Wāthiq's sons as Caliph in order to get control of all the affairs of the state, just as Waṣīf and Bughā had done <sup>(40)</sup>. In the end, it was Waṣīf and Bughā whose conspiracy came to fruition, and they were successful in murdering Bāghir. Bāghir's followers, in order to avenge their leader, started preparing themselves to fight those who had been responsible for his death. In consequence, the Caliphate fell into great disorder, and this prompted the Caliph and his two generals Bughā and Waṣīf to repair to Baghdad in 251 H <sup>(41)</sup>. However, the Turks in Sāmarrā' realized that the presence of the Caliph was necessary to legitimize and give substance to their power. They sent a special deputation to him in order to persuade him to return <sup>(42)</sup>. When he refused, the Turks in Sāmarrā' decided to dethrone him and to release Mu'tazz and Mu'ayyad from their imprisonment <sup>(43)</sup>. They then hailed Mu'tazz as Caliph. It was in this way that the conflict between Turkish leaders about the control of the government's affairs brought about the second civil war, of which we shall talk in the following Chapter. As the result of the civil war, Musta'in abdicated

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(38) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1536, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.318

(39) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1537, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.319

(40) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1537

(41) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1538, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.319

(42) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1544, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.77, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.320

(43) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1545, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.320

from the Caliphate. This was in accordance with the agreement he made with the Turkish leaders in Sāmarrā' after he saw that he would be unable to continue fighting against them. He was exiled to Wasīṭ, but as usual the Turks were afraid to let him live, and sent someone to kill him <sup>(44)</sup>.

Mu'tazz had been installed in 252 H as Caliph in Sāmarrā' by the Turks as we mentioned above. During his reign the basic problem of Turkish control, which Musta'īn had faced and struggled with, continued to plague the Caliphate. When the government was re-established in Sāmarrā' under Mu'tazz, it immediately came under the domination of those Turks from whom Musta'īn had fled. The power which the Turks wielded over this new government became so great that the Caliph's orders were no longer respected, as they had been in the past by Bughā al-Sharābī <sup>(45)</sup>, for instance, and as they would be later, by Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf. Mu'tazz realized from the beginning that the Turks dominated all the affairs of state, and hence he tried to give the impression that he was on their side, while secretly he plotted against them and fomented the rivalry that existed between them. Shābushtī <sup>(46)</sup> mentions that Mu'tazz's mother Qabiḥa encouraged him to have the Turkish leaders murdered. She said to him, "My son, kill them wherever you find them", and she showed him the bloodstained shirt of his father Mutawakkil. Mu'tazz therefore began to take many measures aimed at resisting Turkish control. Having noticed that the Turks, each anxious to acquire power and greater wealth, were continually at each other's throats, he began to encourage their internecine conflicts. When he was attempting to murder Waṣīf he gave his favour to Bughā al-Sharābī, <sup>(47)</sup> and offered him crown. Later, when Bughā fell into disfavour, the Caliph

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(44) See Chapter Two, p. 40

(45) Abū al-Maḥāsīn, vol.2, p.342

(46) Diyārāt, p.169

(47) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1687, Qaramānī, p.78

allowed Ṣālih b. Waṣīf and Baikabāk to rise in power. He decreed that all official documents were to be signed by Ibn Waṣīf, just as if he were Wazīr <sup>(48)</sup>, and he appointed Baikabāk as ruler of Egypt <sup>(49)</sup>.

The other measure taken by Mu'tazz was that of sending his own family, together with the sons of other Caliphs who were living in Sāmarrā', to Baghdad in order to give them some security while he began to fulfill his plans for <sup>(50)</sup> opposing the Turks. He decided next to have done with his brother Mu'ayyad after being informed that the Turks were willing to install him as Caliph in place of himself. Mu'tazz therefore imprisoned him and had him killed on the <sup>(51)</sup> twenty second of Rajab 252 H. The Caliph now determined to consummate his plans for freeing the state from Turkish control, and embarked on the most important action of his reign. He appealed to the governor of Khurāsān, Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad b. Abdallah b. Ṭāhir to aid him. Ṭāhir sent the troops of Khurāsān (Jund Khurāsān), led by his uncle Sulaimān b. Abdallah. They entered Sāmarrā' and the Caliph greeted Ibn Abdallah and gave him many gifts. However, it seems that Waṣīf and Bughā, realizing what Mu'tazz was intending to do, <sup>(52)</sup> forced the Caliph, on pain of death, to send the troops away from Sāmarrā'. According to Mas'ūdi and Ibn al-Athir, at this point in his reign, Mu'tazz was extremely cautious about the possibility of Turkish treachery and violence <sup>(53)</sup> towards him. It was said that he kept his sword by him both day and night. Mu'tazz now set about arranging the murder of Waṣīf and Bughā, judging them

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(48) Mas'ūdi, al-Tanbīh, p.365, Ibn al-'Imād, Shadharāt al-Dhahab, vol.2, p.128

(49) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1697, Ya'qubi, vol.3, p.186

(50) Ya'qubi, vol.3, p.186

(51) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1668-69, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.90

(52) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1706, Ya'qubi, vol.3, p.185

(53) Mas'ūdi, vol.4, pp.91-92, Ibn al-Athir, vol.5, p.338

to have responsible for starting the civil war. He wrote to Muḥammad b. Abdallah b. Ṭāhir, the governor of Baghdad, and ordered him to remove the names of Waṣīf and Bughā from the register of state (Diwān)<sup>(54)</sup>. These two men were in fact by now feeling that the Caliph's position had become so strong that they could ill afford to resist him. Waṣīf, therefore asked his sister, Su'ād, who had the Caliph's favour, to entreat him to change his attitude towards them and to regard them amicably. It was said<sup>(55)</sup> that the Caliph agreed with her request. However, it seems that he only pretended to agree, and in fact continued to harbour a great desire to have them murdered. An opportunity finally presented itself. When his soldiers grew fractious and demanded their salaries, the payment of which had been delayed due to the financial difficulties of the state, he sent Waṣīf and Bughā to restore order. Waṣīf reprimanded them severely, and the soldiers attacked and killed him (in 253 H). In this way the Caliph<sup>(56)</sup> rid himself of one of the two formerly powerful Turkish leaders. In engineering Bughā's demise, he gave his favour to Baikabāk, who was a rival of Bughā and who considered him his enemy<sup>(57)</sup>. Historians report that Mu'tazz expressed his determination to kill Bughā thus, "I will never enjoy<sup>(58)</sup> life again until I hold Bughā's head between my hands". Bughā seems to have perceived what the Caliph was planning, and he fled to Mosul, believing that his Turkish adherents would join him. When they did not, he despaired

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(54) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1658, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.331, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.9

(55) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1658-1660, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.331

(56) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1687-1688, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.185, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.335

(57) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1694, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.186

(58) Abū al-Maḥāsīn, vol.2, p.342, Diyārbakri, vol.2, p.380, Dhahabi, vol.2, pp.5-6



and decided to return to Sāmarrā' in the hope that the Caliph would forgive him. As soon as he arrived at Sāmarrā', in 254 H, the Caliphal guards arrested him and informed Mu'tazz. The Caliph ordered them to kill him immediately (in 254 H) <sup>(59)</sup>.

With both Waṣīf and Bughā out of the way, Mu'tazz began to consider how to eliminate Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf, whose influence had increased so greatly that he had established himself as the most powerful man in the state <sup>(60)</sup>. The Caliph realized that he had to have him murdered as soon as possible, and kept on the lookout for a convenient time to do so. His opportunity came when his soldiers asked him for their salaries, which came to a sum of 50,000 dinārs. They promised to kill Ṣāliḥ, and it seems likely that Mu'tazz had said that he would give them their money in return for Ṣāliḥ's murder. But unfortunately the treasuries of the state were at that time almost empty, because the Turks and the Caliph's mother Qabiḥa had control and free use of them, and because, it was reported, the Caliph himself wasted much money living luxuriously <sup>(61)</sup>. It was said that he asked for financial help from his mother, but that she said that she was unable to help him. Finally, the soldiers began to demonstrate against the Caliph. Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf was quick to take advantage of this chance to get rid of Mu'tazz, and, backed by the Caliphal troops, he pressured Mu'tazz into abdicating. This victory <sup>(62)</sup> was consummated in 255 H by the murder of the Caliph.

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(59) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1694, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.186, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, pp.91-92, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.338

(60) Mas'ūdi, al-Tanbīh, p.365, Ibn al-'Imād, Shadharāt, vol.2, p.128, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.626

(61) Qaramānī, p.78

(62) See Chapter Two, p. 43

After the death of Mu'tazz the Turks fetched Muḥammad b. al-Wāthiq from Baghdad and hailed him as Caliph. They gave him the title of Muhtadī. The Turks may have chosen Muhtadī on account of his piety or for his supposed weakness. Muhtadī in fact showed great ability in resisting their control. His reign was considered to be an open struggle between Caliphate and Turks. He saw clearly that the survival of the Caliphate depended on getting rid of Turkish influence entirely, and therefore began to take measures aimed at achieving this. Firstly, he attempted to attract the common people (most of whom were non-Turks), and the theologians ('Ulamā') towards him, by making widespread reforms in the life of the Islamic state. He ordered the expulsion of singers, dancers, including singing girls from Sāmarrā', and had them sent to Baghdad. He ordered that the lions which were kept in the Caliphal palaces should be killed. He destroyed the rams which had been used to amuse the Caliphs. He closed places of entertainment, forbade singing and drinking, and made himself available to those who had grievances or complaints (Maḥālim), to which he would listen. He gave his (63) favour to theologians, promoting them to high positions. He supervised the various offices of the state personally and kept check on the governors of the provinces and on state officials, particularly those who were responsible for financial affairs. It was said that he punished some who had (64) neglected their duties. He attempted to reduce official expenditure, for treasury funds were still very low. For instance, he reduced his own food bill from 10,000 dirhims to 100 dirhims. The Caliph also ordered that gold and silver plate stored in the treasuries should be melted down and used

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(63) Tabarī, vol.12, p.1736, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.187, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.103, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, pp.628, 631

(64) Suyūṭī, p.362

(65)  
 for minting dirhims and dinārs . In all these actions, Muhtadī showed himself to be a man similar to the pious 'Umayyad Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz. Furthermore, he abandoned the luxurious life of his predecessors and lived simply. Historians report that he ate and drank frugally, and dressed austere<sup>(66)</sup> . He was described as pious, just, heroic and brave<sup>(67)</sup> . As a result of these qualities the common people and theologians liked and supported him. Secondly, following the example of the previous Caliphs, Muhtadī attempted to combat the dominance of the Turkish leaders by setting these men, most of whom were army commanders, against one another. He favoured these army corps, such as the Maghāribā and the Farāghina, who were hostile to the Turks and their control of the government and treasuries, and who hated them for their assassinations of various Caliphs<sup>(68)</sup> . Muhtadī began to have the powerful Turkish leaders murdered. By means of the rivalry between them, he engineered the murder of Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf in 256 H, making Mūsā b. Bughā the instrument by which he accomplished this. Historians report that Mūsā b. Bughā had been in Tabaristān that year, fighting the 'Alawīs. He returned to the capital on Monday, Muḥarram 256 H, however, as soon as he had come to know that Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf was dominating all the Caliphate's affairs and was amassing a huge fortune for himself. Ibn Bughā finally captured his rival and killed him<sup>(69)</sup> . Thus the Caliph rid himself of one of those whom he hated.

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(65) Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.103

(66) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.187, Suyūṭī, pp.361, 362

(67) Suyūṭī, p.361

(68) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1680-81, Suyūṭī, p.363, Kaḥḥala, Mukhtaṣr Tarīkh al-Dawla al-Islamiya, p.65

(69) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1738, 1787, 1791, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, pp.97-98, Dhahabi, al-'Ibar, vol.2, pp.10-11, Suyūṭī, p.362, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.632

In order to eliminate the others he wrote to Baikabāk who at that time was with Mūsā b. Bughā and Muflīḥ al-Turki on the way to Khurāsān. The Caliph offered him, secretly, the overall leadership of the army and of the Turks, and ordered him to murder Ibn Bughā and Muflīḥ. However, it seems that Baikabāk realized where the Caliph's plot was ultimately leading, for he showed the letter to his companions and said, "I am not happy with this. The Caliph surely wants to kill all of us"<sup>(70)</sup>. They then decided to murder Muhtadī, and marched towards the capital. Their plan seems to have been for Baikabāk to pretend to accept the Caliph's offer and, under cover of a simulated loyalty, to kill him. Baikabāk entered Sāmarrā' but Muhtadī had a suspicion of what the Turks were planning. He gathered his followers together mostly common people and the loyal army corps such as Maghāriba and Farāghina. Although Baikabāk protested his obedience to the Caliph, he was arrested, and when his adherents demonstrated, the Caliph<sup>(71)</sup> ordered that he should be killed. With murder of Baikabāk, Mūsā b. Bughā and his supporters decided to attack the Caliph and kill him. They marched towards Sāmarrā'. This signalled the start of the war between the Turks and the Caliph. Muhtadī bravely made preparations to fight his enemy. When he began to call his supporters to war against the Turks, he hung a copy of the Qura'in around his neck in order to inspire them with patriotic and religious fervour. At the same time he declared to them that they should consider it their religious duty to kill any Turk who was disobedient and disloyal to the Caliphate, and to seize their possessions<sup>(72)</sup>. He addressed them thus, "I am Amīr al-Mum'inīn. Fight for the sake of your Caliph"<sup>(73)</sup>.

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(70) Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.99, Qaramānī, p.81, Suyūṭī, p.363

(71) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1813, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.99, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.355

(72) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.188

(73) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1821

"Oh people, support your Caliph"<sup>(74)</sup> . At the beginning of the war, the Caliphal troops seemed to be about to win a great victory. They were said to have killed four thousand of Ibn Bughā's troops each day<sup>(75)</sup> . However, after a long and vital battle, those Turkish warriors who had given him their support deserted him and joined forces with his enemy. The rest of his men fled, and Muhtadi surrendered. The Turks then demanded that he abdicate, but he refused, and they killed him, in Rajab 256 H. They chose Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. al-Mutawakkil as the next Caliph and gave him the title Mu'tamid<sup>(76)</sup> .

This period thus ended with the victory of the Turks over the Caliphate. Despite this we must not forget the efforts of 'Abbāsīd Caliphs such as Mutawakkil, Muntaṣir, Musta'īn, Mu'tazz and Muhtadi to resist Turkish control and in attempting to restore the Caliphate's dignity and power. We must not imagine that the subsequent prosperity of the Caliphate after this period was a sudden occurrence, unrelated to past events, for when it did come, it was as a result of the efforts those former Caliphs had made to combat the dominance of the Turks. The last Caliph Muhtadi, had not been satisfied with merely plotting to eliminate Turkish leaders, but had openly declared war against all Turks who interfered in the affairs of the 'Abbāsīd state. It was said that Muhtadi had consistently threatened the Turks with reprisals, and had always remembered their murderousness. It seems that the Turks felt that his bravery exceeded any which they had previously seen. When

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(74) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1816

(75) Qaramānī, p.81, Suyūṭī, p.363

(76) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1813, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.188, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.99  
Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.355, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.22

during the final battle of the war, Muhtadi had realized that the Turks sought his abdication, he drew his sword and spoke thus, "By God! I would not fight the Turks if I were not ready to die. I have asked my brother to take care of my son. This is my sword, and by God I will kill every Turk whom I catch. By God, if any Turk touches a hair of my head I will kill him in return. Have they no religious conscience? (77) Have they no shame? How long will they assault the Caliphs and defy God? . Although the Turks were finally victorious and murdered him in the end, we see that his bravery contributed greatly towards the restoration of the dignity of the Caliphate and its authority during the reigns of Mu'tamid, Mu'taḍid and Muktafi, whose regimes lasted forty years altogether.

During the reign of Mu'tamid (256-279 H), responsibility for the military was taken from the Turkish commanders and given to the brother (78) of the Caliph, Abū Aḥmad al-Muwaffaq . The appointment of Muwaffaq was in fact made in order to keep the Turkish leaders under strict control. The other step taken during the reign of Mu'tamid was to move the Caliphate from Sāmarrā' to Baghdad to regain its position as the capital of the Islamic state.

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(77) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1793-94, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.21

(78) His name was Ṭalḥa b. Ja'far al-Mutawakkil, and Muwaffaq or Nāṣir Lī-Dīnallāh was his title. He had a strong personality. His brother Mu'tamid appointed him to control the affairs of state and to fight all those who rebelled against the state. The Turks respected and obeyed him on account of his strength of character and fought under his leadership. See Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1841, Mas'ūdi, al-Tanbīh, p.367

## Chapter Four

### The Role of the Turks in Political Developments;

#### (1) The Position of the Dynasty

A - Muntasir's Intrigue with the Turks against the Caliphate

B - The Interference of the Harim in the Political and Financial Affairs

#### (2) The Attempts to Transfer the Capital of the Caliphate and their Causes

#### (3) The Civil War of 251 H and its Causes

## (1) The Position of the Dynasty;

## A - Muntaşir's intrigue with the Turks against the Caliphate.

The Caliph Mutawakkil was installed as Caliph due to the over riding influence of the Turks as was mentioned above. After Mutawakkil settled in his position he began to feel that Turkish respect towards the dignity of the Caliphate was reduced and the Turks held all power and authority in the state. Therefore, it was natural that the relationship between the 'Abbāsids and the Turks was tense and that each side wanted to reduce the influence of the other. Each side had begun to take a series of measures to gain supporters and made plots against the other side. Some civilian statesmen such as the Wazīr 'Ubaidullah b. Yahya b. Khāqān and Fatih b. Khāqān who sided with the Caliph hated the other Turkish military leaders, because they dominated all the affairs of state. While the Turks united under the leadership of Bāghir, Waṣīf, Autāmish and Bughā al-Sharābi, they were supported by one of the Caliph's sons, Muntaşir<sup>(1)</sup>.

Many factors were operative in Muntaşir's decision to support the Turks and join them in the assassination of his father. The study of these factors is very important and helps us to know the circumstances which persuaded Muntaşir to intrigue against the Caliphate.

First, Historians agree that the Caliph Mutawakkil hated the 'Alawīs<sup>(2)</sup>, while his son Muntaşir sympathized with them and liked them. Thus when he came to the Caliphate he favoured the 'Alawīs; he honoured them and was generous to them<sup>(3)</sup>. Therefore, he irritated his father, because his father

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(1) See the recent work by Shamsuddin Miah, The reign of Mutawakkil, pp.67 ff.

(2) We will give more details about that in chapter Five.

(3) Iṣfahānī, Maqātil al-Talibiyyin, p.387



abused 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, destroyed the tomb of Ḥusain b. 'Alī and persecuted the 'Alawīs. This conflict of opinions created the tension between father and son. Some historians say that this problem caused Muntaṣir to murder his father<sup>(4)</sup>.

Secondly, some historians think that 'Ubaidullah b. Yaḥya b. Khāqān and Fatih b. Khāqān disliked the Turks because the Turkish military leaders held the monopoly of power and authority in the state. They persuaded Mutawakkil to favour his son Mu'tazz and to keep Muntaṣir away<sup>(5)</sup>. This led Muntaṣir to support the Turks. It was said that 'Ubaidullah b. Khāqān and Fatih b. Khāqān persuaded Mutawakkil to authorise his son Mu'tazz to lead the public prayers at Ja'fariyah instead of Muntaṣir on the last Friday of Ramadan 247 H. When Muntaṣir knew that, he became very angry<sup>(6)</sup>, because he as the heir apparent used to be Imam al-Ṣalāt (leader of prayer).

The other thing which turned Muntaṣir against his father, was the fact that Mutawakkil favoured his son Mu'tazz, because he liked Mu'tazz's mother Qabiḥa (Mutawakkil's wife). Shābushtī mentions that Mutawakkil spent large sums of money to build a huge palace called Barkuwār in Sāmarrā'. He then gave the palace to his favourite son Mu'tazz in honour of his mother Qabiḥa<sup>(7)</sup>. Furthermore, he had organised and financed a huge celebration in that palace for the circumcision (Khitān) of Mu'tazz. It was said that Mutawakkil ordered the minting of special coins bearing the name of his son 'Abdallah al-Mu'tazz. These coins amounted to 1,000,000 dirhims and they were thrown among the

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(4) Isfahānī, p.387, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.287

(5) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1453, Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.38-9, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.301

(6) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1453, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.301

(7) Shābushtī, p.150-56 gives details about the sums which were spent on the building of that palace. Also see Diyarbakri, Tarīkh al-Khamīs, vol.2, p.378

servants, including the man who performed the circumcision. Among the guests was Muntaṣir who saw that huge celebration and noticed how much his father  
(8)  
loved Mu'tazz .

Thirdly, according to Tabarī and Ibn al-Athīr, the Caliph Mutawakkil began to insult his son Muntaṣir in public. The Caliph insulted his son because he knew that Muntaṣir sided with the Turks and disagreed with his father's policies. It was said that Mutawakkil in his later days asked Muntaṣir to abdicate from the succession in favour of his brother Mu'tazz. He refused, and with increasing wrath his father immediately asked Fatih b. Khāqān who was present at that time to slap Muntaṣir's cheek, which he did. Muntaṣir became angry and said, "If you ordered that I should be killed, it  
(9)  
would be better for me than that." It seems that Mutawakkil ignored him and announced Muntaṣir's removal from the succession, appointing Mu'tazz in his  
(10)  
stead . In addition, Mutawakkil had dismissed Muntaṣir from the rulership  
(11)  
of Egypt, in 242 H, and gave the position to Fatih b. Khāqān .

Because of this, it was natural that Muntaṣir hated his father and encouraged all the plots against him particularly those which were created by the Turks. However, the Turks had already noticed that the policy of Mutawakkil was changed towards them, particularly when the Caliph ordered the confiscation of Waṣīf's property in Iṣfahān and Jibāl, and gave it to  
(12)  
Fatih b. Khāqān . In addition, he planned to kill Waṣīf, Bughā, Autāmish and even Muntaṣir and others on Thursday 5th Shawwāl (In event, Mutawakkil

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(8) Shābushtī, p.152 gives more details about the sums which were spent for that celebration. Also see Washshā', al-Muwashshā, p.293

(9) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1457, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.302

(10) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1457

(11) Abū al-Mahāsin, vol.2, p.295

(12) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1452, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.301

(13)  
 was assassinated two days before this date ). The Turkish leaders split into warring factions until they noticed the Caliph was obviously against them all. Then they all united against the Caliph and took measures in order to assassinate the Caliph. However, Muntaşir began to confirm his position among the Turks who prepared to kill his father (14).

The Turks, who were encouraged by Muntaşir, decided to murder the Caliph on Tuesday night 3rd Shawwal 247 H; during that night the Caliph was with his favourite secretary Fatih b. Khāqān drinking in his palace, called Ja'fari (15). Some Turks entered the palace among them Bāghir, Autāmish, Waşif, Bughā al-Sharabī, Wajin and Baghlūn. When they saw everyone had gone except Fatih b. Khāqān and the Caliph who was drunk at that time, they attacked the Caliph. Fatih who attempted to protect him from them shouted, "Wailakum Mawlākum Amīr al-Mum'inīn", but the Turks killed him with the Caliph (16). Then, they went out to Muntaşir and installed him as Caliph. They asked the officials of state among them the army officers (Quwwād), secretaries (Kuttāb), Shākiriyya and soldiers (Jund) to recognize him as Caliph too. Afterwards, Aḥmad b. al-Khasīb read the statement of Muntaşir by which Muntaşir informed them that Fatih b. Khāqān had killed his father, and then the guards killed Fatih. The Turks then also presented his two brothers Mu'tazz and Mu'ayyad and asked them to recognize Muntaşir as Caliph. Those who refused to accept the new Caliph were coerced into doing so (17).

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(13) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1456, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.38, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.302

(14) Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.34-6, 38-9

(15) See the illustration

(16) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1460, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.178, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.302-3, Diyarbakri, vol.2, p.378

(17) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1462-3, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.303

In fact, the murder of Mutawakkil was the first attack on the 'Abbāsid Caliphs. That crime opened the door to many calamities for the 'Abbāsid state. The people felt distressed for the Caliphate's condition. Professor Dūrī<sup>(18)</sup> saw that the murder of Mutawakkil created a great disturbance for the Caliphate in which the Turks were responsible for many disasters and reduced the dignity of the Caliphate. Governors particularly in Iran and Egypt, took the opportunity to wrest more power and independence for themselves while the state was in confusion and weakness.

#### B - The Interference of the Harīm in Political and Financial Affairs;

The interference of the Harīm in the affairs of state is considered as an important factor in 'Abbāsid history. Most historians<sup>(19)</sup> believe that the Harīm were responsible for the reducing of the political and economic affairs in the state and for its final decline and fall. Some 'Abbāsid Caliphs allowed the women, particularly their wives and mothers to interfere in the affairs of state, despite the advice of Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr to his son that he should not allow women to share their political opinions with him<sup>(20)</sup>. During the study of the first and second 'Abbāsid periods, we see that there were many prominent women such as Khaizurān, wife of the Caliph Maḥdī and mother of Hādī and Rashīd. Khaizurān was a slave woman who Maḥdī

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(18) Dūrī, al-'Uṣūr al-'Abbāsiyah al-Muta'khiraḥ, p.59

(19) Dūrī, al-'Usūr, p.16, Zaydān, Tamadun, vol.2, p.130, Ibn al-Wardī, Mukhtaṣar, vol.1, p.253

(20) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.43, Irbilī, p.90

(21) bought and married . She built a palace for herself in Baghdad (22) .  
 She was surrounded by many servants who obeyed her and the people came  
 to her with many requests (23) . Maḥdī appointed both of her two sons  
 Hādī and Rashīd as heirs apparent, because he favoured and respected  
 her (24) . When Hādī came to the Caliphate at first he was like his  
 father Maḥdī and obeyed her and did everything which she asked. There-  
 fore, the people came always to her palace to make their requests of  
 her (25) . Thus it was said that she used with Hādī the same treatment as  
 she used with Maḥdī (26) . But it seems that Hādī felt annoyed as a result  
 of her interference in the affairs of state, so he decided to put an end  
 to it. After four months, he began to change his policy towards his mother  
 and did not do what she wanted. For example, once she asked him something  
 but he ignored her request, she said, "You must do that, because I promised  
 'Abdallah b. Mālīk." Hādī became very angry and said, "If anybody informs  
 me that one of my leaders, statesmen or my servants comes to make requests  
 of you, I will kill him and confiscate his wealth. Why do people come to

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(21) Jāḥiẓ, al-Maḥāsin wa'l - Aḍḍād, p.233

(22) Washshā', p.279

(23) Ṭabarī, vol.10, p.569, Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.313

(24) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.74, Irbilī, p.115

(25) Ṭabarī, vol.10, p.569-70, Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.327

(26) Ṭabarī, vol.10, p.569, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.79

ask of you?". He threatened her, "Beware (Iākkī, Iākkī), do not open your door either for Muslim or Dhimmi". She became angry and left him. Upon hearing this threat the people and leaders left her and ceased to bring their request to her <sup>(27)</sup>. Another thing which increased her discontent was that she heard that Hādī had removed his brother Rashīd from the succession and installed his son Ja'far <sup>(28)</sup>. As a result Khaizurān began to take measures to rid herself of him. It was said that she ordered her slave women to kill him while he was sleeping. However, we doubt the murder of Hādī by his mother, but she wanted to kill Hādī because he removed his brother Rashīd (her favourite son) from the succession. When she was sure that her son Hādī was dead, she ordered the release of her son Rashīd and Yahya b. Khālīd al-Barmakī from the jail <sup>(29)</sup>. Rashīd was installed as Caliph for the state and Yahya appointed as his Wazīr. Because of the role which he played by installing Rashīd, the Caliph allowed her to interfere in the affairs of state. She often made requests of the Wazīr Yahya b. Kālīd and the Hājib Rabī' b. Yūnis

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(27) Ṭabarī, vol.10, p.570, Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.327-8, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.79, Qalqashandī, Ma'athir, vol.1, p.190

(28) Ṭabarī, vol.10, p.571, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.115

(29) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.115 mentions that, in 169 H, when the Caliph Hādī disagreed with his mother Khaizurān and removed his brother Rashīd from the succession. He ordered that he should be jailed with Yahya b. Khālīd who had looked after him.

and discussed with them many matters of state. They listened to her  
 (30)  
 opinions and carried out her orders . As for her influential position  
 and her strong personality, most of the statesmen such as the Wizarā',  
 (31)  
Kuttāb, Quwwād and Wilāt respected her and obeyed her . Therefore,  
 they always tried to curry favour with her by giving her many valuable  
 gifts. She began to interfere in the appointment of governors of the  
 provinces. It was said that she influenced the Caliph's appointment of  
 Muḥammad b. Sulaimān as governor of Basrah. As soon as he arrived there  
 to receive his position, he began to send valuable gifts to Khaizurān.  
 Her response was, "God give you health ('Afāk Allah) for what you sent  
 (32)  
 to us, and this shows our opinion towards you".

On the other hand, it was said that Khaizurān favoured the Barmakids, and  
 they enjoyed an influential position until her death. She prevented the  
 Caliph Rashīd from appointing anyone other than the Barmakids to high  
 positions of state, particularly as Wazīr. But it seems her son the Caliph  
 was not pleased with what she had done. According to Ṭabarī, when she died  
 he sat and called Faḍīl b. al-Rabī', and after the funeral he said to him  
 "I would have liked to have appointed you as Wazīr but my mother prevented  
 me and I obeyed her. Get the ring from Ja'far" (he meant the ring of the  
 (33)  
 Vizirate) . That shows that Rashīd began to change his policy towards the

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(30) Ṭabarī, vol.10, pp.546, 578, 604, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.74, Irbilī,  
 p.108

(31) Ṭabarī, vol.10, p.604, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.74, Irbilī, pp.116, 122

(32) Irbilī, p.116 gives details about the gifts which were sent by Muḥammad  
 b. Sulaimān to Khaizurān.

(33) Ṭabarī, vol.10, p.609

(34)  
Barmakids . As to her interference in financial affairs, she began to  
amass a huge fortune for herself. It was said that her fortune amounted  
to 160,000,000 dirhims a year, and was equal to half Kharāj of the 'Abbāsīd  
(35)  
state at that time .

In addition to Khaizurān, another prominent woman was Zubaida the wife  
of the Caliph Rashīd and mother of Amīn. She had an influential position  
and interfered in the affairs of state as Khaizurān did during the reign of  
her husband. A recent writer suggests that Amīn came to the throne due to  
(36)  
influence of his mother . Although she interfered in the affairs of  
(37)  
state, the historians mention her great public works . Zubaida retained  
her power even after the death of her husband and had great influence over  
(38)  
her son the Caliph Amīn . Another prominent woman during the 'Abbāsīd  
(39)  
period was Burrān wife of the Caliph Ma'mūn and the daughter of the  
Wazīr Ḥasan b. Sahil. It was said that Ma'mūn loved Burrān and spent vast  
(40)  
sums of money on her marriage . She had played a vital part in releasing  
Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī when he was arrested by Ma'mūn's men and when Ma'mūn

(34) Sourdel, Le Vizirat Abbaside, vol.1, p.129

(35) Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.337, Irbili, p.117

(36) A. Ḥasan, al-Tarikh al-Islami, p.575

(37) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.132, Abu al-Mahāsīn, vol.2, p.214

(38) Ṣābī, Lost Fragments of Kitāb al-Wazarā', p.31, Irbilī, p.220

(39) Her real name was Khadija b. Ḥasan b. Sahil and her family came from Iran.

(40) Shābushtī, p.157-8, Ibn al-Athir, vol.5, p.211, Ibn al-Sa'ī, Nisā' al-Khulfā', pp.67, 70



(41)  
had decided to kill him .

However, the power of the Harīm continued in the second 'Abbasid period particularly during the Turkish domination. Women's interference in financial and political affairs increased during this period. Some reformer Caliphs, such as Muhtadī, attempted to improve this state of affairs, but his efforts were thwarted by the Turks and all his plans failed. So the influence of the Harīm was greater than it had been during the previous period. There were many powerful women such as Qabiḥa the mother of Mu'tazz, Mukhāriq the mother of Musta'īn and Shaghab the mother of Muqtadir. In addition to those were the Qahrmanāt (42) and slave women (43) .

During the reign of Mutawakkil, there was a prominent woman called Maḥbūba known as Qabiḥa. She was one of the Caliph's slavewomen (44) . It was said that the Caliph Mutawakkil loved her and educated her in a variety of

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(41) The Baghdadis recognized Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī as Caliph, in 202 H, when they heard that Ma'mūn had installed 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Ridā as heir apparent in Khurasān. They gave Ibrāhīm the title of al-Mubārak. His reign lasted one year, eleven months and nine days. After Ma'mūn came back to Baghdad, the Caliph Ibrāhīm disappeared but was found and arrested by Ma'mūn's men. See for further details, Ṭabarī, vol.11, pp.1013-14, 1015, Jahshiyārī, p.312, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, pp.209, 211, Ibn al-Sā'ī, p.67, Fahad, al-Khalifa al-Mughani, pp.55, 67

(42) The singular is Qahrmanā, it means one who looks after the palace's domestic affairs

(43) Jāhiz, al-Qiyān (Rasa'il al-Jāhiz) vol.2, p.156-57

(44) It was said that Mutawakkil liked to collect slavewomen. He had 4,000 slavewomen from different races. Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.40, Ibn al-Sā'ī p.96

(45)  
 subjects and married her . When Mutawakkil decided the question of succession, in 235 H, between his three sons Muntaṣir, Mu'tazz and Mu'ayyad, he divided his kingdom between his three sons who were each responsible for their allotted parts. At first, Mutawakkil made Muntaṣir's brothers subject to Muntaṣir; but out of love for Mu'tazz' mother Qabiḥa, he took this right away from Muntaṣir, and gave it instead to Mu'tazz (46) . This action, infact, made Muntaṣir angry with his father because he had the right first, so he intrigued with the Turks against his father as mentioned above. Qabiḥa used her influence on her husband Mutawakkil, she asked him to order the minting of the money in the name of her son Mu'tazz who was still prince (47) . When civil war broke out between her son Mu'tazz' troops and Musta'in's troops in 251 H, she played an important role. It was said that due to her fear for her son's life she had a hand in the murder of the Caliph Musta'in who had been exiled to Wāsiṭ. Her hatred for Musta'in was expressed when she actually hit one of his slave women, because she cried for her master (48) . Her influence on political affairs of state was increased during the reign of her son Mu'tazz. She ordered the troops into battle and according to (49) Ṭabarī , Qabiḥa ordered Mūsā b. Bughā to march against Ḥasan b. Zaid al-'Alawī in Ṭabaristān. Mūsā b. Bughā fulfilled her order.

As regards the financial affairs; historians mention the huge fortune which she and the Turkish leaders amassed for themselves, while conversely her son

(45) Suyūṭī, pp.350, 353, 359, Dhahabī, al-'Ibar, vol.2, p.9, Qalqshandi, Ma'āthir, vol.1, p.244, Washshā', p.82

(46) Shābushtī, p.152, Washshā', p.293, Suyūṭī, p.350, Maqrīzī, al-Nuqūd, p.204, Diyārbakrī, vol.2, p.378

(47) See page ( 64 ) in this chapter.

(48) Shābushtī, p.170

(49) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1736

the Caliph in his later days suffered from bankruptcy. It was said that she had, in 255 H, a huge fortune amounting to about 2,000,000 dinārs in cash, and another 2,000,000 dinārs in pearls and valuables. Despite having this wealth, Qabiḥa inadvertently caused the death of her son when Mu'tazz, desperate for the 50,000 dinārs demanded by the soldiers as their payment, asked his mother for this sum; but Qabiḥa denied that she had any money at that time. Hence Mu'tazz was killed by the discontented soldiers (50). It might be surmised that she was encouraged to withhold the money by some Turkish leaders like Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf who had had a bad relationship with the Caliph Mu'tazz. Ṣāliḥ began secretly to win the favour of Qabiḥa and gave her his promise to marry her if she would comply with his request. It was said that she expressed regret for what she did to her son after Ṣāliḥ betrayed her, saying, "God punish Ṣāliḥ as he (Ṣāliḥ) dishonoured me, killed my son, took my money, made love with me and exiled me". (51) (52) Ibn Kathir mentions that Qabiḥa married Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf secretly. She was in his palace when her son was killed. Ṣāliḥ exiled her to Makka after he had confiscated all her property and money.

There was another famous woman in the second 'Abbāsid period, Mukhāriq the mother of the Caliph Musta'in. Historians mention that her son the Caliph allowed her with two Turkish military leaders, Autāmish and Shāhik al-Khādim to interfere in financial affairs freely. They appropriated for themselves most of the revenue which came to central treasury (53). She had

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(50) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1709, 1718-20, Qaramānī, p.80, Dhahabī, vol.2, p.9, Qalqshandi, vol.1, p.250, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.17, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.3, p.22  
 (51) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1717-18, Ibn Kathir, vol.11, p.17-18, Qalqshandi, vol.1, p.251

(52) Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.17

(53) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1512-13

a private treasury to keep her fortune, she kept about 1,000,000 dinārs in cash in it, in addition to pearls and valuables<sup>(54)</sup>, among them was a valuable carpet which cost 130,000,000 dirhims to make<sup>(55)</sup>.

The 'Abbāsīd women had influential positions during the reign of Muqtadir,<sup>(56)</sup> because he was a minor and weak<sup>(57)</sup>. He was dominated by women. Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa attributed the confusion of the state and Muqtadir's reign to these factors. His state was administered by the women and the condition of the state generally deteriorated during his reign. He was dethroned, re-installed and then killed. There were some powerful women during Muqtadir's reign like his mother Shaghab known as Sayyidah (the mistress), Umm Mūsā al-Hāshmiyah and Distanbawayh the mother of Mu'taḍid's sons, as well as other Qahrmanāt<sup>(58)</sup>. These were bribed along with Mu'nīs al-Khādim, Naṣr al-Hājib and the secretaries (al-Kuttāb) by those who hoped to obtain a high office<sup>(59)</sup>. However, they controlled affairs of state as they desired. Because of Muqtadir's mother's high position, it was said that if she or one of her Qahrmanāt became angry with one of the Wazīrs of the state, they would dismiss him from his position. This happened to the Wazīr 'Alī b. 'Isā b. Da'wūd b. al-Jarrāh, although he had a sound character, strong personality and he was faithful in his duty.

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(54) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1545, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.5

(55) Dūrī, al-'Uṣūr, p.16, Zaydān, al-Tamadun, vol.2, p.130-31

(56) Ṣābī, al-Wuzarā', p.118-19, Ibn Meskawaih, Tajārib al-Ummam, vol.1, p.13, Suyūtī, pp.381, 384, Amīn, Tarīkh al-'Irāq fī al-'Asr al-Saljuqī, p.18

(57) Fakhri, p.262

(58) Tha'ālbī, Thimār al-Qulūb, p.603

(59) Ṣābī, al-Wuzarā', pp.287, 310, 347

Historians mention that once Umm Mūsā al-Hāshmiyah went to the house of the Wazīr 'Alī to discuss the needs of Harīm and the servants with him. When she arrived there the Wazīr was sleeping. His Hājib asked her to wait for an hour until he woke up, where upon she left in high dudgeon. When the Wazīr woke up and knew what had happened, he sent his Hājib and his son to apologise to her, but she refused to accept his excuses. She went immediately to the Caliph Muqtadir and asked him to dismiss him from the Vizirate and to jail him <sup>(60)</sup>. Umm Mūsā, once tried to use her influence to get the Caliphate for one of her relatives (called Aḥmad b. 'Abbās b. Abī al-'Abbās b. Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. al-Mutawakkil). She paid a lot of money for the support of the military leaders and others, but some of them betrayed her to the Caliph who arrested her and confiscated her fortunes <sup>(61)</sup>. She often ordered the punishment of statesmen who disagreed with her and she contrived to get rid of Wazīrs who could not bribe her, by denouncing them to the Caliph, as she did with the Wazīr Ḥasan b. al-Furāt. Through her strong influence on the Caliph she caused those who could bribe her to be appointed to the Vizirate <sup>(62)</sup>.

Sayyidah the mother of Muqtadir and her Qahrmanā Thumāl had also interfered with appointment and removal of the Wazīrs. In 299 H, Muqtadir ordered the arrest of the Wazīr 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Furāt and appointed Muḥammad b. Yahya b. Khāqān instead of him, because of Muqtadir's mother's

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(60) Ṣabī, al-Wuzarā', p.310, Ibn Meskawaih, vol.1, p.40

(61) For further details see, Ibn Meskawaih, vol.1, pp.83-4, Ṣabī, al-Wuzarā', pp.119, 310, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.262

(62) Ṣabī, al-Wuzarā', pp.118, 119, 295

pressure. Afterwards, the Wazīr promised Sayyidah to pay her 100,000 dinārs . . (63)  
 Sayyidah appointed her Qahrmāna Thumāl as Ṣāhibat 'L-Mazālim. This was the first time women occupied that office instead of men. So Thumāl sat in Raṣāfa palace every Friday and heard the people's complaints and gave judge-  
 ments on the matters (64) . There was another woman who rose to a place of importance during Muqtadir's reign called Qahrmāna Zaydān. She made her palace a private jail for those prominent statesmen who angered the Caliph and the Harīm. It was called the jail of Zaydān (65) . She enjoyed such an influential position at the Caliph's court that he once presented her with a string of one hundred pearls, each worth a thousand dinārs (66) . In addition to that, the Harīm amassed huge fortunes for themselves. It was said that Muqtadir's mother and Qahrmānāt dominated the central treasury, some Wazīrs (67) like Ḥasan b. al-Furāt borrowed money from them .

However, the interference of the Harīm in the political and financial affairs affected the status of the Caliphate. The dignity of the Caliphate was reduced, and many regions were separated from the state while some local (68) governors were ambitious for independence in their provinces . On the other hand, this interference also had an impact on the opinion of the people, who began later to turn away from the Caliphate itself.

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(63) Ṣābī, al-Wuzarā', p.288

(64) Suyūṭī, p.381, Dhahabī, al-'Ibar, vol.2, p.131, Qalqashandī, Ma'athir, vol.1, p.276

(65) Ibn Meskawaih, vol.1, pp.38, 40, 50, 88

(66) Qaramānī, p.88, Ibn al-Sa'ī, p.107

(67) Ṣābī, al-Wuzarā', pp.37, 38, 97, 123, 158

(68) Ibn al-Wardī, vol.1, p.253, Amīn, Tarīkh al-'Irāq, p.18

(2) The Attempts to Transfer the Capital of the Caliphate,  
and their Causes.

Baghdad became the capital of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate when it was established by Abū Ja'far al-Mansūr, in 145 H, and remained so until moved by later Caliphs. Before discussing Sāmarrā' which was established by Mu'taṣim, we should mention the first attempts to move the centre of the Caliphate. It is said that the first attempt was made by Hārūn al-Rashīd. He tried to establish a new city in Sāmarrā' area. Yaqūt mentions that he dug a channel for a new river called Nahr al-Qatūl and built a palace there called Abī 'l-Jund<sup>(69)</sup>, but that palace was never completed as the Caliph was preoccupied with suppressing disturbances in Syria. Tabari states;  
"the city of Qatūl remained unfinished",<sup>(70)</sup> but neither he nor the other historians give any reasons for its foundation.

It is also said that Rashīd made another attempt to move the capital, this time to Rāfiqa<sup>(71)</sup>, but after a short time there he left for Tūs in Khurāsān where he died. Ibn al-Qifti<sup>(72)</sup> confirms this by reporting Rashīd's doctor,

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(69) Yaqūt al-Hamwī, Mu'jam, vol.4, p.16, vol.3, p.15

(70) Tabari, vol.11, p.1180

(71) The Caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansūr founded a new city in 155 H, 300 cubits to the west of the old city of Raqqa, and named it al-Rāfiqa "the companion". The city was similar in design to Baghdad, but its walls were not perfectly round like those of the capital. The walls were double, and present day remains show that these were built of mud-brick. Mansūr garrisoned it with Khurāsāni troops to secure the Syrian frontier against the raids which were constantly being made by the Byzantines. See, Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture, vol.2, p.39.

(72) Tarikh al-Hukamā', p.140

Jibrī'l b. Bukhtīshu' as saying, "Rashīd asked me after he became ill in Tus to treat him. I answered him, I asked you to come back to your home, because it was healthy for you, but you refused". Although Rashīd seems to have considered moving the capital from Baghdad, it does not seem that he was very serious. This is shown by the fact that he did not settle for long in any of the places he selected; nor did he undertake any major building operations in them, nor did he move his government offices. (73) Some historians claim that Rashīd moved from place to place largely, because of his fear and distrust of his army; particularly of the Iranian warriors.

The first serious attempt to move the capital happened during the reign of his son, Mu'tasim. He increased the number of Turks until it is said there were 70,000 of them. As the result of their increasing numbers, especially in Baghdad, the city became congested and the people complained about them, because they were strangers and uncivilised nomads, and they hit the people when they rode their horses in the streets of Baghdad. Thus (74) the people became restless and started to fight with them. Discontent was not confined to the civil population but also affected veteran Iranian and Arab soldiers. Mu'tasim was very worried about any disturbances against his regime and Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr mention the Caliph as saying, "I am

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(73) Rogers, Samarra', p.129 (The Islamic city), Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture, vol.2, pp.39 ff.

(74) See chapter one, page 23



afraid that these men from the Ḥarbiyah will kill my ghilmān." (75) So Mu'taṣim looked for a solution to this problem to avoid the recurrence of these events with Baghdadis. Finally, he decided to found a new city for his Turks. One day he went out hunting, and he passed through an expanse of land uninhabited but for a single Christian monastery (Dair al-Naṣārā). He admired the whole area, so he asked the monks about it, and they told him that that place was called Sāmarrā' and that in their holy books it belonged to Sām b. Nuḥ and that it would be renewed by a great king. Mu'taṣim said, "By God, I will build it; and I with my descendents (76) will live in it (77). He bought that land from the monks for 4,000 dinārs. It was situated on the right side of the Tigris river, one hundred and thirty Km. north of Baghdad. He brought the engineers and workers from all of the regions (78). They started to build in 221 H, they planned the situation of the palaces (such as the palace of the Caliph Jawsaq al-Khāqāni) (79), the mosque

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(75) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1179, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.236. Those soldiers were called Ḥarbiyah deriving this name from quarter in Baghdad which took its name from Ḥarb b. Abdallah al-Balkhi who was one of the Caliph Maṣṣūr's leaders. It was inhabited by the 'Arab and Iranian soldier's families. The Ḥarbiyah corps resented the government's policy, seen in the actions of the Caliph Mu'taṣim who increased the number of the Turks and gave the privileges. Therefore, it was natural that the Ḥarbiyah were discontented both with the Turks and the Caliph Mu'taṣim. See Yaqūt, Mu'jam, vol.2, p.234

(76) Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.467

(77) Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.466

(78) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.264, Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.467

(79) See the illustration

(80) (Masjid al-Jāmi') , the markets and the streets of the city (81) . The Caliph arranged special quarters called Qaṭā'i' exclusively for Turkish military leaders. No other nationalities were allowed in there (82) . When the city was completed, the Caliph Mu'taṣim with his soldiers and leaders moved there. He transferred the government offices and the caliphal court (Dār al-Khilāfa), thus all the officers of state, workers and small merchants were transferred to Sāmarrā'. They brought with them different kinds of goods for the markets, and whatever the people needed. Finally, Sāmarrā' was developed very quickly and the people came to it from all places so that it began to resemble and rival Baghdad and the Baghdadis began to hate the Turks more than before. They were discontented with the Turks and Mu'taṣim who had brought them. Sāmarrā' remained the centre of the Caliphate until 279 H, when Mu'tamid decided to come back to Baghdad. Seven caliphs ruled in Sāmarrā' after Mu'taṣim including Wāthiq, Mutawakkil, Muntaṣir, Musta'īn, Muhtadī and Mu'tamid who deserted it and came back to Baghdad.

When Mutawakkil came to the Caliphate in 232 H, his installation there to being due entirely to the overriding strength and influence of the Turks as mentioned previously, he soon noticed that his position was weak and that he was among the Turks who did not respect him and were disloyal to him.

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(80) It was built by Mu'taṣim when he planned Sāmarrā' in 221 H. It remained until 232 H, when Mutawakkil came to the Caliphate, he noticed that the mosque was not big enough for huge numbers of muslims praying together, particularly on Friday or when the people make Ṣalāt al-'Id. Therefore, he decided to extend that mosque and build a new minaret for it which is now called (Malwiyah) and it is famous even today. (See the illustration.)

(81) Creswell, vol.2, pp.227, 254, Rogers, Sāmarrā', p.131

(82) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, pp.285, 289, 262, Mas'ūdi, vol.3, p.467

Therefore, he decided to reduce their power in order to restore the dignity of the Caliphate. He realized that staying in Sāmarrā' near the Turks was risky, so he thought of moving the centre of the Caliphate to another place as the first step to avoid the interference of the Turks and their influence. Finally, he decided to move altogether to Damascus in which the Turks and Iranians had no influence. He might find the 'Arab element would support him against the Turks; furthermore the people of Syria were generally Sunnī and hated the 'Alawīs and in this they shared his own opinion.

In Ṣafar 244 H, Mutawakkil went to Damascus. He began to attempt to move  
(83)  
the government offices, and he planned to build some buildings . Iraqis regretted the departure of the Caliph. Of course, they blamed the Turks for  
(84)  
that, and resented them . Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr agree about the sojourn  
(85)  
of the Caliph in Damascus, saying that he stayed two months and a few days : while Ya'qūbi disagrees with them, he says that Mutawakkil stayed only thirty  
(86)  
eight days there . However, Mutawakkil soon left Damascus and came back to Iraq again. Historians explain that as following, "The weather there was too cold and damp, the water was polluted and the wind blew in the after-  
(87)  
noon and it became stronger in the night. The place was infested with fleas . But Mas'ūdi denied that and said; "Mutawakkil did not live in Damascus itself,  
(88)  
but an hour's journey outside Damascus in the hills". Furthermore, Ṭabarī

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(83) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1436, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.298, Abū al-Fidā', vol.2, p.43

(84) Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.344

(85) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1436, Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.345

(86) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.187

(87) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1436, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.298

(88) Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.32

Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn Kathīr emphasize the cold weather, rain and snow in Damascus when the Caliph was there <sup>(89)</sup>. But in fact, this seems unlikely, because Mutawakkil was there between Ṣafar and Rabī' al-Thānī (between May and July which is in the middle of summer).

However, it seems that the reasons which persuaded Mutawakkil to leave Syria for Iraq were that the relationship between the 'Abbāsids and Syrians had not been good since the 'Abbādis state was established. It deteriorated during the reign of Mu'taṣim when he promoted the Turks and ignored the 'Arabs. So there were many insurrections created by the 'Arabs in Syria such as Mubārq al-Yamānī's revolt in 227 H <sup>(90)</sup>. In fact, they remained in active revolt during the whole 'Abbāsid rule as we shall see in the following chapters. Mutawakkil was therefore unable to achieve his purpose among the Syrians. Rather the Syrian troops (Jund al-Shām) created disturbances against him there when they confronted the Caliph with weapons and demanded their salaries, then they demonstrated and were ready to fight the Caliph <sup>(91)</sup>. On the other hand, the Turks who accompanied the Caliph during his journey were resentful about their stay in Syria. Therefore, they agitated there in order to compel the Caliph to come back. However, their turbulence soon died down, because Bughā al-Kabīr did not support them. Ya'qūbi <sup>(92)</sup> emphasizes that by saying, "The return of the Caliph was due to his caution regarding the Turks." However, Mutawakkil was compelled to come back to Sāmarrā' after he had spent more than two months in Syria. Nevertheless, the Caliph did not settle in Sāmarrā' itself, and he decided to go to the north of it, determined to build a new city.

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(89) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1436, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.298, Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.345

(90) See for further details Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1319-22

(91) Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.32

(92) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.178

In 245 H, he ordered Muḥammad b. Mūsā and other engineers to choose a suitable site for his new city. It was said that the site which was chosen was called Māḥuzza<sup>(93)</sup>, ten km. north of Sāmarrā'. Mutawakkil appointed Dalīl b. Ya'qūb al-Naṣrānī for the task of building and supervision of it, and he allowed 2,000,000 dinārs<sup>(94)</sup> for the building of the city. The workers and engineers started the building which lasted one year. They planned the city which was connected with Sāmarrā' by the road known as Shāri' al-'Aẓam, and passed through Sāmarrā'. They began to dig a channel for a new river which would pass through the city and for this he spent 1,500,000 dinārs<sup>(95)</sup>. They built the palaces of the Caliphate, one of which was Ja'fari<sup>(96)</sup>, the Jāmi' al-Kabīr<sup>(97)</sup> (great mosque), markets, quarters and people's houses. A huge wall mounted with watchtowers and having gates for access was then built around the new city<sup>(98)</sup>. After it was finished, immediately Mutawakkil transferred to his new city in Muḥaram 246 H, with a number of his loyal clients including some Turks. And then, he ordered the removal of all the government's offices which were in Sāmarrā'<sup>(99)</sup>. The Caliph called his new city Ja'fariyah, while some of his men and people called it Mutawakkiliyah, which, in fact, remains until today with traces still visible<sup>(100)</sup>. It was located between

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(93) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.266

(94) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1438, Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.346, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.298, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.320

(95) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.266

(96) The palace in which Mutawakkil was murdered by the Turks on Tuesday's night 3rd Shawal 247 H. Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.267

(97) Nowadays known as Jāmi' Abū Dulaf

(98) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.267

(99) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, p.267, Tarīkh, vol.3, p.178

(100) See the illustration

the canal called Nahr al-Ruṣās and Nahr Dijlah (Tigris) north of Sāmarrā' <sup>(101)</sup>. Mutawakkiliyah remained the centre of the Caliphate during the reign of Mutawakkil until he was killed in his palace of Ja'farī in Shawāl 247 H, by the Turks and his son Muntaṣir who was recognised as Caliph by the Turkish murderers of his father. Muntaṣir remained ten days in Mutawakkiliyah, then he deserted it and went back to Sāmarrā' which became the centre of the Caliphate for the second time until 279 H, when the Caliph Mu'tamid decided to replace it by Baghdad.

### (3) The Civil War of 251 H and its Causes;

Historians agree that the Turks and their aspirations which created conflicts among themselves about domination and control, caused civil war in 251 H, between the Caliph Musta'in and his supporters and Mu'tazz and his supporters. It was mentioned that the Caliph Musta'in let Autāmish and Shāhik al-Khādim (as well as his own mother) have free use of the central treasury. Autāmish controlled everything, so Waṣīf and Bughā <sup>(102)</sup> began to take military measures against him. Finally, they were <sup>(103)</sup> successful when the soldiers attacked and killed Autāmish in 249 H.

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(101) 'Amīd, al-'Mārah al-'Abbāsiyah fī Sāmarrā', p.175

(102) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1512, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.3

(103) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1512, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.3

The murder of Autāmish did not solve all the problems, however, because Bāghir still dominated Waṣīf and Bughā, so these latter began to take action against him in order to eliminate him. Bāghir had a powerful position at that time, because he had a lot of adherents among the Turks (104). When he felt that Waṣīf and Bughā who had the support of the Caliph, were intriguing against him, he collected his adherents who had supported him during the murder of Mutawakkil (105), and asked them to support him again (106). But it seems that Waṣīf and Bughā had acted more quickly than their enemies: they were successful in killing Bāghir. Of course, Bāghir's adherents agitated in order to avenge the killing of their leader. However, in the course of this disturbance, the situation of the state seriously deteriorated. Waṣīf and Bughā realizing that their situation in Sāmarrā' was relatively weak, descended on Baghdad where they hoped to have the support of the Ṭāhirid forces, and Baghdadis (107). It seems that Waṣīf and Bughā were successful in persuading Caliph Musta'in to join them. The Caliph realized his position in Sāmarrā' was dangerous so he decided to join them (108).

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(104) Ṭabari, vol.12, p.1536

(105) Ṭabari, vol.12, p.1537

(106) See Chapter three p.49-50

(107) Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.71

(108) Ṭabari, vol.12, pp.1538, 1539, 1542, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.319, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.7, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.60

The Turks in Sāmarrā' were worried and puzzled about the departure of the Caliph, because they thought that the presence of the Caliph in Sāmarrā' was necessary to strengthen and legitimize their power. Therefore, they sent a mission to the Caliph with valuable gifts in order to convince him of their loyalty and to persuade him to come back to Sāmarrā'. The mission was led by Kulbāktakīn and Baikabāk<sup>(109)</sup>. It is recorded that they admitted their sins, and asked the Caliph to forgive them and to come back with them to Sāmarrā'<sup>(110)</sup>. The Caliph refused to go back with them, but he promised to send them their salaries regularly<sup>(111)</sup>. It seems the refusal of the Caliph was encouraged by Waṣīf and Bughā who felt that their rivals, the Turks in Sāmarrā', had great power. They were aware that the return of the Caliph meant their defeat, and that possibly they might lose their positions and be killed. Eventually, the mission came back to Sāmarrā' unsuccessful<sup>(112)</sup> and so they decided immediately to release Mu'tazz and Mu'ayyad from jail and recognize Mu'tazz as Caliph<sup>(113)</sup>. Then, in 251 H, they started to prepare to fight the Caliph Mustā'īn and his adherents in Baghdad<sup>(114)</sup>.

In 23rd Muḥarram 251 H, Mu'tazz began to mobilize all his forces under the leadership of his brother Abū Aḥmad b. al-Mutawakkil who was called

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(109) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1544, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.320

(110) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1544, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.77, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.320

(111) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1545, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.320

(112) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1507, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.320

(113) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1542, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.320

(114) It is called the second civil war because the first civil war was one between the Caliph Amīn and his brother Ma'mūn.



(115)  
 Muwaffaq . In fact, the appointment of Muwaffaq as leader of the 'Abbāsīd army, most of whom were Turks, meant that the leadership moved from the hands of the Turks to the hands of the 'Abbāsīds and that had significant effect later, particularly when Muwaffaq held the reins of power during the reign of his brother the Caliph Mu'tamid. He was unable to control the ambitions of the Turks and temper their influence channeling both into positive service for the state by bringing his strong personality and astuteness to bear on the Turks. Mu'tazz took measures against Musta'īn and his family by confiscating their property and private wealth left in Sāmarrā'. It was said that he found 500,000 dinārs in the treasury of Musta'īn, and 1,000,000 dinārs in the treasury of his mother Mukhariq, and also in that of his son 'Abbās b. al-Musta'īn 600,000 dinārs . (116)

On the side of the Caliph Musta'īn in Baghdad, it was said that he too made considerable preparations to be ready to fight. First of all, he appointed Muḥammad b. 'Abdāllah b. Ṭāhir as leader of the army and gave him the task of defending Baghdad. Ibn Ṭāhir was ordered immediately to restore the two walls which surrounded Baghdad, so he dug ditches around the city walls, and ordered troops to guard the gates and supplied them with great Ballistas (Manjanīq). He destroyed the dams to flood the district (Ṭussūj) of Anbār and district of Baduriah in order to interrupt the passage of Samarran army. The Caliph also sent out instructions to the various provinces that the revenues should —————→

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(115) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1555, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.321, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.5

(116) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1545, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.320, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.5

be carried to Baghdad and not to Sāmarrā'. And then, he appealed to the Sāmarrān troops to abandon Mu'tazz. Furthermore, his commander Ibn Ṭāhir recruited most of the Baghdadis who were able to fight, in addition to some (117) Khurāsāni pilgrims and 'Ayyarūn .

However, in the course of these preparations, both Caliphs appealed for reinforcements from military corps, which were from outside Iraq, for the military operations and persuaded them to join them. It was said that both Caliphs wrote to Mūsā b. Bughā who was at that time in Syria in order to suppress the insurrection created by the people of Hims. So Mūsā decided to come back and joined Mu'tazz in Sāmarrā'. At the same time, they wrote also to Ḥasan b. al-Afshīn who was in Iran fighting the 'Alawīs. So Ḥasan (118) decided to leave his position and joined the Caliph Musta'īn in Baghdad . The Caliph Mu'tazz ordered his leader Abū Aḥmad al-Muwaffaq to march towards Baghdad on Friday 29th Muḥarram 251 H. Therefore, Sāmarrān troops converged

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(117) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1550, 1553, 1586, 1587, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.321, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.608, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.5. 'Ayyarūn were the local population, who appeared on the scene for the first time at the end of the second century H., particularly during the first civil war between Amīn and Ma'mūn. In the course of the siege of Baghdad, in 197 H, by Ṭāhirid troops the Caliph Amīn recruited 'Ayyarūn in order to help him, particularly after his troops failed to defend Baghdad. According to historians most of the 'Ayyarūn were non-Arāb, because most of their leaders' names did not sound like Arabic names, for example, Nabtawiya, Khalawiya and Dekawiya. Meanwhile, 'Ayyarūn called themselves Fityān, because they were enthusiastic and brave youths. Ḥaiderī, al-Mujtama' al-Iraqi fī al-'Asr al-'Abbāsi al-Awwal, p.130 (M.A. Thesis).

(118) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1554, 1555, 1559, 1560, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.321

and descended upon Baghdad. According to Tabari, their number was estimated as 12,000 on the west side of Baghdad and 7,000 on the east side <sup>(119)</sup>. The war broke out when Ibn Ṭāhir suddenly attacked Samarran troops, most of whom were in the 'Ukbarā' area which was close to Baghdad. Due to this the Samarran troops panicked, and then most of them fled saving their lives, but there were numerous casualties <sup>(120)</sup>. However, Musta'in's troops won a great victory at the beginning, so that when the Caliph Musta'in heard about it, he became very happy, and honoured his military leaders and gave the warriors various valuable gifts <sup>(121)</sup>. Moreover, the Caliph Musta'in announced to the Baghdadis in an official statement in the mosque the news of the victory which his troops had won <sup>(122)</sup>.

Unfortunately Musta'in's troops did not pursue the defeated troops to Sāmarrā' to win the final victory by overthrowing the new government there. But they were satisfied with the quick triumph which they had gained, believing that they had won the war. Meanwhile, Mu'tazz' troops siezed an opportunity to get ready for fighting again. It was said that the land troops were re-inforced by river troops transported by war boats such as Shubārāt and Bahriyāt <sup>(123)</sup>

(119) Ṭabari, vol.12, p.1595

(120) Ṭabari, vol.12, p.1556, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.322

(121) Ṭabari, vol.12, p.1563

(122) Ṭabari, vol.12, p.1565-76 gives the whole statement which the Caliph Musta'in announced to the Baghdadis.

(123) Various types of boats had been used in the rivers of Iraq, (Tigris and Euphrates) during the 'Abbāsīd period. Some of them were known as Taiyārāt, Zabāzib and Sumyriāt, used mostly for pleasure trips. But the others which were known as Shubārāt and Bahriyāt, seemed to have been designed especially for military purposes. See Shābushtī, p.46, Iṣfahānī, Tarīkh sinī Mulūk al-Arḍ, pp.157, 159

some of them were especially for throwing fire <sup>(124)</sup>. Those troops marched towards Baghdad again and surrounded and attacked the city. Ibn Tāhir's troops began to be defeated in the fighting, although they were brave and strong during the battles. Most of them were captured. On Wednesday 7th of Rabi' al-Thānī the war restarted vigorously between them, and they used different kinds of weapons. Ṭabarī described that day as, "a difficult day for each side" <sup>(125)</sup>. The long war and economic blockade which had been inflicted on Baghdad by Mu'tazz' troops prevented provisions from reaching the city, and so prices of goods rose, e.g. one Qafiz <sup>(126)</sup> of grain reached one hundred dirhims. <sup>(127)</sup> The people suffered from starvation <sup>(128)</sup>. In addition, Banū Hāshim in Baghdad asked the government for their salaries and they threatened that if they did not receive their pay immediately they would open the gates for the enemy and desert to Sāmarrā' <sup>(129)</sup>. The situation deteriorated further when the warriors fled to join Mu'tazz' side, because they realized that it was useless to resist the Sāmarrān troops <sup>(130)</sup>. When

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(124) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1589-90, 1626

(125) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1596

(126) "Qafiz, an 'Arab measure of capacity (dry measure) containing from 25-50 litres (5-10 gallons). See The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol.2, p.622 (Leyden 1927).

(127) Tabari, vol.12, p.1628-29, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.183

(128) Banū Hāshim had settled in Baghdad since the beginning of the 'Abbāsīd dynasty, and had been faithful to the legal Caliph, because he was from their family. Now under the reign of Musta'in they were discontented, because they had experienced much suffering, and so were prepared to change sides.

(129) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1616

(130) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1556, 1614-15, 1619, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.324, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.5, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.611

Ibn Ṭāhir noticed that his position was weakening and his troops were unable to win a victory he began to negotiate with Mu'tazz. Correspondence began between them and they exchanged missions. Mas'ūdi<sup>(131)</sup> says that when Ibn Ṭāhir realized that Mu'tazz had a strong position, he began to take his side and agreed to dethrone Musta'īn.

Some conditions of the agreement provided for the security of Musta'īn and his family and all that they had. They allowed his family and himself to live in Makka and let him stay in Wāsiṭ for a short time until he could go to Makka. In fact, it seems that Ibn Ṭāhir agreed secretly with the enemy to dethrone the legal Caliph Musta'īn from the Caliphate. It is clear from the action of Ibn Ṭāhir when he showed Musta'īn the agreement and asked him to agree about what it contained and to sign it. The Caliph refused vigorously, then Ibn Ṭāhir threatened him by saying, "You have to agree to abdicate whether you like it or not"<sup>(132)</sup>. Therefore, the Caliph Musta'īn had no alternative but to agree and signed. After Ibn Ṭāhir had obtained the Caliph Musta'īn's signature and his consent, he announced to the Baghdadis that the Caliph would stay in his position and Mu'tazz would become heir apparent, but when the Baghdadis knew the facts, they were disturbed and moved towards Ibn Ṭāhir's house. Ibn Ṭāhir's life was threatened and he asked the Caliph Musta'īn to come to rescue him from these angry people. The Caliph went out and quietened them<sup>(133)</sup>. In fact, the adherence of the Baghdadis to the Caliph, despite the hardship they had suffered, showed their hatred of the Turks, a hatred which had existed since Mu'taṣim first brought the Turks to the city. In addition, there were other conditions which were in the agreement which were agreed by both sides. They agreed to award the Caliph Musta'īn

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(131) Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.78

(132) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1641, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.328

(133) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1632-33, 1634, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.78, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.328

50,000 dinārs and gave him property which was worth 30,000 dinārs. Furthermore, they appointed Bughā as governor of Hijāz and Waṣīf as governor of Jibāl. They also agreed to release the prisoners of war and to provide Baghdad with provisions immediately, because there was starvation in the city (134).

It was thus that the second civil war caused economic problems for the people. The people committed many crimes, such as rape and pillage, because there was no security or law. Production was reduced, because the people left their work. Many merchant's shops were burnt and many houses were destroyed (135). The Baghdadis suffered most of these disasters, because most of the battles happened in Baghdad and around it. In fact, there were many other districts in Iraq damaged by this war, such as Anbār (136). On the other hand, the war had an impact outside Iraq; it encouraged the movements against the 'Abbāsīd authority. The 'Alawī movements increased, such as the revolt of Ḥasan b. Zaid al-'Alawī in Tabaristān. He controlled many areas there (137). There was also the movement of Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-'Alawī and Idrīs b. Mūsā al-'Alawī in the region of Rayy (138). The Ṣaffārids were encouraged under the leadership Ya'qūb b. al-Laith al-Ṣaffār to compel the Caliphate to give them independence in Sistān and the other adjacent territories. So they established the Ṣaffarid state (139). Furthermore, revolts occurred in Armenia and Hijāz (140) where rebel leaders were encouraged by the circumstances of the civil war.

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(134) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1629-30, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.183, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.328, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.613

(135) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1556, 1597, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, pp.321, 323

(136) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1599, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.325-326

(137) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1583, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.329, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.68

(138) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1585, Iṣfahānī, Maqātil, p.397, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.329

(139) Ḥaidari, Ya'qūb b. al-Laith al-Ṣaffār, p.210 ff.

(140) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1584-85, 1594, Iṣfahānī, Maqātil, p.422

## Chapter Five

### The Caliphate's policy towards Religious Groups and the Turkish Reaction

1. The 'Alawī<sup>ī</sup>s
2. The non-Muslims (Ahl al-Dhimmah)

### 1. The 'Alawīs

The attitude of Ma'mūn, Mu'tasim and Wāthiq to the 'Alawīs was a lenient one. During their reigns the 'Alawīs regained the privileges of which they had earlier been deprived. Thus, during the reign of Ma'mūn (197-218 H), the 'Alawīs attained an influential position in the state. It was said that the Caliph appointed 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā as his heir apparent <sup>(1)</sup>. Furthermore, he commended the 'Alawīs to his brother before his death <sup>(2)</sup>. Then, when Mu'tasim (218-227 H) came to the throne, he treated them well as his brother had asked him to, and the sources do not mention that the 'Alawīs were discontented during Mu'tasim's reign. When his son Wāthiq (227-232 H) came to power, he too adopted a sympathetic policy towards the 'Alawīs. It was said that he went further than his father in respecting them. Al-Maqrīzi mentions that the judge Yaḥyā b. Aktham said, "There is no one who treated the 'Alawīs better than Wāthiq did" <sup>(3)</sup>. Therefore, most of the 'Alawīs preferred to live in Sāmarrā', to be near the Caliph who favoured them and spent money on them and gave them generous gifts. There were no 'Alawīs who died in poverty during the reign of Wāthiq <sup>(4)</sup>. Furthermore, there was no 'Alawī revolt against Wāthiq's rule, due to his excellent treatment of them. In fact, they even cooperated with him against his enemies. Although the historian Iṣfahāni had pro-Alawī sympathies, he

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(1) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1013, Khalīfah b. Khayyāt, Tarīkh, vol.2, p.508  
Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.217

(2) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1139

(3) Maqrīzi, al-Nuqūd al-Islamiyah, p.202

(4) Iṣfahāni, p.385, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.236, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.277,  
Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.310



emphasizes that, "There was not a single 'Alawī killed during Wāthiq's reign"<sup>(5)</sup>. The improved conditions which the 'Alawīs enjoyed persisted until the end of his reign.

However, when Mutawakkil (232-247 H) came to the throne, the relationship between the 'Abbāsids and the 'Alawīs became tense as a result of his policy towards the latter, whom he persecuted harshly. It was said that Mutawakkil hated the three previous Caliphs for sympathizing with the 'Alawīs<sup>(6)</sup>. Historians disagree about the reasons why Mutawakkil oppressed the 'Alawīs. However, Ṭabari, Ibn al-Athīr and Abū al-Fidā' were agreed that Mutawakkil's attitude towards the 'Alawīs had been influenced before he came to the throne by certain men who hated them, such as 'Alī b. al-Jahm al-Shā'ir, 'Umar b. Faraj al-Rukhkhaji, Abū al-Ṣamt and 'Abdallāh b. Muhammad b. Da'ūd al-Hāshimī, known as Ibn Atarja<sup>(7)</sup>. In addition to this, when he was installed as Caliph, he was influenced by certain ministers who had an intense hatred for the 'Alawīs, such as 'Ubaidullāh b. Khāqān and Fatih b. Khāqān his Secretary, and who persuaded him to have no contact with the 'Alawīs and to persecute them<sup>(8)</sup>.

Iṣfahānī and Abū al-Maḥāsin mention that Mutawakkil had a slave woman called Umm al-Faḍl, who due to being a good singer, was able to exert some influence. The Caliph favoured her and often invited her to his meeting (Majlis) to sing. One day he requested her presence, but she was absent, visiting Ḥusain's tomb. When his men finally presented her to him, the Caliph questioned her about her absence. She replied, "I was making a pilgrimage". He said, "But this month is Sh'bān and there is no pilgrimage required".

(5) Iṣfahānī, p.385

(6) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.287

(7) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1407, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.287-88, Abū al-Fidā', vol.2, pp.40,41

(8) Iṣfahānī, p.387, Ṣabī, al-Wūzarā', p.293

She told him, "I was making a pilgrimage to Ḥusain's tomb". At this the Caliph became very angry and he ordered the immediate destruction of Ḥusain's tomb<sup>(9)</sup>. In fact, this story seems unlikely, because Mutawakkil ordered the destruction of the shrine of Ḥusain in 236 H, but he had disagreed with the 'Alawīs before that time. It was said that in 235 H he ordered his governor in Egypt, Ishāq b. Yahya, to arrest all the prominent 'Alawīs and send them to Iraq<sup>(10)</sup>.

The actions of Mutawakkil against the 'Alawīs have been described as being the result of two factors. On the one hand, the Caliph seems to have been influenced by the opinions of those around him, and particularly by Fatih b. Khāqān who had a great hatred for the 'Alawīs and who was the companion of the Caliph until his very death. On the other hand, Mutawakkil's policy reflected his concern to ensure the security of the 'Abbāsīd house against all elements of opposition, potential as well as active, and in particular, of course, 'Alawī opposition<sup>(11)</sup>. His action was also part of the comprehensive changes he instituted with the intention of reducing the influence of the Turks. For instance, shortly after he had been installed as Caliph, he proclaimed that he would drop the question of Mu'tazilism entirely, and that he would transfer the centre of the Caliphate itself.

Mutawakkil had expressed his hatred of the 'Alawīs when he ordered the destruction of Ḥusain's tomb and all the houses which surrounded it. In addition, he forbade the people to visit it, and to this end had officers patrol the roads which led to Ḥusain's tomb to watch the people and mete out punishments to those who did not observe the new instructions<sup>(12)</sup>.

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(9) *Iṣfahānī*, p.386, *Abū al-Maḥāsīn*, vol.2, p.284

(10) *Abū al-Maḥāsīn*, vol.2, p.283

(11) *Miah*, *The reign of al-Mutawakkil*, p.101

(12) *Ṭabarī*, vol.12, p.1407, *Iṣfahānī*, p.386, *Mas'ūdi*, vol.4, p.51, *Ibn al-Athīr*, vol.5, p.287

Historians mention also that the Caliph hated Al-Imān 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and all his family (Ahl al-Bait). Furthermore, he encouraged mockery of them. It was said that he often had clowns called Samāja <sup>(13)</sup>, (one such was 'Ubāda al-Mukhanth) in his meeting to perform parodies about 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib <sup>(14)</sup>. He ordered his governors throughout the state to deal severely with the 'Alawīs and their adherents, and to confiscate their estates. 'Umar b. Faraj al-Rukhkhaji, the governor of Madīna who was well-known for his hostility towards the 'Alawīs, was vigorous in his persecution of them and anyone who helped them <sup>(15)</sup>. Mutawakkil's policy of dealing harshly with the 'Alawīs brought about discontent and tense relations. It <sup>(16)</sup> caused Ibn al-Athīr to say, "That sin set all his good actions at naught".

The 'Alawīs, feeling the effects of the Caliph's attitudes towards them, reacted more strongly than ever before. They revolted throughout the entire state and threatened 'Abbāsīd authority <sup>(17)</sup>. In 233 H, there was a minor rising of the 'Alawīs in Madīna led by 'Alī b. Muhammad b. 'Alī al-Ridā, who was supported by a majority of the people. They gave him the title of Imām. The revolt, however, was quickly brought under control, <sup>(18)</sup> and its leader imprisoned. Nevertheless, this rising encouraged other 'Alawīs such as Ahmad b. Zaid al-'Alawī <sup>(19)</sup> and Qāsim b. Abdallah b. al-Husain al-'Alawī <sup>(20)</sup>, who led rebellions in Hijāz. But the most dangerous movement

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(13) Shābushti, p.39

(14) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.287, Qalqshandi, vol.1, p.230-31

(15) Iṣfahānī, p.387, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.288

(16) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.288

(17) Miah, The reign of al-Mutawakkil, p.88

(18) Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.172, Abū al-Mahāsīn, vol.2, p.271

(19) Iṣfahānī, p.399

(20) Iṣfahānī, p.398

to threaten the Caliphate in Hijāz was led by Muhammad b. Ṣāliḥ b. 'Abdallāh b. Mūsā al-'Alawī. He occupied Makka and Madīna but was then unable to get the support of his uncle who had many adherents, because the latter seems to have promised the Caliph not to revolt against him. The rebellion was (21) unsuccessful and the rebels were arrested by the Caliphal troops. There were other 'Alawī revolts which broke out in Iran, and particularly in Rayy and Tabaristān, such as that led by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-'Alawī, (22) and that led by Aḥmad b. 'Isā b. 'Alī al-'Alawī in Rayy. Especially notable was the revolt led by Ḥusain b. Aḥmad al-Arqaṭ who was called al-Kawkabī. The central government was not able to quell this rebel movement in spite of all the efforts of the Caliphal troops. It lasted until Mu'tamid's (23) reign.

The difficult circumstances with which the 'Alawīs were faced changed markedly after the murder of Mutawakkil in 247 H by the Turks. Muntaṣir, whom the Turks installed as Caliph, announced a policy which proclaimed his sympathy for the 'Alawīs. Historians mention that one of the reasons why Muntaṣir helped the Turks with their plot to murder his father was the latter's (24) oppression of the 'Alawīs. In accordance with his new policy, when Muntaṣir settled in Sāmarrā' he distributed a huge sum of money among the 'Alawīs. He ordered his governors to stop persecuting them. He restored (25) Ḥusain's tomb and allowed people to visit it again. Furthermore, he allowed the 'Alawīs to enter his court whenever they wished without requiring

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(21) Iṣfahānī, p.387-88

(22) Iṣfahānī, p.397

(23) Iṣfahānī, pp.397-398, 425

(24) See Chapter Four, page 63-64

(25) Iṣfahānī, p. 387, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.51-52, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.311, Dhahabi, al-'Ibar, vol.1, p.453

(26)  
to get permission in advance . He appointed 'Alawīs as governors of some of the provinces. For example, 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Isma'il was appointed governor of Madīna (27). The Caliph was said to have informed his governors, (28)  
"If you want to please me, you have to treat the 'Alawīs well".

However, this sympathetic attitude of Muntaṣir was not welcomed by the (29)  
Turks who dominated the affairs of state, and, as mentioned above , they attempted to remove him. Eventually, they succeeded in assassinating him after he had ruled a mere six months.

The 'Alawīs were disheartened now that they had lost the sympathetic Caliph Muntaṣir, and their relationship with the central government deteriorated again. They began to observe how the central government fared under Turkish interference and they kept an eye open for opportunities to revolt. (30)  
Furthermore, they encouraged other insurrections (such as the Zanj's revolt)

(26) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1488

(27) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.311

(28) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1499

(29) Of course, there were other factors which persuaded the Turks to assassinate the Caliph in addition to this factor. See Chapter three, p.

(30) This occurred during the reign of Muḥtadī and continued until the reign of Mu'tamid. It was a dangerous rising which had broken out among the negro slaves in the lower Euphrates valley. However, the rebellion was led by 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. 'Isā b. Zaid b. 'Abbās b. 'Alī b. Ḥusain b. 'Alī. He pretended that he was a member of the 'Alawī family. It is obvious that the 'Alawī rebels supported and encouraged him believing that the Zanj's leader shared them the same purpose, which was to replace the 'Abbāsīd state with an 'Alawī one. See for further details, The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol.4, p.1213 (Leyden 1924)

which aimed to reduce the power of the central government<sup>(31)</sup>.

As regard the Turkish situation towards the 'Alawīs, it seems they disliked them even more than the Caliphs did. The main reason behind this may have been that the Turks were Sunni<sup>(32)</sup>. They attempted to get rid of them by murdering their leaders and their main supporters<sup>(33)</sup>, and by encouraging the people to hate them<sup>(34)</sup>. In point of fact, however, the Caliphs who came after Muntaṣir seemed to follow the Turks' lead in persecuting the 'Alawīs<sup>(35)</sup>. We may notice that these Caliphs employed the Turkish leaders to overcome the various 'Alawī revolts. In 249 H, during the reign of Musta'in, there was one 'Alawī rebel, Yahya b. 'Umar b. Yahya b. al-Ḥasan b. Zaid, who led a rebellion in Kūfa because the Turks had insulted him when he came to Sāmarrā' to ask for help (possibly financial aid). He had approached the Turks (among them Waṣīf), because they controlled everything at that time, but they had insulted and mocked him. He returned to Kūfa, gathered together his followers and they revolted there. They seized control

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(31) Birūnī, p.332

(32) Kindī, al-Wulāt, p.154, Qazwīnī, pp.235, 538, 610, Ṭabarāh, al-Imām al-Awza'i, p.168, Osman, Mu'taṣim and Turks, p.19. The Turks did not show their own feelings regarding the 'Alawīs during the reign of Mu'taṣim (who was sympathetic towards the 'Alawīs), due to the fact that they did not dominate Caliphal authority, because of the strong personality of the Caliph. When Mu'taṣim employed Turks in his service, he made sure that they did as he wanted, and served him properly, usually by fighting the enemies of the state.

(33) Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.10, Ibn al-Athir, vol.5, p.300

(34) Khaṭīb al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad, vol.1, p.109

(35) Tha'ālbi, Lṭā'if al-Ma'ārif, p.125

of the treasury, burst open the jail and released the prisoners. In fact, their rebellion was a threat to the central government, particularly when the rebels succeeded in forcing the governor of Kūfa to flee. The government then sent in troops led by Kulbāktakīn al-Turki. They fought the rebels and after considerable efforts managed to quell them. Yahya b. 'Umar (36) was killed on 17 Rajab 249 H, fighting bravely until the end .

In the following year, 250 H, Ḥasan b. Zaid b. Muḥammad b. Ismā'il led a revolt in Tabaristān, in protest against the harsh and unfair way in which the governors were treating the 'Alawīs there. For instance, historians mention that the Caliph Musta'īn gave Muḥammad b. Abdallah b. Ṭāhir, the governor of Baghdad, property in Klār and Chālūs (in Tabaristān). There were other private properties adjacent to that gift of land. When Ibn Ṭāhir's representative came to administer the land, he tried to force the people who owned the adjacent private properties to give them up. This kind of treatment created discontent and made the people ready to rebel against the central government. Ibn Zaid was taking advantage of this general discontent when he united the people and led them in revolt with the idea of establishing an 'Alawī state in Tabaristān in the face of the efforts being made by the Turkish leaders (such as Waṣīf and others) (37) to prevent this. In the same year of 250 H, other 'Alawī rebel leaders (such as Aḥmad b. 'Isā b. Ḥusain al-Ṣaghīr, who led a revolt in Rayy, and Idrīs b. Mūsā b. 'Abdallah b. Mūsā and Muḥammad b. Ja'far b. al-Ḥasan who led rebellions in the same area) gave support to Ḥasan b. Zaid's goal of creating an independent 'Alawī state. However, none of their rebellions succeeded because they fought the Caliphal

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(36) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1515, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.182, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.314, Isfahānī, p.410, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.240-41, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.63

(37) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1523-1533, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.68, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.316-17

(38)  
troops separately .

The 'Alawīs seized another opportunity of fighting for their freedom during the worst crisis of the central government. When a civil war broke out in 251 H, between Mu'tazz and Musta'in they increased their revolts everywhere. In that same year Ḥusain b. Muḥammad b. Ḥamzah led a rebellion in Kūfa, taking advantage of the lack of law and order caused by the civil war. Ibn Ḥamzah and his followers managed to defeat the troops which the governor of Kūfa, Aḥmad b. Naṣr al-Khuzā'i, sent against them. The governor then fled, to save his life. Afterwards, the Caliph Musta'in sent his Turkish commander Muzāḥim b. Khāqān 'Arṭūj against the rebels, and he was able to suppress the revolt. Ibn Khāqān then entered Kūfa and set it on fire to punish its people, who had supported the 'Alawī movement (39) .

The tolerant treatment which had been accorded the 'Alawīs by Ma'mūn, Mu'taṣim and Wathīq was reversed by Mutawakkil and most of his successors. Of course, the Turks, who held the reins of power at that time, played a large role in this reversal of policy as mentioned above. The fortunes of the 'Alawīs changed when the influence of the Turks vanished after 256 H. It was said that during the reign of Mu'taḍid the anti-'Alawī policy was relaxed. As a result, their number increased from two thousand three hundred at the end of the first 'Abbāsīd period (40) to four thousand (41) . In addition, they possessed an independent council (Niqāba) (42) which was

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(38) Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.69, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.329, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.6

(39) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1617-19, Iṣfahānī, p.421-22, Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.69, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.330

(40) Metz, al-Ḥadārah al-Islamiyah, vol.1, p.264

(41) Ṣābī, al-Wuzarā', p.25

(42) Qalqashandi, vol.3, p.157 .



headed by one of their number (<sup>(43)</sup> called Naqīb), who held a high position in the state.

## 2. The non-Muslims (Ahl al-Dhimmah)

The Islamic state had made the nations which submitted to the rule of Islam, and in particular to Ahl al-Dhimmah, covenants <sup>(44)</sup> which promised security and protection in exchange for a tribute (Jizyah) which would be levied <sup>(45)</sup>. The 'Abbāsīd Caliphs accordingly observed the Islamic law as regards Ahl-al-Dhimman <sup>(46)</sup>. It was said that the Caliphs allowed them to govern themselves in some areas, for instance in Armenia, if they formed the majority of the population in a particular region <sup>(47)</sup>. The tolerant attitude of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs towards the non-Muslims was more marked still during the reign of Ma'mūn, who organized a consultative committee

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(43) Kāzrūnī, Maqāmah fī Qawā'id Baghdad, p.23, Ibn Baṭūṭa, al-Raḥla, p.178, Tritton, Materials on Muslim Education in the Middle Ages, p.113

(44) Historians mention those covenants which the Muslims had given to Ahl al-Dhimmah. See Abū Yūsuf, al-Kharāj, pp.143-44, Balādhuri, pp.208, 252

(45) It seems that not all Ahl-al-Dhimmah contributed towards the tribute. Women and children did not pay poll tax, nor did the poor and the blind who were without work, nor the handicapped nor monks. See Abū Yūsuf, p.122, Tritton, Islam and the Protected Religions, p.486, The Caliphs and their Non-Muslim Subjects, p.198

(46) Arberry, (The oriental Jewish Communities) Religion in the Middle East, vol.1, pp.130, 132

(47) Balādhuri, p.217

(48)  
which consisted of Muslims, Christians, Jews, Sabians and Magians .

Historians mention that many Christians occasionally gave gifts to the Caliphs, as for instance did the Caliph Mutawakkil's personal physician (49) Bakhtiyshu' .

The 'Abbāsid Caliphs and Muslims also joined Ahl al-Dhimmah in their (50) celebrations and festivals as did the Caliph Ma'mūn , and the Caliph (51) Mu'tazz who also partook of their food and drink . In fact, the historian Shābushti mentions that many Caliphs' sons and Muslim people in general (52) joined Non-Muslim celebrations . Ahl-al-Dhimmah were able to hold their various festivals in complete freedom throughout the whole of the Islamic state. For instance, the Christians formed processions in which they wore beautiful clothes, carried a cross and held censers (Majāmir) In front of them walked monks and priests singing hymns. Because of the religious tolerance and the generous treatment which the Non-Muslims enjoyed, their (54) churches and synagogues increased in number . Moreover, most of the personal doctors of the Caliphs were Ahl-al-Dhimmah. The Caliphs appreciated (55) their skills and favoured them . It was said that the Caliphs did not eat

(48) Irbili, pp.188, 193, Babū Ishāq, Tarikh Naṣārā al-Iraq, p.70, Aḥwāl Naṣārā Baghdad, p.56

(49) Tanūkhi, Jāmi' al-Tawarikh, vol.8, p.145, Zaydān, Tarikh al-Tamadun, vol.4, p.139

(50) Shābushti, p.177

(51) Shābushti, p.156

(52) Shābushti, pp.34, 46, 58

(53) Shābushti, p.241, Le Strange, Baghdad during the 'Abbāsid Caliphate, p.209

(54) Babū Ishāq, Tarikh Naṣārā al-'Iraq, p.70, Baihaqī, Tarikh Ḥukamā' al-Islam, p.16

(55) Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'a, 'Uyūn al-Anbā', vol.2, p.39, al-Qiftī, Tarikh al-Ḥukamā', p.159

any food without the supervision of their doctors. For example, the personal physician Yuḥanā b. Māsawaih who served the Caliphs Rashīd, Ma'mūn, Mu'taṣim, Wāthiq and Mutawakkil, stood near those Caliphs while they were eating in order to supervise (56). In addition, the Caliphs appointed the doctors as supervisors of hospitals (Bimārstān) which increased in number throughout the whole of the state (57). Some Ahl al-Dhimma took up other professions (58) such as engineering, trading, money changing and cloth selling.

However, Islamic law imposed some restrictions on social relationships between Muslims and Non-Muslims. The law did allow Muslim men to marry Non-Muslims without being obliged to make the wife give up her religion (59). But Christians were not allowed to convert to Judaism or vice versa. The law stated that any change of religion must be to Islam only (60). A Christian could not inherit from a Jew nor vice versa. Nor might a Christian or a Jew inherit from a Muslim or vice versa (61). Furthermore, the estate of a Jew or a Christian who died without an heir who lived at his place of permanent residence devolved upon the community to which he belonged (62). However, the relationship between Muslims and Non-Muslims sometimes grew tense. This happened when the Caliphs became harsh in their treatment of Non-Muslims, as occurred during the reigns of Rashīd and Mutawakkil.

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(56) Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'a, vol.2, p.124, al-Qiftī, p.380, Ibn Juljul, Tabaqāt al-Atibbā', p.65

(57) al-Qiftī, p.109, Bell, The Origin of Islam, p.181

(58) Abū Yūsuf, p.123

(59) Ibn Rustah, 'Alāq al-Nafīsa, p.206

(60) Metz, vol.1, p.56-7

(61) Ṣābī, al-Wazarā', p.270

(62) Arberry, (The Oriental Jewish communities) Religion in the Middle East, vol.1, p.130

Historians mention that, in 191 H, the Caliph Rashīd issued an order that Ahl al-Dhimma wear clothes different from the Muslims, and that when they were riding their mules or donkeys, they use a sign to show they were Non-Muslims. These instructions seem to have been applied only to Ahl-al-Dhimma (63) who were living in the frontier regions. Then he issued instructions (64) that the poll-tax be increased. Although Rashīd was described as being severe in his attitude towards Ahl al-Dhimma, the evidence indicates that (65) on the whole he treated them fairly, and that when he did take measures against them, these were precautionary and he did so with good reason. It seems that the Caliph issued his edicts concerning Non-Muslims after his return from the war with the Byzantines, when he had been informed that Ahl-al-Dhimma, and in particular the Christians who inhabited the border regions, had helped the Byzantines by spying, and that they had used their churches for that purpose. This angered Rashīd, and he immediately ordered that Ahl-al-Dhimma should be distinguished from Muslims to prevent them disguising themselves and mixing with Muslims in order to secure military information. He had officers stationed along the whole Byzantine border. These officers were to search everyone who passed them, such as traders and travellers, and if they discovered that they had weapons or slaves, these would be confiscated and they would be ordered to go back. However, if documents containing information gathered from the affairs of state were found, these would be sent to the Caliph for him to decide what punishment (66) should be imposed.

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(63) Tabarī, vol.11, p.712-13, Ibn al-Athir, vol.5, p.127

(64) Tritton, Islam and Protected Religions, p.496

(65) Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'a, vol.2, p.44, Babū Ishāq, Tarikh Naṣārā al-'Iraq, pp.67-68, 70

(66) Abū Yūsuf, pp.189, 190, al-Qiftī, p.175

As regards the Caliph Mutawakkil's attitude towards Ahl-al-Dhimmah, he was said to have persecuted them too. Historians mention that he issued an edict, in 235 H, concerning Ahl al-Dhimmah which affected their individual and social life. It included regulations on dress, on means of transport, the education of children, the burial of Christians and on the building of houses, on the payment of a house tax called 'Ushūr', and on customs such as the hanging of a carved piece of wood above the door of a house with a figure of a devil thereon, etc. The regulation in regard to dress required Christians to clothe themselves in a manner different from that of the Muslims. They were to wear a honey-coloured cowl with patches of contrasting colour, with a special band of material round the waist for men and a distinctive yellow dress for women. Slaves had to wear a special form of head-gear. The stipulations in regard to means of transport required them to ride on donkeys or mules but not on horses and to use stirrups with wooden knobs. They were forbidden to use the type of saddle used for riding horses.

Dhimmi students were not to attend Muslim schools, and Muslim teachers were not to teach them (67) (68) . Some of these regulations were renewed in 239 H .

Mutawakkil also re-enacted the law that no Non-Muslim should be in government service; he even went so far as to dismiss, in 247 H, the Christian keeper (69) of the Nilometer .

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(67) Tabarī, vol.12, p.1389-90, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.174, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.285, Maqrīzī, book 3, vol.3, p.398, Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.313-14, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.583, Diyārbakrī, vol.2, p.377

(68) Tabarī, vol.12, p.1419, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.293, Maqrīzī, book 3, vol.3, p.398

(69) Tritton, The Caliphs and their Non-Muslim Subjects, p.23

As a matter of fact, however, there are certain contradictions and differences of chronology in the historians' accounts of the reasons which led Mutawakkil to issue these regulations. Dūrī and Miah state that Mutawakkil took this step in order to satisfy the Muslim public who were being strongly influenced by the theologians ('Ulamā')<sup>(70)</sup>. Yet doubts can be raised as to the truth of this, because there is no evidence that there was any conflict between the Muslim populace and Ahl al-Dhimmah. In particular the contemporary historians who were interested in this issue make no mention of such conflict.

According to the historian Zaydān, Mutawakkil persecuted Ahl al-Dhimmah because when the 'Arabs of Hims revolted against the central government, they were supported by Christians. The Caliph therefore ordered the expulsion of all the Christians and the demolition of their churches<sup>(71)</sup>. However, if we examine this statement carefully we discover that this historian has contradicted himself. The 'Arabs of Hims rebelled in 241 H,<sup>(72)</sup> and about this most contemporary historians agreed, while the Caliphal edicts were issued in 235 H and in 239 H. We therefore disagree with Zaydān's opinion too. The historian Qalqashandi, who died in 821 H gives another story about the reasons why Mutawakkil reacted against Ahl al-Dhimmah. Seemingly, while the Caliph was performing the rites of pilgrimage at the K'abah, he heard a man praying against him. The Caliph wanted to kill him, but the man begged him to wait until he had told him his grievance, which was that Dhimmi officials were frequently insulting Muslims. When Mutawakkil

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(70) Dūrī, al-'Usūr al-'Abbāsiyah al-Muta'khira, p.44, Miah, The Reign of al-Mutawakkil, p.96

(71) Zaydān, Tarikh al-Tamadun, vol.4, p.139

(72) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1422, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.294-95, Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.323, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.586

heard this, he took various measures against Ahl al-Dhimma and dismissed (73) them from all government offices . This story seems unlikely however, the Caliph was at that time the leader of a great state. It is incredible that he should act on the word of one man and persecute the Non-Muslims, who formed a large section of the population. At this time he was attempting to unify all his subjects in order to get their support against the Turks who dominated his own state.

It seems that the cause which in fact led Mutawakkil to oppress the Non-Muslims was the policy of aggression then being used by the Byzantines. They were said to have attacked Islamic provinces repeatedly, and to have killed and tortured Muslims. In addition, some of Ahl al-Dhimma cooperated with the Byzantines as spies, as mentioned above. This had persuaded previous Caliphs such as 'Umar b. 'Abad al-'Aziz and Hārūn al-Rashīd to take severe measures against Ahl al-Dhimma. Historians state that the Byzantines attacked Dimyāt in Egypt, in 238 H. They burnt down the great mosque there and killed all the worshippers, then took six hundred Muslim (74) women captive and returned home . Furthermore, it was said that in 241 H, Theodora (the mother of Theophilus the Emperor of the Byzantines) had ordered twenty thousand captive Muslims to adopt Christianity. When they refused to do so, she ordered that twelve thousand of them be killed.

Nevertheless, historians state that the Caliph Mutawakkil was sympathetic towards Ahl al-Dhimma. They mention that he employed many of them in government offices, honoured them, and accepted their presents, and that he desired to protect their religions. As an instance of his sympathetic attitude, we may note that, in 241 H, when Muslims and Byzantines agreed

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(73) Qalqashandi, Ma'āthir al-Ināqah, vol.3, p.229

(74) Tabarī, vol.12, p.1417, Suyūṭī, p.347-48, Abū al-Mahāsīn, vol.2, p.294, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.587

(75) Tabarī, vol.12, p.1426-27, Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.324

about the exchange of prisoners of war over the frontier the Caliph was said to have ordered his representative Shanīf al-Khādim in charge of the exchange to buy back all the captives including the Christians who had been captured in the war<sup>(76)</sup>.

Ibn Juljul mentions that Mutawakkil often invited Catholicos Theodosius to come and keep him well-informed about Christian affairs. The Caliph gave Christian religious leaders complete freedom in looking after all the affairs which concerned their sects and in giving their views about current issues<sup>(77)</sup>.

When, in 245 H, the Caliph Mutawakkil was planning the construction of the new city Mutawakkiliyah, he appointed Dalīl b. Ya'qūb al-Naṣrānī to supervise the building and the financing of the city<sup>(78)</sup>.

It was said that when Mutawakkil was setting out for Damascus, the Catholicos Sergius honoured the Caliph by strewing flowers in his path and that he erected arches made of flowers as well, and provided the Caliph with all his needs for the journey<sup>(79)</sup>.

The Caliph often accepted the social invitations of Non-Muslims. When his physician Bakhtiyshu' b. Jubra'il invited him to his palace<sup>(80)</sup>, the Caliph was said to have appreciated the hospitality offered him there<sup>(81)</sup>.

Bakhtiyshu' often accompanied him on his trips and journeys<sup>(82)</sup>. In addition,

(76) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1417-18, 1427, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.177. These Christians were Copts from Egypt. They had different opinions on religious matters from the Byzantine Christians. The latter were Melkites, while the Copts were Jacobites. See Shahrastāni, al-Milal wa'l-Nihal, vol.2, pp.39, 44

(77) Ibn Juljul, pp.70, 72

(78) See Chapter Four p. 84

(79) Babū Ishāq, Aḥwal Naṣārā Baghdad, p.47

(80) According to Ya'qūbī, Buldān, p.261 was a huge house in Sāmarrā'.

(81) Qiftī, p.103, Tritton, The Caliphs and their Non-Muslim Subjects, p.159

(82) Ibn al-'Ibari, Tarikh Mukhtasr al-Diwal, p.144



Mutawakkil accepted with thanks the gifts which were given to him on the occasion of various Muslim festivals <sup>(83)</sup>. It was said of his doctor Isrā'īl b. Zakariya al-Taifūri, that when he went to visit the Caliph, his procession (mawkib) was just like that of a prince or a military leader with drummers <sup>(84)</sup> accompanying him. Another of the Caliph's doctors, Ḥunain b. Ishāq, attained an influential position too, and Mutawakkil gave him a huge property <sup>(85)</sup> and fixed his salary at a high level. He also appointed him as chief of <sup>(86)</sup> the Caliphal translators.

Unfortunately there is very little evidence about the attitude of the Turks to the Non-Muslims because the historians of the time concentrate on political events. But it does seem that the Turkish attitude was affected by that of the Caliph. We may note that when the Caliph Mutawakkil issued his edicts, in 235 and 239 H, concerning Ahl al-Dhimma, the Turks sided with the Caliph. For instance, they arrested wealthy Christians and seized their fortunes. They arrested Ibrāhīm b. Junaid al-Naṣrānī, one of the secretaries of state, and beat and tortured him, only releasing him when <sup>(87)</sup> he gave them 70,000 dinārs. But historians give many details which show that the Turks, among them the military leaders, employed many Non-Muslims, as secretaries and in charge of their financial affairs. This was partly because the Turks had amassed huge fortunes and were unable to manage them themselves. It was said that Itākh al-Turki appointed Qudāma <sup>(88)</sup> b. Zaid al-Naṣrānī as his secretary. Bughā al-Sharābi (al-Ṣaghīr)

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(83) Tanūkhī, Jām'i al-Tawārīkh, vol.8, p.145

(84) Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'a, vol.1, p.94

(85) Qiftī, p.175, Ibn al-'Ibarī, p.144

(86) Qiftī, p.171

(87) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1378

(88) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1386

appointed Dalīl b. Ya'qūb al-Naṣrānī as his secretary. Historians remark that Dalīl came to have great influence, which he exerted indirectly through the influence of his master Bughā (89). As a further example, Bāghir al-Turki (90) had a Jewish secretary. The Turks also took on many Ahl al-Dhimma as their personal physicians (91). Some of these doctors they employed at various times as assassins, and the Caliph Muntaṣir was one so assassinated (92).

In conclusion, we note that the 'Abbāsid Caliphs' treatment of Ahl al-Dhimma was good in general, and that they desired to practise religious tolerance, to be just and to deal fairly with them. The Caliphs employed them in various government offices. During the reign of Mu'tadid (279-289 H) and the reign of Muqtadir (295-320 H), Ahl al-Dhimma occupied some high positions (93). It was said that when the Wazīr Ibn al-Furāt appointed Mālik b. Walīd al-Naṣrānī as chief of Diwān al-Jaish (the register of the army) (94), the people castigated him and were resentful. The Wazīr defended himself by saying that he was only imitating previous Caliphs who had also used Ahl al-Dhimma in the offices of state.

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(89) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.318

(90) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1535

(91) Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'a, vol.2, pp.92, 93

(92) See Chapter Four p.

(93) Tritton, The Caliphs and their Non-Muslim subjects, p.23

(94) Ṣābī, al-Wuzarā', p.109

## Chapter Six

### A Survey of the Political Movements in the Provinces

1. The Popular Movement in the Centre of the Caliphate
2. Ḥijāz
3. Armenia
4. Syria
5. The Appearance of the Ṭāhirīds

## A Survey of the Political Movements in the Provinces

Many aspects of the Turkish domination and influence in the 'Abbāsid state proved a great threat to the Caliphate. It seems the Turks were not satisfied with what they had attained, but interfered with the appointment and dethroning of the Caliphs. They used various methods to force the Caliphs to abdicate and engaged in assassination and torture. According to Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa<sup>(1)</sup>, "The Turks dominated the state after they had murdered the Caliph Mutawakkil. So the Caliph became as captive in their hands. When they wished they let him live, when they wished they dethroned him and when they wished they killed him". As a result of these conditions, government authority became weak, particularly in those outlying regions furthest from its power and influence. The unity of the people was destroyed, because the dignity of the Caliphate which united the people and gave them power vanished. Therefore, popular movements and attempts to gain independence emerged in many regions. In fact, most of those movements did not rise against the Caliphate itself, but against foreign elements such as the Turks who dominated affairs of state.

### 1. The Popular movement in the centre of the Caliphate

Baghdad was unsettled after the news which emerged from Marū (capital of Khurāsān) that the Caliph Ma'mūn had issued an order to appoint a member

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(1) Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.243

(2)

of the 'Alawī family, one 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā, in 201 H, as heir apparent .  
 The dissenting reaction of the Baghdadis which was led by Banū Hāshim ('Abbāsīd family) was vigorous, because they feared that their authority would be transferred entirely to the 'Alawīs and finally they might lose the Caliphate. Therefore, they agitated in Baghdad showing their feeling and objection against that appointment. They announced that they had installed Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdi as Caliph in Baghdad and gave him the title of al-Mubārak, in 202 H .  
 (3)

When the Caliph Ma'mūn knew about the unsettled state of affairs in Baghdad and that the people there did not recognize him as the rightful Caliph, he

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(2) Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.217 and Dhahabi, vol.1, p.332 mention that the Caliph Ma'mūn noticed that 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā was the most preferable and religious among the Alawīs and 'Abbāsīds. But the historian Rifā'i, vol.1, p.265, says of that appointment, "Perhaps, the Caliph Ma'mūn's opinion was affected by the opinion of his Wazīr Faḍl b. Saḥil who advised him that such an appointment was the best way to settle all the 'Alawī revolts." Although this opinion seems reasonable, we cannot ignore the considerable evidence that the Caliph Ma'mūn was quite sympathetic towards the 'Alawīs for when he was asked the cause for appointing 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā as his successor, he replied that "'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib when he became the Caliph, looked upon Banū 'l-'Abbās kindly. He appointed 'Abdallah as the governor of Basrah, 'Ubaidullah as the governor of Yaman and Quthim as the governor of Samarqnd. I never saw one of my family (Banū 'l-'Abbās) during their reigns requite 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib for what he had done (for the 'Abbāsīds), so now I requite him". See Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.219.

(3) See Chapter Four, p. 71-72

decided to move to Baghdad to regain his authority over the Baghdadis and to restore the power of his family, Āl 'l-'Abbās who were the rightful rulers in Baghdad. As a result, he deposed his heir 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Ridā from his position before he came to Baghdad, in 204 H. The Caliph did that as the first attempt to quell the discontent of the Baghdadis and 'Abbāsīd family. On the other hand, as soon as the Caliph arrived in Baghdad he ordered a return to wearing black instead of green clothes <sup>(4)</sup>. Therefore, the situation in Baghdad became more stable and peaceful; and the Baghdadis became loyal and obedient to the new Caliph, particularly when Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī gave up his claim to the throne and disappeared.

In the years which followed, Baghdad faced other rebellions when the Baghdadis expressed their resentment and dissatisfaction towards the government's policy and especially the increasing number of Turks and the privileges which Mu'taṣim gave to them. In fact, the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs brought the Turks to the centre of the Caliphate. Their purpose behind that policy could have been to serve the state, and to use them against the enemies of the state, because they were brave in war. In addition, however, it might have been to create a new balance of power between 'Arabs and Iranians as was mentioned above. In fact, that step would have been successful if the Caliphs after Ma'mūn had been able to control the Turks. But unfortunately the Caliphs who came after Ma'mūn, particularly the Caliph Mu'taṣim favoured the Turkish element too much, and unwisely increased their numbers and privileges. Their nomadic character and rough manner created many troubles for the people of Baghdad. The people indeed suffered greatly at the hands of the Turks in Baghdad, because when they rode their horses in the streets and markets, they

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(4) It was said that the Caliph issued his decision after having been eight days in Baghdad. See Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1037, Ibn al-Taṭṭaqa, p.219

hit the old men, the blind and children quite callously. Therefore, the Baghdadis complained of their suffering to the Caliph Mu'taṣim<sup>(5)</sup> and the Caliph decided to remove all his Turks from Baghdad. He established Sāmarrā',<sup>(6)</sup> in 221 H, and moved there with his Turks. It was said that Mu'taṣim in his later years expressed regret that he had used the Turks and relied on them<sup>(7)</sup>. It was too late to correct his mistake, however, because he was conscious that the Turks formed a great power in the 'Abbāsid army. So the Baghdadis expressed their resentment towards the Turks and their master,<sup>(8)</sup> Mu'taṣim, and looked for an opportunity to revolt against them, and show their feeling.

After the murder of Mutawakkil by the Turks, in 247 H, the people were angry, particularly the Baghdadis who voiced their disapproval of that crime. Twenty thousand of them assembled in Baghdad; they agitated, and then, they went to the Wazīr 'Ubaidullah b. Yahya b. Khāqān and asked his permission to attack the Turks and avenge the Caliph<sup>(9)</sup>. But it seems the Wazīr refused their request, because he feared for the life of Mu'tazz who was at that time in the hands of the Turks and would certainly have been killed by them. As a result of all this the new Caliph Muntaṣir who had joined with the Turks in the murder of his father, sent some troops to disperse the outraged Baghdadis. Muntaṣir's soldiers, by the use of force suppressed the rebels, and killed six of them<sup>(10)</sup>.

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(5) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1181, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.236, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.231

(6) See Chapter Four, p.79

(7) See Chapter Two, p. 29

(8) Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, (see Turkistan)

(9) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1463, 1479, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.303

(10) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1479, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.306

In 248 H, the Turks disagreed with Muntaşir, and killed him in the sixth month of his reign. Afterwards, they decided to install Musta'in as Caliph. But it seems that that appointment was not acceptable to certain Turkish military leaders, nor to some of the civilian population<sup>(11)</sup>. So those people expressed their protest by agitating and demanding the appointment of Mu'tazz instead of Musta'in. In fact, their demonstration lasted for three days, in the course of which, the agitators were involved in clashes with the supporters of Musta'in. Accordingly, those Turks who sided with Musta'in decided to kill Mu'tazz and his brother Mu'ayyad who had been put in jail at that time in an attempt to quell the disturbance. But Ahmad b. al-Khasib, the leader of the Turkish faction who supported Musta'in and who held political sway among them at the time, while maintaining that "Those (Mu'tazz and Mu'ayyad) were innocent", advised, "but retain them in jail". He succeeded in convincing his faction<sup>(12)</sup>. Finally, the supporters of Musta'in succeeded in suppressing the rebels and appointed Musta'in as Caliph<sup>(13)</sup>.

The popular rebellions which broke out, in 249 H, in Baghdad and Samarra' were considered as dangerous movements against Turkish domination, the Turks' murder of the Caliphs, and their appointment of Caliphs as they pleased without care or respect of the religion or the affairs of Muslims.<sup>(14)</sup> It was said that the people crowded in Baghdad. They shouted for a

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(11) Tabari, vol.12, p.1503, Ya'qubi, vol.3, p.18, Ibn al-Athir, vol.5, p.311

(12) Tabari, vol.12, p.1507-8, Ibn al-Athir, vol.5, p.312

(13) Tabari, vol.12, p.1503-5, Ibn al-Athir, vol.5, p.311-12

(14) The majority of them were 'Arabs and Iranians. They had inhabited Baghdad since it was established by Abu Ja'far al-Mansur, in 145 H. See Ya'qubi, al-Buldan, pp.235, 240, 241, 244-248, 250, 252, El-'Ali, The Foundation of Baghdad (The Islamic City), pp.96-8, Ashtor, A Social and Economic History of the Near East in the Middle Ages, pp.87, 90



general call to arms, then they stormed the jail and burst it open. Then destroyed two bridges by setting fire to them, then they went to the armoury (Bait al-Silāh) and took all that they found there (15).

At the same time the non-Turkish people in Sāmarrā' (16) were encouraged by the Baghdadis, and there followed another insurrection in the city. They also stormed the jail and freed the prisoners. Then they attacked the houses of the Turkish population (17). In fact, during those events we notice that a remarkable feature appears; some military divisions, particularly the 'Arab divisions such as Maghāriba (18) joined the rebels and supported their movements against the Turks, because the Turks had dominated the affairs of state and murdered certain Caliphs and assaulted the dignity of the Caliphate. For example, the leaders of Maghāriba expressed their resentment towards the Turks during the negotiation between themselves and the Turks as follows, "Everyday you are killing one Caliph and dethroning another, then you kill the Wazīr and appoint another" (19). The two sides were involved in many battles. The civilian people and the Maghāriba who were under the leadership of Muḥammad b. Rāshid and Naṣr b. Sa'īd had had their triumphs over the Turks, despite their enemies being led by famous Turkish military leaders such as Waṣīf, Autāmish and Bughā al-Ṣaghīr. In the course of these battles Waṣīf was almost killed, and in fact was seriously wounded (20).

However, when the Turks realized that they were unable to win, they took

(15) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1510-11, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.311-13, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.3

(16) Ya'qūbi, al-Buldān, pp.259, 261

(17) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.181

(18) See Chapter Two, p. 29

(19) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1680-81

(20) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1511, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, pp.311, 313

refuge in strategic negotiations with the opposite side. Accordingly, both sides agreed to sign a treaty after the Turks consented to the Maghāribā joining them in managing the affairs of state <sup>(21)</sup>. This change of strategy was entirely in the interests of the Turks. When they felt that they were strong enough after uniting under the leadership of Baikabāk, they arrested the Magharibian leaders and killed them, and then they used force to quell the rebellious civilian people. After that, the Turks recovered their influence again.

In addition, there were other movements which were created by the civilian people against the Turkish domination. It was said that, in 255 H, the resentful people agitated in Baghdad after the Turks had killed the Caliph Mu'tazz. They attacked the house of the ruler of Baghdad, Sulaimān b. 'Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir believing that he had cooperated with the Turks and that he had had a hand in the murder of the Caliph. But unfortunately their insurrection was quickly and easily suppressed <sup>(22)</sup>, due to the fact that, compared with the Turks, the civilian people were an irregular and inexperienced force.

All these revolts which had occurred in Baghdad and Sāmarrā', were in the final analysis caused by the Turks' ruthless ambition to dominate the state and by their blatant disregard of the Caliphate. These revolts in turn paved the way for other uprisings which took place in other parts of the state.

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(21) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1512. 1515, 1680-1681, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.333-334, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.616

(22) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1714-15, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.343, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.624-25

## 2. Hijāz

Among the 'Arabs who inhabited the Hijāz, almost all the tribes of Northern and Southern 'Arabia were represented. There were Qais, Tamīm, Ḥamdān, Kindah, Madhḥij, Muḍar, Rabī'a, Banū 'Uqail, Banū Numair, Banū Salīm and others. During the Umayyad period the 'Arab tribesmen and their chiefs acquired influential positions in the state, because of the policy of the Umayyad Caliphs who favoured the 'Arabs. Therefore, the highest posts in the administration and military had been occupied by them <sup>(23)</sup>. However, this policy was changed, in 132 H, when the 'Abbāsids came to power. Instead of relying on the 'Arabs alone, they also gave non-'Arabs administrative and military posts such as the Vizirate. It seems to be the case that the 'Abbāsids were endeavouring to establish a balance of power between various elements. This new policy which was being used by the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs did not satisfy all the 'Arabs, and certain of the tribes expressed their disapproval of the policy of the central government. During the reign of Manṣūr, the Banū Numair created disturbances in the Hijāz, and showed their resentment, but they were quickly brought under control. This might have been the cause of the Caliph Manṣūr's command to his governors, including his son Mahdī, not to employ anyone of the Banū Numair <sup>(24)</sup>. Nevertheless, the Caliph Manṣūr favoured the other 'Arab tribes and employed them in <sup>(25)</sup> the various offices of state.

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(23) Ḥaideri, Makānt 'L-'Arab wa-Nfudhihm fī al-'Asr al-'Abbāsi al-Awwal, p.189 (Majallat Adab al-Rafidaiyn).

(24) Ṭabarī, vol.10, p.444, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.43

(25) Omar, The composition of 'Abbāsīd support, p.162, Ḥaideri, Makānt 'l-'Arab, p.193

However, during the reign of Mu'taṣim the resentment of the 'Arabs towards the central government increased, because the Caliph gathered about him a large number of Turks and then relied on them. He appointed them to the various military and administrative posts, and then distinguished them from the other races by awarding them gold-decorated belts. Nevertheless, the historians never mention any 'Arab insurrection breaking out during the reign of Mu'taṣim. This was perhaps due, on the one hand, to the strong personality of Mu'taṣim which had been demonstrated while he was a prince (26) and later a Caliph, and on the other hand, to the fact that the 'Arabs during his period were concentrating on preparing themselves for future fighting. When the Caliph Wathīq came to power, more Turks than ever before succeeded in obtaining high positions in the state, because the Caliph was weak-willed unlike his father Mu'taṣim (27). The 'Arabs realized that this was a suitable time to revolt against the central government which sided with the Turks. These Turks were described by the 'Arabs of the Ḥijāz as the slaves (ʿAbīd) and savages (Uḷūj) of the state (28). The 'Arabs of the Banū Salīm (29) created a series of disturbances around Madina, taking advantage

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(26) When Mu'taṣim was a prince during the reign of his brother Ma'mūn, he led the 'Abbāsid troops in order to suppress the revolt of the Egyptians. Then, during his reign as Caliph, he led the 'Abbāsid troops in order to conquer Amorion, as mentioned above.

(27) Michel Le Syrien, Chroniqu, vol.3, p.113

(28) They expressed this feeling to Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Ja'fari, the representative of the Caliph Wāthiq, when he was sent, in 232 H, to investigate the causes of the 'Arab disturbances in Ḥijāz. See Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1359

(29) They were descended from Salīm b. Manṣūr b. 'Ayyilān. They inhabited the Najd area near Khaibar. See Ibn Ḥazm, Jamharat Ansāb al-'Arab, p.261, Kaḥḥāla, Mu'jam Qabā'il al-'Arab, vol.2, p.543

of a central government which had been weakened by the domination of the Turks. The Banū Salīm, for instance, would demonstrate their disapproval of and contempt for the government by forcing stallholders to sell them goods at whatever price they cared to buy, and then by ignoring or killing any legal authorities who tried to stop them. In addition, they attacked other tribes that disagreed with their attitudes, particularly those which cooperated with the government (such as the Bāhila and the Banū Kināna) and they killed some of their men. The governor of Madīna, Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ, sent troops led by Ḥammād b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī to suppress them, and Ḥammād was involved in many battles with/ but later his troops were utterly defeated and the rebels killed him.

Afterwards, in order to challenge the authority of the central government, the Banū Salīm proclaimed their leader 'Azīza b. Qaṭṭāb Caliph<sup>(30)</sup>. This challenge constituted a serious threat to the Caliphate in Sāmarrā' and therefore the Caliph Wāthiq mobilized a huge army led by Bughā al-Kabīr in order to suppress their insurrection. The troops arrived in the Ḥijāz in Sha'bān 230 H, and engaged in battle with the rebels who were led by 'Azīza. After a series of battles, the Banū Salīm were defeated, although it was said that they had had the upper hand at the beginning. Their leader 'Azīza was killed and about one thousand men were captured and jailed in Madīna<sup>(31)</sup>. After that, Bughā al-Kabīr marched towards the Banū Hilāl<sup>(32)</sup>.

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(30) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1335, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.169-70, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.270, Abū al-Maḥāsīn, vol.2, p.257, Kaḥḥāla, vol.2, p.545

(31) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1335, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.270, Abū al-Maḥāsīn, vol.2, p.262, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.574

(32) They<sup>were</sup>/descended from Hilāl b. 'Uamīr b. Mu'awiyya. They inhabited the Ḥijāz and Najd around Makka and some areas of Tā'if. See Ibn Ḥazm, p.273, Kaḥḥāla, vol.3, p.1221

who supported the Banū Salīm. It seems, however, that they realized that they had insufficient forces to fight him, and therefore they sued for peace and gave up their revolt against the government, at the same time giving him three hundred men as hostages. Then he interned them at Madīna<sup>(33)</sup>. In the following year, 231 H, the tribes of Fizāra<sup>(34)</sup> and Banū Murra<sup>(35)</sup> rose in insurrection in the Najd and the Hījāz and there they occupied Fadak<sup>(36)</sup>. As a result the caliphal troops led by Bughā al-Kabīr, marched towards them and fought them. The rebels escaped towards Syria, and Bughā pursued them there. He is said to have stayed forty days in Haifā by which time he had captured most of them, and then came back to Madīna<sup>(37)</sup>. There were other tribes (such as the Ghaṭfān<sup>(38)</sup>, the Ashja'<sup>(39)</sup>

(33) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1335, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.270, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.574

(34) They were descended from Fizāra b. Dhibiyān b. Ghaṭfān. They inhabited the Najd and the valley of Qurā. See Ibn Ḥazm, p.255, Kaḥḥāla, vol.3, p.918

(35) They were descended from Murra b. 'Aūff b. Dhibiyān. See Ibn Ḥazm, p.252, Kaḥḥāla, vol.3, p.1072

(36) Fadak was an ancient and small town in the northern Hījāz, near Khaibar and two or three days' journey from Madīna. The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol.2, p.725

(37) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1342, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.272, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.575

(38) They were descended from Ghaṭfān b. Qais b. 'Adnān. They inhabited the Najd. See Kaḥḥāla, vol.3, p.888

(39) They were descended from Ashja' b. Raith b. 'Uyyilān. See Ibn Ḥazm, p.249, Kaḥḥāla, vol.1, p.29

(40)  
and the Tha'laba ) who also sued for peace after they realized that they could not successfully confront the caliphal troops. Bughā made them swear on oath to keep the peace in future, and to give their allegiance to the central government (41). After that, Bughā marched against the Banū Kilāb (42) who then sued for peace as well. It was said that Bughā accepted their entreaty, but that he took one thousand men from them as hostages, and then he interned them in Madīna (43).

(44)  
In 232 H, the 'Arabs of the Banū Numair rebelled against the central government. They began a series of disruptive acts, (such as blocking the roads) particularly in the Yamāma area and its surrounds. The Caliph Wāthiq ordered his leader Bughā al-Kabīr to march against them and to quell them. Bughā moved from Madīna in Ṣufar 232 H, then he engaged the rebels in many battles, in one of which Bughā was defeated and almost killed. He therefore appealed for assistance from Wājin al-Ashrūsni who was at that time fighting in another area. Wājin joined Bughā, and together they were able to restore the fortunes of the caliphal troops, which had been brought low. After this they were successful in compelling most of the rebels to flee to the Yaman,

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were  
(40) They/descended from Tha'laba b. Bahtha b. 'Ukrama. See Kaḥḥāla, vol.1, p.143

(41) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1342, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.272, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.575

were  
(42) They/descended from Kilāb b. Rabī'a b. 'Uamīr. They inhabited the area around Madīna and Fadak. See Ibn Ḥazm, p.282, Kaḥḥāla, vol.3, p.989

(43) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1343, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.272, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3 part 3, p.575

were  
(44) They/descended from Numair b. 'Uamīr b. Ṣ'a Ṣ'aa. They inhabited the Najd. It was said that they had had an influential position both before and after the rise of Islam. See Ibn Ḥazm, p.279, Kaḥḥāla, vol.3, p.1195

while the remainder sued for peace. Bughā accepted their petition, but took eight hundred men from them as hostages and interned them in Madīna<sup>(45)</sup>. After the Caliphal troops had suppressed all the disturbances which had been created by the 'Arab tribes in the Ḥijāz, they returned to Sāmarrā'<sup>(46)</sup> with their hostages, who amounted to two thousand and two hundred men. The tribes which had been forced to submit to the central government continued to be set against it, and seized any chance of further revolt. When a civil war started in 251 H, between Mu'tazz and his adherents and Musta'in and his adherents, the tribes took advantage of this absence of law and order and rebelled again in their provinces. For instance, the 'Arabs of the Banū 'Uqail<sup>(47)</sup> rose up, in 251 H, in the Najd. They blocked the road between Makka and Jidda, and the governor of Makka, Ja'far b. Fadl, sent his troops to quell them and to re-open the road which was under their control. His troops were defeated, however, and he was compelled to flee to save his life. The rebels then occupied Makka itself. In order to restore the sovereignty of the Caliphate in that area the Caliph Musta'in<sup>(48)</sup> decided to mobilize his troops under the leadership of Abū al-Ṣāj. It was said that after considerable efforts the caliphal troops succeeded in suppressing the revolt, and many of the rebels were captured.

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(45) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1357, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.276

(46) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1363, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.576

(47) They were descended from 'Uqail b. Ka'ab b. 'Uamir b. Ṣ'a ṣ'aa, and their original area was the Baḥrain. Kaḥḥāla, vol.2, p.801

(48) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1594, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.183. Abū al-Ṣāj was a Turkish general and a native of Ashrūsna. He had been served by the Caliph Mutawakkil to fight the 'Alawīs in Ḥijāz. See The Encyclopedia of Islām, vol.1, p.103



Despite all their revolts, the 'Arab tribes of the Ḥijāz were finally brought under the control of the central government. Yet the rebels had succeeded in alerting the Caliphate in Sāmarrā' to the exceptionally serious problems caused by Turkish domination of the affairs of state and of their over-privileged position. The Caliphs of this period, therefore, devoted themselves to putting an end to Turkish interference. This the Caliph Mu'tamid finally succeeded in doing when he decided to remove the leadership of the 'Abbāsīd army from the hands of the Turks and to return it to the 'Abbāsids. He appointed his brother Mawaffaq as the general of the whole 'Abbāsīd army, and gradually removed the privileges which had been given to the Turks. In addition, he moved the centre of the Caliphate from Sāmarrā' to Baghdad.

### 3. Armenia

Armenia came under the control of the Islamic state after Islamic troops had raided it during the Rāshīdī period. Most of the population of Armenia were Christian, and most of them were ruled by Christian families (such as the Bagratuni or Bagratids)<sup>(49)</sup>. The Armenians paid tribute (Jizyah) to the central government in return for the protection and security which

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(49) See Balādhuri, p.217, Bābū Ishāq, Tarīkh Naṣārā al-'Irāq, p.62, Aḥwāl Naṣārā Baghdad, p.45, The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol.2, pp.636, 637, 642

(50)  
it gave them in accordance with Islamic law .

A further segment of the population was constituted by the many 'Arab warriors who had participated in the conquest of Armenia and had decided to settle there with their families (51) . This seems to have been encouraged by the Caliphs, who offered them estates (52) . The policy of frontier settlement was in fact aimed at keeping some troops permanently in frontier regions in order to be ready to face a sudden attack by the Byzantines, or local disturbances, should either of these occur (53) . During the 'Abbāsid period, particularly during the domination of the Turks, there were many disturbances and rebellions in various regions of Armenia. These came as result of the strict enforcement of taxes, and especially when the tax-collection was backed by force (54) . The 'Arabs often united with the Armenians, because of their objection to the central government's policy of favouring the Turks and giving them more privileges than the 'Arabs.

A further cause of unrest was that some local 'Arab governors discriminated unfairly in favour of their own tribes and tribesmen. Such discrimination created discontent with the central government. Therefore, there

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(50) Abū Yūsuf, p.122, Balādhuri, pp.205, 208, The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol.2, p.636

(51) The 'Arab settlers descended from famous 'Arab tribes such as the Qais and Yaman. See Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.130, The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol.2, p.643

(52) This policy had been used by the first 'Umayyad Caliph Mu'awiyya b. Abī Suffiyyān, who gave estates in frontier regions to Muslim soldiers, who then served as true military colonists. See Ashtor, A Social and Economic History, p.62

(53) Balādhuri, p.205

(54) Balādhuri, p.208

was support for any rebellion which occurred in Armenia<sup>(55)</sup>. However, the relations between the central government and the people of Armenia in general were tense. The people either ceased obeying the new local governor who had been appointed by the central government, or refused to pay taxes,<sup>(56)</sup> just as they had refused during the reign of Mu'taṣim<sup>(57)</sup>. In fact, this challenge towards central and local government increased. The 'Arabs rebelled against the governemnt and threatened it. According to Ya'qūbī<sup>(57)</sup> the authority of the Caliphate over the people of that area diminished. Although the caliphal troops were able finally to suppress this movement, it seems to have paved the way for other movements.

In 237 H, during the reign of Mutawakkil the Armenians revolted under the leadership of their chief Bagrāṭ b. Ashūṭ, supported by dissatisfied 'Arabs<sup>(58)</sup>. It seems that the real cause of this was the way taxes had been strictly enforced by local governors<sup>(59)</sup>. So the Caliph put his troops under the leadership of Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Marūzī, but his troops are/to have been<sup>said</sup> defeated at the outset and he was killed<sup>(60)</sup>. Seemingly, the government troops

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(55) There is considerable evidence that the Caliph Manṣūr wrote to his governor in Armenia whom the Caliph deposed after he had been unable to suppress the local insurrection there, "Leave your office in disgrace. If you had acted wisely, the people would not have revolted". See Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.48

(56) Balādhurī, p.218, Hamadhānī, p.294

(57) Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.170

(58) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1408, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.176

(59) Balādhurī, p.218, Frye, The golden age of Persia, p.105-106

(60) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1408-1409

faced a severe winter there and not being used to that kind of weather, suffered defeat. It is also possible that the rebels had extensive connexions with the chiefs of the adjacent Caucasian regions, and that they (61) relied on their support for their cause .

Accordingly, the Caliph sent his Turkish leader, Bughā al-Sharābi (62) (al-Saghīr) , who was able after arduous efforts to kill thirty thousand rebels and to capture many. He then conquered their chief city, Dabīl. Afterwards, Bugha marched towards Tiflis which was inhabited by the 'Arabs who had supported the Armenians. He ordered that the city be set on fire and killed the 'Arab leader Ishāq b. Ismā'īl. When Bughā had finished these (63) tasks he returned to Sāmarrā' in 241 H with the captives .

There was a minor rising of the Armenians during the reign of Musta'in in (64) 249 H . They rose again, on a larger scale, during the second civil war (65) in 251 H, taking advantage of the lack of law and order caused by this war. These revolts, however, were quickly brought under control, because the rebels did not get any support from the population as they had hitherto.

To summarize, we have seen above that all the rebellions begun by the Armenians and the 'Arabs against the central government came as a result of their discontent with the local governors' unfair discrimination against them,

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(61) Sh'abān, Islamic History, p.78

(62) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1410 (But Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.176, Balādhurī, p.219, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.288-89, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, <sup>part 3,</sup> p.284 mention that the leader was Bughā al-Kabīr)

(63) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1410, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.176-77, Balādhurī, p.218-19, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.291-92 Ibn al-'Ibārī, p.142-43

(64) Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.181

(65) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1584

and more seriously, because of the fact that taxes were to be levied from them by force if necessary. So these policies were widely resisted and when they were vigorously imposed insurrections resulted throughout the whole of Armenia. These happenings in Armenia all contributed to the further weakening of the central government.

#### 4. Syria

Syria became the centre of the Islamic state, when the Umayyads established their state in 41 H. The Umayyad Caliphs adopted a policy of relying mainly on 'Arabs for administrative and military positions. (66)  
'Arabs and non-Muslims were both employed and worked side by side in administrative positions and as doctors in hospitals. As translators of the registers of the state (Diwāns), the Caliphs employed mainly non-Muslims (67). After the 'Abbāsids came to power, in 132 H, they instituted a policy completely at odds with former Umayyad policy. First of all they

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(66) The non-Muslims were mainly 'Arabs, and these belonged to a variety of 'Arab tribes. There were also non-Muslims who had descended from other races.

See Ya'qūbī, al-Buldan, p.324, Balādhurī, pp.127, 136, Ashtor, pp.90, 91

(67) During the reign of 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwan, 65-86 H, the Caliph decided to translate all the registers of state Diwāns. Jahshiyari, p.40, Ibn al-Taḡṭṭaqa, p.122, Ḥasan, al-Tarikh al-Islami al-'Aām, p.512-13.

(68)  
 moved the central Caliphate entirely to Iraq . Next, during the beginning of their rule, they used certain Iranians whom they employed in high posts of state (such as the Vizirate)<sup>(69)</sup> .

The 'Arabs, particularly the 'Arabs of Syria, resented these changes. They often expressed their resentment to the authorities. For instance, it was said that when the Caliph Ma'mūn passed through Syria to fight the Byzantines, he stopped there in order to rest and to prepare for battle. The 'Arabs therefore met with him and explained their position, saying, "Oh Amīr al-Mu'minīn, look after the 'Arabs of al-Shām as you look after the Iranians"<sup>(70)</sup> .

As a result of the government ignoring the Arab desires, the 'Arabs in Syria expressed their distress and rebelled against the central government. They rose in great insurrections in 132 H and 190 H, during the reign of al-Saffāh<sup>(71)</sup> and al-Rashīd<sup>(72)</sup> . When Ma'mūn succeeded to the throne, the 'Arabs

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(68) The first 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Saffāh had lived at the palace called Hashimiyah (after the ancestor of his race), which he had built beside the old Persian city of Anbār on the eastern side of the Euphrates. At this Hashimiyah (of Anbār) the Caliph al-Saffāh died in 136 H; and his brother Manṣūr, shortly after succeeding to the throne, began to build for himself another residence called by the same name (Hashimiyah). Finally, Manṣūr took a permanent dislike to Hashimiyah after the insurrection of the Rawandis. He therefore decided, in 145 H, to found a new city. This was Baghdad. See Le Strange, Baghdad during the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, pp.5, 6, 15

(69) Hamadhānī, p.315, Ibn al-Taḡṭaqa, p.153

(70) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.227

(71) Ṭabarī, vol.10, p.53

(72) Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.132. It was said that the Caliph Rashīd led his own troops in suppressing that revolt.

revolted again under the leadership of Naṣr b. Shubth al-'Uqailī. After considerable effort on the part of the government's troops, the revolt was barely contained <sup>(73)</sup>. During the reign of Mu'taṣim the 'Arabs became still more resentful, particularly when they noticed that the Caliph relied on the Turks and favoured them. They began to worry about their declining prestige and this led to a number of revolts. In 227 H, the Qaisi tribes rebelled in Damascus under the leadership of Ibn Bayhas al-Kilābī, because the governor of the city had insulted them and then executed fifteen of their men. Their rebellion continued until the reign of Wāthiq who sent against them a massive force of troops led by Rajā' b. Ayyūb al-Ḥaḍarī. Eventually, and only after much effort by the government's troops, the insurrection was put down, and Ibn Bayhas was arrested <sup>(74)</sup>. An important reason for the lack of success of the rebellions in Syria seems to have been the divisions between the 'Arab tribes and their poor cooperation, especially as regards the dealings of the Yamani and Qaisi tribes.

In 240 H, during the reign of Mutawakkil the 'Arabs rebelled in Ḥims. They seem to have wanted to restore their prestige and influence in that area.

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(73) Historians mention that Naṣr b. Shubth appeared as a leader in 196 H at the end of the reign of Amīn. His insurrection then continued during the reign of Ma'mūn. The Caliph charged his general Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusain and then Ṭāhir's son 'Abdallah with the suppression of the revolt. It was this latter who was able in 210 H to stop the rebellion and who captured Naṣr and sent him to the Caliph in Baghdad. See Ṭabarī, vol.11, pp.845, 975, 1043, 1045, 1067, 1072, 1073, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, pp.144, 152, 154, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, pp.207, 211

(74) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1322, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.169, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.267, Abū al-Fidā', vol.2, p.37, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.249

However, the rebels got the support of Christians <sup>(75)</sup> who were resentful of Mutawakkil's policy, initiated in 235 H, which had imposed many severe restrictions on Ahl al-Dhimma, among whom were Christians <sup>(76)</sup>. So the Christians united with the 'Arabs in their revolt. In the beginning the governor of Ḥims, Abū al-Mughith Mūsā b. Ibrāhīm al-Rāf'ī, arrested some of the rebels and executed one of them. However, this action on the part of the governor incited the rebellious elements to further vigorous activity inside the city. After defeating the local troops they took control of the city and expelled the governor al-Rāf'ī.

Al-Mutawakkil decided to replace al-Raf'i by Muḥammad b. 'Abdawayh in order to placate the rebels. But it seems that this step was not successful, <sup>(77)</sup> because the new governor was even more severe than the previous one. The rebels, therefore, continued resisting and challenging the government. Accordingly, in 241 H the Caliph asked the governor of Damascus (Ṣāliḥ al-Turki) to help Muḥammad b. 'Abdawayh to suppress the insurrection. Eventually, the troops successfully restored the authority of the central government. Afterwards, the governor Ibn 'Abdawayh punished and used much violence against the people, particularly the Christians, who had supported the rebels. In spite of this, the succeeding period seems to have been a quiet one, and yet the relationship between the central government and the 'Arab tribes in Syria remained tense. In fact, the relationship deteriorated, particularly

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(75) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1422, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.294-95, Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.323, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.586

(76) See Chapter Five, p. 107

(77) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1420-21, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.177, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.293, Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.319



when the Caliphs appointed Turkish military generals as governors of provinces of Syria. These governors, instead of going out to the provinces themselves, appointed their own deputies, most of them also Turkish, to go there and govern in their stead. It was these deputy governors who were very severe in their treatment of the local populations, with the result that the resentful people, taking advantage of the weakness of the Caliphate during the reign of Musta'in, rose in insurrection throughout the whole of Syria.

In 248 H, the people of Ḥimṣ revolted against the Turkish governor of their city, Kaidar b. 'Ubaidullah al-Ashrūsni. He fought them until, exhausted and seeing that further resistance was useless, he fled and left the city in the rebels' hands. The Caliph Musta'in then sent in troops under the leadership of Faḍl b. Qarin<sup>(78)</sup>, and after arduous efforts they were able to suppress the troubles. The Caliph therefore appointed him as governor of Ḥimṣ.

But in 250 H the people in Ḥimṣ reunified. They regained their strength with the help of the support of the 'Arab tribes, particularly the Banū Kalb tribes who were led by Ghaṭīf b. Na'mah al-Kalbi and Dābir b. 'Affār al-Kalbi. The rebels were later able to surround and capture the governor of the city, Faḍl b. Qarin, who was then executed. After that, they marched towards Damascus to remove its Turkish governor Nūshari b. Ṭājil al-Turki. They were able to defeat his troops; and he himself was killed. The rebels, as a gesture of challenge towards the central government, were said to have installed Ghaṭīf al-Kalbi as governor of Syria. In view of the dangerous situation which the central

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(78) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1508, Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.181, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.312, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.2, This general was the brother of the famous Mazyār b. Qarin who had revolted in Tabaristan during the reign of Mu'taṣim.

government was now facing, the Caliph dispatched an expedition under the leadership of his experienced general Mūsā b. Bughā al-Kabīr, which expedition successfully restored the power and authority of the Caliphate there<sup>(79)</sup>. In Būghā, moreover, in order to put a stop to all further disturbances and insurrections, decided as a next step to sweep all Syria with that purpose in mind. He therefore sent some military divisions to suppress the fresh insurrections which had been created by the 'Arab tribes in Qinnisrīn under the leadership of Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm al-Tanūkhī<sup>(80)</sup>, and also in Palestine under the leadership of 'Isā b. al-Shaikh al-Shaibānī, who supported the rebels of Syria<sup>(81)</sup>.

It seems, however, that with the outbreak of civil war between Musta'in and Mu'tazz, the authority of the Caliphate in the capital and in other regions deteriorated. The government troops who had been away from Iraq on military operations left their positions and returned posthaste when both Musta'in and Mu'tazz recalled them to enter the war on his side. Naturally, the course of events at this time was affected by the general conditions of civil war. Shortly afterwards, the Caliphate's policy towards the rebels altered and finally became submissive to their demands. It is possible that the Caliphate desired to get the support of the 'Arabs in order to restore its power. The Caliphate issued orders to appoint many 'Arab leaders as governors. Yūsuf al-Tanūkhī was appointed governor of Ladhqiah<sup>(82)</sup>, and 'Isā b. al-Shaikh governor of Armenia<sup>(83)</sup>.

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(79) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1533, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.182, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.218, Ibn Kathīr, vol.11, p.8

(80) Ya'qūbī, vol.3, pp.182, 184

(81) Ya'qūbī, vol.3, pp.184, 190, Abū al-Fidā', vol.2, p.46

(82) Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.182

(83) Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.190, Abū al-Fidā', vol.2, p.46

### 5. The Appearance of the Tāhirids

Historians mention that the Tāhirid family was originally Iranian (84).  
 But the recent work of Kaa'bi shows that it was originally from Basrah (85),  
 and therefore, because many 'Arab tribes lived in Basrah, it is a possibility  
 that the Tāhirids were originally of 'Arab stock. The first Tāhirid governor  
 of Khurāsān was Tāhir b. al-Ḥusain. His grandfather, Muṣ'ab b. Ruzaiq, played  
 a part in the 'Abbāsīd revolution in Khurāsān, acting as secretary to the  
 'Abbāsīd Da'i or propagandist Sulaimān b. Kathīr al-Khuzā'ī. At the beginning  
 of his career, Tāhir b. al-Ḥusain took up the post of governor of Pushang.  
 This was during the first civil war, in 195 H, between Mu'mūn and his  
 brother Amīn. Tāhir joined the side of Ma'mūn, and he led the troops which  
 attacked Baghdad in 198 H, overthrew the legal government and killed the  
 Caliph Amīn (86).

After Ma'mūn succeeded to the throne, he recognised his indebtedness to  
 Tahir and rewarded him with the title "Dhu 'l-Yamīnain" ("the man with two  
 right hands"). In addition, he appointed him as governor of Mosul, Jazirah,  
 Syria and Egypt, and then, in 204 H, as chief of Police (Shurṭa) in Baghdad.  
 However, this last appointment seems to be an indication that the Caliph  
 wanted to keep Tāhir far away from Khurāsān. The Caliph knew that Tāhir  
 had strong local support there. The evidence seems to show both that Tāhir

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(84) Tabarī, vol.11, p.1063, Bosworth, The Tāhirids and Saffārids (The  
 Cambridge History of Iran, vol.4, p.91), Barthold, Turkestan down to the  
Mongol Invasion, p.207-209

(85) Kaa'bi, Les Origines Tāhirids dans La Da'wa 'Abbāsīde, vol.19, p.148

(86) Tabarī, vol.11, p.911, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.141, Abū al-Maḥāsīn, vol.12,  
 p.183

was not content with what he had acquired, and that he may have feared that Ma'mūn would turn against him. He therefore sought the governorship of Khurāsān, which he finally attained through the good offices of the Wazīr Ahmad b. Abū Khālīd who recommended him for this position. It was said that when the Caliph expressed his suspicions about this appointment to his Wazīr, the Wazīr replied, "I will be responsible for him". So the Caliph accepted the appointment of Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusain in 205 H as governor of Khurāsān in addition to all his previous positions <sup>(87)</sup>.

After Ṭāhir went to Khurāsān to take up his governorship there, the Caliph appointed his son, 'Abdallah, to all the other positions his father had held, including the office of chief of police of Baghdad <sup>(88)</sup>. In turn, 'Abdallah appointed his cousin Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm as chief of Police and in charge of all A'māl of Baghdad <sup>(89)</sup>, and went to Egypt to take up his position there. Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm was to hold these offices for nearly thirty years.

Ṭāhir settled in Nisābūr which became his base and the centre of his rule. From the time he took up his position there, he tried to make his influence firmly felt throughout the whole of Khurāsān. It seems that he began to direct his efforts wholeheartedly towards attaining independence from Baghdad. In fact, there is considerable evidence that he began, in 206 H, to omit Ma'mūn's name from the Friday sermon. In view of all this, the Caliph Ma'mūn tried and finally succeeded in getting rid of him in 207 H. It was said that Ṭāhir was poisoned on the orders of Ibn Abī Khālīd,

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(87) Ṭabarī, vol.11, pp.975, 1039, Ya'qūbī, al-Buldān, p.307, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.196-97, Ibn al-Ṭaṭṭaqa, p.224, Shābushtī, p.146

(88) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1045, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.197

(89) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1062

the Wazīr, who was concerned to vindicate his reputation with the Caliph now that the man whom he had personally recommended for office had proved  
(90)  
a rebel and a traitor .

Although, the Caliph had been alert to the ambitions of Ṭāhir, he did not hesitate to appoint Ṭāhir's son, Ṭalḥah, as governor of Khurāsān  
(91)  
after the death of his father . Ṭalḥah held his office from 207-213 H. It seems that the influence of the Ṭāhirids was firmly entrenched in that area, and the Caliph probably thought that if he tried to remove the Ṭāhirids from their position it might create fresh disturbances. Furthermore, the Caliph would be mindful of the great services which they had rendered to the central government in suppressing various insurrections which had flared  
(92)  
up against government authority . In point of fact, none of the subsequent Ṭāhirids tried to emulate the late Ṭāhir; all of them behaved circumspectly and with great correctness towards the Caliphs. Thus the Ṭāhirids gave up their separatist idea; they made efforts to cooperate with the central government, and recognized its authority in the eastern part of the state. We can see how loyal the Ṭāhirids were by the following example. The Caliph Ma'mūn, in order to test out their fidelity, sent a man to try to persuade 'Abdallah b . Ṭāhir (who ruled Khurāsān after the death of his brother Ṭalḥah from 213 to 230 H), to make Khurāsān an entirely independent state and to give support to the 'Alawīs. 'Abdallah firmly refused and said indignantly, "How can you ask me to do that and to betray the Caliph who

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(90) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1064, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.224, Shābushtī, p.147-48, Abū al-Maḥāsīn, vol.2, p.183

(91) Ya'qūbī, al-Buldān, p.307

(92) Ṭabarī, vol.11, pp.845, 1043, 1073, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, pp.144, 152, 154, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, pp.207, 211, Bosworth, The Ṭāhirids and Saffārids, vol.4, pp.97, 99

(93)  
 gave me everything . So 'Abdallah remained as ruler of Khurāsān throughout the whole reign of Ma'mūn, Mu'taṣim and Wāthiq. In addition, he held the provinces of Rayy, Tabaristān and Kirmān, and was administrator of the Sawad of Iraq and military commander in Baghdad (Walī al-Ḥarb Wa 'L-Shurta) through his deputy Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm. 'Abdallah had been high in Ma'mūn's favour. According to Ṭabarī, before his death the Caliph recommended 'Abdallah to his successor Mu'taṣim saying, "Confirm 'Abdallah b. Ṭāhir in his position and increase the grants made to him, and treat him kindly"<sup>(94)</sup> . As a result, the Ṭāhirids gradually became very influential and acquired great power in their own area, and in the caliphal court. It came to be seen as impossible that the Ṭāhirids could be removed from their position as rulers of Khurāsān. Their power was firmly established and their offices became hereditary. The Caliph Ma'mūn himself was responsible for this, for we know that he supported the Ṭāhirids by giving them great wealth in order to strengthen their regime<sup>(95)</sup> .

After the death of 'Abdallah b. Ṭāhir in 230 H, the Caliph Wāthiq appointed 'Abdallah's son Ṭāhir as governor of Khurāsān. Ṭāhir governed from 230-248 H, remaining in his position during the reign of Wāthiq, Mutawakkil, Muntaṣir and the beginning of the reign of Musta'in<sup>(96)</sup> . In fact, Ṭāhir b. 'Abdallah's just rule and personal virtues are praised by the historians in the same glowing terms as those employed to describe his father, and Ya'qūbī states that, "He governed Khurāsān in an upright manner

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(93) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1094-95, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.213-14

(94) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1139

(95) Dhahabi, vol.1, p.101 mentions that the Caliph Ma'mūn granted 'Abdallah b. Ṭāhir 500,000 dinārs when he appointed him as governor of Khurāsān.

(96) Ya'qūbī, al-Buldān, p.307

(97)  
 (Walī Mustaqīm 'l-A'mr)". So much so that, after his death in 248 H in accordance with Tāhir's own last will and testament (Wasiya), the Caliph Musta'in appointed his young son Muḥammad as governor of Khurāsān (248-259 H). Muḥammad b. Tāhir is viewed in the sources as a markedly inferior figure compared with his predecessors, and as a weak and neglectful voluptuary. He was unfortunate in that, soon after his assumption of power, most of the provinces under his rule rose up in a general revolt so serious and lasting in its effects that external control could never be fully re-imposed on them (98). However, the history of Muḥammad b. Tāhir's governorship of Khurāsān now merges with that of the first of the Saffārids, Ya'qūb b. al-Laith, who gradually extended his power from Sistan, expelling the Tāhirid governors from the towns of eastern Khurāsān, and finally, in 259 H, occupying Nisāpūr (99) itself and deposing Muḥammad b. Tāhir.

In conclusion, the Tāhirids had fifty years of unbroken rule in Khurāsān. Although they are described as a separate dynasty, we must remember that their relationship with the central government remained a good one in general, and their power in Baghdad and Iraq continued undiminished. They governed Khurāsān and adjacent regions, and in addition (100) held various offices in Iraq, such as chief of police (Shurta) of Baghdad ,

(97) Ya'qūbī, al-Buldān, p.307

(98) Ya'qūbī, al-Buldān, p.307-308, Tarikh, vol.3, p.181

(99) Ya'qūbī, al-Buldān, p.308, Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa'L-Hadā'iq, vol.4, part 1, p.71-72, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.328, Ibn Khallikān, vol.6, p.411

(100) They had held this office of Shurta since the establishment of their state in 204 H; and it remained in their hands until the reign of Mu'tadid (279-289 H). Tabarī, vol.12, pp.1039, 1410, 1706, 1932, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.270-71, 'Uyūn wa'L-Hadā'iq, vol.4, part 1, p.88, Shābushtī, p.84

and the posts of governorship of Baghdad, the holy cities and Sawad, which they held simultaneously. As regards their relationship with the Caliphate, it is most significant that they continued to hold certain of these offices even after they lost Khurāsān to the Ṣaffārids in 259 H.

The Ṭāhirids cooperated with caliphal authority in suppressing all disturbances and rebellious movements which emerged against the 'Abbāsīd state, such as the 'Alawī movements <sup>(101)</sup>, and also Mazyār b. Qārīn's revolt in 224 H <sup>(102)</sup>.

The Ṭāhirids aided the Caliphs also with their resistance to the influence of the Turks. For instance, when the Caliph Mutawakkil decided definitely to rid himself of Itākh, the governor of Baghdad, Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Ṭāhirī <sup>(103)</sup> arrested Itākh and his two sons Muẓaffr and Manṣūr and jailed them in 235 H.

Furthermore, the Ṭāhirids stood firmly on the side of the Caliphate during all the disturbances which occurred in the capital, Baghdad, particularly during the second civil war in 251 H, as mentioned above <sup>(104)</sup>. On the whole, it seems that the Ṭāhirids were left in control in Khurāsān because the Caliphate in Iraq was becoming increasingly unstable and because its direct authority over outlying provinces was shrinking. The Ṭāhirids gave firm government to a large part of Persia, were loyal and respectful to the Caliphate and gave as little trouble as could be expected.

(101) Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.231-232

(102) Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.167, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.253, Hamadhānī, p.309, Abū al-Mahāsīn, vol.2, pp.240, 243

(103) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1384, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.173, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.283, Ibn Kathīr, vol.10, p.313

(104) See Chapter Four, p.88



## Chapter Seven

### The Status of the Vizirate during the period of Turkish Influence

1.   Introductory Study of the Vizirate  
      (The Vizirate), (Forms of the Vizirate), Formalities (Rusūm) pertaining  
      to the Vizirate
2.   The Vizirate and the Turks

# 1. Introductory Study of the Vizirate

(1)

## The Vizirate

The term "Vizirate" is connected in the historical sources with various meanings. The root "Wzr" means "to carry a burden", "to bear responsibility"; "Wazar" means "to help somebody (to carry, etc.)"; and "Wazīr" in the "helper" <sup>(2)</sup>. With this meaning the word occurs in Qurān when the prophet Moses asks God to recommend to him a man who would assist him with his affairs by saying, "Give me a minister (Wazīr) from my family, Aharon, my brother, add to my strength through him and make him share in my task." <sup>(3)</sup> Ibn Khaldūn <sup>(4)</sup> remarks also that, "The Vizirate was a function higher than any other, and this is indicated by the fact that its meaning was originally "assistant", and came to be "assistant to the Caliph." It was also said that, according to King Kusrā (The king of ancient Persia), "The Wazīr in respect to the King is as his hearing, sight, tongue and heart" <sup>(5)</sup>. These sources seem to indicate that the office of Wazīr was considered to be one of assisting the Caliph and of deputizing for him when necessary.

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(1) We need not dwell on the origin of the word Vizirate or Wazīr, because it is outside our subject. In addition, this question has been treated recently by S.D. Goitein, The Origin of the Vizirate and its true Character, Islamic Culture, vol.XVI, p.255-57 (1942), Sourdel, Le Vizirat 'Abbāside, vol.1, p.41

(2) Māwardī, Adab al-Wazīr, p.9, Ibn al-Ṭaṭṭaqa, p.153, Ibn Maḍḍūr, Lisān al-'Arab (see the word "Wzr"), Fairūzabādhi, Qāmūs al-Muḥīt (see the word "Wzr")

(3) Qurān, Surat Ṭaha, Aya, 29

(4) Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, p.236

(5) Māwardī, Adab al-Wazīr, p.26

Hence, at the beginning of the Islamic state, the 'Arab Muslims (who had mixed with Byzantines and Iranians before Islam emerged), treated Abū Bakir as the Wazīr of the prophet Muḥammad, and similarly with 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, who was treated as the Wazīr of Abū Bakir, and 'Uthmān and 'Alī who were (6) looked upon as the Wazīrs of 'Umar . However, those who were treated as ministers (Wazīrs) did not call themselves Wazīrs, but simply acted as such, as the office of the Vizirate did not yet exist when the Islamic state (7) first emerged .

After the establishment of the Umayyad state in 41 H, the Umayyads made their regime a hereditary one. During their reign the Islamic state grew greatly in extent. They therefore used chancellors in order to assist and advise them. It was said of those men who acted as Wazīrs without bearing that title, that they saw to the administration of affairs of state, such (8) (9) as political and financial affairs . Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa mentions that it was, "When the 'Abbāsids came to power, that the regulations of the Vizirate were well-defined. The Wazīr was called "Wazīr", whereas before he had been called scribe "Kātib" or chancellor "Mushīr". Nevertheless, there had been some advisers of the Umayyad state who had used the title of Wazīr, such as Ziyad b. Abīhi, who did so during the reign of the Caliph Mu'awiya, and Ruḥ b. Zinbā' (10) al-Judhāmī in the reign of 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān .

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(6) Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, p.236, Suyūṭī, p.125

(7) Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, p.236, H.I. Ḥasan, Nuḡum al-Islamiyah, p.144, Tarikh al-Islam, vol.1, p.440, Zaydan, Tarikh al-Tamaddun, vol.1, p.158

(8) Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, p.238

(9) Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.153

(10) A.A. Salim, Tarikh al-Dawla al-'Arabia, p.676, Ḥasan, Tarikh al-Islam, vol.1, p.441 (Ibn al-Athir, vol.4, p.164 mentions that the Muḡāḡim "Mawlā" of the Caliph "Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz was called Wazīr too), See also Goitein, The Origin of the Vizirate, p.257 for more details.

When the 'Abbāsids came to power in 132 H with the aid of the Iranians, it was natural that they should be affected by their contact with Iranian institutions, and particularly by the Vizirate system. Accordingly, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa<sup>(11)</sup> states that, "The Vizirate system became well-established only during the 'Abbāsīd state". The first 'Abbāsīd Wazīr was Abū Salama al-Khalāl, who was appointed by the Caliph Abu 'l-'Abbās al-Saffāḥ, who then gave him the title "Wazīr Āl-Muḥammad" or "Wazīr of the House of Muḥammad."<sup>(12)</sup> The position of Wazīr was the most powerful in the 'Abbāsīd state, particularly during the first 'Abbāsīd period<sup>(13)</sup>. He held in his hand both civil and military power. For instance, the Wazīr Faḍl b. Saḥil was called "Dhū 'l-Ri'āsatayn", which meant he was the head of both military and administrative affairs<sup>(14)</sup>. The Vizirate system was one that developed gradually in the Islamic state, and particularly in al-Andalus, where there were many ministers (Wazīrs) serving the state, each working in his own field. For instance, there was a Wazīr of military affairs (Ḥarb) and a Wazīr of financial affairs (Amwāl), and a Wazīr for the settling of grievances<sup>(15)</sup> (Mazālim) etc.

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(11) Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.153

(12) Jahshiyari, p.84, Ibn al-Athir, vol.4, p.336 (Historian Sourdell, Le Vizirat, vol.1, p.65 remarks that Abū Salama al-Khalāl was appointed Wazīr of Saffāḥ even though he was Iranian. Yet the appointment is understandable if we remember that the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs were indebted to the Iranians for the help they gave during the establishment of the 'Abbāsīd state).

(13) Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, p.238

(14) Jahshiyari, p.306, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.221, Ṣābī, Rusūm, p.130

(15) Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, p.239

### Forms of the Vizirate

Historians agree that the Vizirate which emerged during the 'Abbāsid period had two divisions, the Vizirate of Entrustment (Tafwīd) and the Vizirate of Fulfillment (Tanfīdh). They differed from each other in the rights accorded to and in the actions expected of the man who filled the position.

#### 1. The Vizirate of Entrustment (Tafwīd)

This kind of Vizirate involved the Caliph giving full power to his Wazīr to look after all affairs of state without having to consult the Caliph (16).

Therefore, Ibn Khaldūn (17) described this sort of Wazīr by saying, "He seems to dictate to the Caliph". However, there appear to have been three things (18) which this sort of Wazīr was not allowed to do .

Firstly, there was the question of succession. The Caliph had right to name anyone he wanted as heir apparent. But the Wazīr had no such right.

Secondly, the Caliph had the right to depose anyone who was appointed by the Wazīr. But the Wazīr was not entitled to depose anyone who had been appointed by the Caliph.

Thirdly, the Caliph was able to abdicate at will, but the Wazīr could not do so.

Nonetheless, the Wazīr al-Tafwīd had many important tasks to do, such as appointing regional governors and settling the grievances (Mazālim) brought

(16) Mawardi, Aḥkam al-Sultāniya, p.22, Adab al-Wazīr, p.10

(17) Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, p.239

(18) Mawardi, Aḥkam al-Sultāniya, p.25

to him by the people. In addition, he administered defence and military  
(19)  
affairs .

## 2. The Vizirate of Fulfillment (Tanfīdh)

This kind of Vizirate involved the Wazīr fulfilling the orders of the Caliph. Correspondingly, he did not have a right to act as he wished in the affairs of state, but had to refer all his decisions and intentions to the Caliph, from whom he might then get agreement and permission to act. Historians therefore describe this kind of Wazīr as the representative of  
(20)  
the Caliph . The main areas in which the Wazīr of Fulfillment acted were  
(21)  
as follows :

- A. As representative of the Caliph, in which capacity his duties included:
  1. Informing the military leaders of the Caliph's orders.
  2. Checking the actions of the regional governors and reporting them to the Caliph.
  3. Trying to settle the grievances of the people with the advice of the Caliph.
  4. Collecting the revenues from the managers of the Caliph's estates.
  5. Choosing and recommending governors for the Caliph to appoint to the various provinces.
- B. As adviser to the Caliph.
- C. As deputy of the Caliph he oversaw the affairs of state on the Caliph's behalf.
- D. As general assistant to the Caliph, in which capacity he had to work very hard indeed.

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(19) Māwardī, Aḥkām, p.26, Adab al-Wazīr, pp.13, 25

(20) Māwardī, Aḥkām, p.25, Adab al-Wazīr, p.10, Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, p.239

(21) Māwardī, Adab al-Wazīr, pp.37-38, 41, 42

Thus, the duties of the two types of Wazīr obviously differed from each other. For further explanation, let us refer to the historian Māwardī's (22) summary of their distinguishing features .

1. The Wazīr of Entrustment was permitted to administer the affairs of state. In addition, he was authorized to settle people's grievances (Mazālim). But these were not for the Wazīr of Fulfillment.
2. The Wazīr of Entrustment was permitted to appoint governors (Wilāt). This the Wazīr of Fulfillment was not permitted.
3. The Wazīr of Entrustment was permitted to order the mobilization of the caliphal troops and to issue orders to fight. But this the Wazīr of Fulfillment was not permitted to do.
4. The Wazīr of Entrustment was permitted to supervise the state treasury, governmental income and expenditure. The Wazīr of Fulfillment was not entrusted with these tasks.

Finally, al-Māwardī notes that the Caliph could appoint two Wazīrs of Fulfillment, making one of them the Wazīr for war (Ḥarb), and the other the Wazīr for land tax (Kharāj), but he would appoint only one Wazīr of Entrustment.

#### Formalities (Rusūm) pertaining to the Vizirate

Among the conditions for appointing a Wazīr was the stipulation that the candidate for this position was suitably qualified. Historians describe these qualifications as follows: Firstly, the candidate ought to be just. Secondly, he ought to be trustworthy. Thirdly, he ought to be suitably experienced. Fourthly, he ought to have had much background experience in

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(22) Māwardī, Aḥkām, p.27

the affairs of state. Fifthly, he ought to be merciful in his dealings with all people<sup>(23)</sup>. Šābī added that the Wazīr ought to have previously worked as a scribe and to have acquaintance with military affairs<sup>(24)</sup>.

After the selection of the person possessing these qualifications, the Caliph sent two palace dignitaries bearing the order of appointment. Then the new Wazīr returned with them to the Caliphal palace. Inside the palace there was a special room for the new Wazīr to put on the ceremonial garments which had been provided for him. They were called Khil'a Sultānyya or Khil'a 'l-Wizāra<sup>(25)</sup>. Then he was presented to the Caliph. The formalities at this point involved the Wazīr kissing the hand of the Caliph and sitting on a special chair, and then the Caliph saying to him, "I entrust you with the Vizirate"<sup>(26)</sup>. In this manner he became officially the state's Wazīr. After the formalities for appointing the Wazīr were completed, the new Wazīr left the palace and, mounted on a horse which had been prepared for him, he rode in procession with high officers of state, military leaders and judges until he reached his office called (Dār 'l-Wizāra)<sup>(27)</sup>. Later that day the Wazīr sat in his office and received the congratulations of various people. It seems that the formalities continued for two or three days more, as some of those wishing to congratulate the Wazīr came from distant areas<sup>(28)</sup>.

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(23) Māwardī, Adab al-Wazīr, p.34

(24) Šābī, al-Wuzarā', p.375

(25) Šābī, al-Wuzarā', p.306, Ibn Miskawaih, vol.1, pp.7-8, 26, 59

(26) Sourdél, Le Vizirat, vol.1, p.74

(27) Šābī, al-Wuzarā', pp.63, 199, Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa, p.13, Kāzarūni, Muqāma fī Qawā'id Baghdad, pp.19, 26, Ibn al-Ṭaṭṭaqa, p.223, Ibn Miskawaih, vol.1, pp.27, 59, 132. This office lay in the Mukharm quarter of Baghdad.

(28) Šābī, al-Wuzarā', p.306



In the Wazīr's office (Dār 'l-Wizāra), there were a number of secretaries (Kuttāb) and a Hājib who organized official meetings. There were also guards who guarded the office of the Vizirate both day and night in order to protect the documents and archives of state. When the Caliph dismissed his Wazīr,<sup>(29)</sup> these documents and archives were moved and taken to the new Wazīr. In addition, to Dār 'l-Wizāra the Wazīr had another office in the Caliphal palace. The Wazīr used this second office some days each week, particularly when<sup>(30)</sup> something happened which was of great concern to the state (such as an invasion by the Byzantines, or local disturbances or rebellions in the regions, etc.). It was in this second office in the palace that the Wazīr would be asked by the Caliph to write out especially important documents such as these concerning the appointment of a governor or the mobilization of the army. The Wazīr would formally use a special inkwell which he held in his left<sup>(31)</sup> hand, while he wrote out the document with his right. As soon as he finished writing, he would fold up the document put sealing wax on it, and then stamp it with the Caliphal seal.

When the Wazīr presented himself in the court of the Caliph on urgent business,<sup>(32)</sup> he had to be immaculately attired. He had to dress respectfully in relation to the Caliph. (For instance, he might not wear red shoes, for such were<sup>(33)</sup> regarded as suitable for the Caliph alone). During his audience with

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(29) Ṣabī, Rusūm, pp.13, 291, Kāzarūni, p.19

(30) Ṣabī, al-Wizārā', p.291

(31) Ṣabī, al-Wizārā', p.369, Rusūm, pp.66, 68. This tradition was continued until the reign of Muqtadir when the Caliph appointed a person who held the inkwell while the Wazīr wrote.

(32) Ṣabī, Rusūm, p.32

(33) Ṣabī, Rusūm, pp.75, 90

the Caliph at court, he might talk only when the Caliph asked him to. He might not leave the court at any time during his audience, but had to wait until the end, when the Caliph would give him permission to leave. He had to exit backwards without turning his back to the Caliph <sup>(34)</sup>.

As regards dismissing the Wazīr, there were three sorts of dismissal. Firstly, he could be dismissed because of differences over policy. Secondly, he could be dismissed for reasons such as disloyalty, incompetence, or weakness of personality, or the ground for dismissal might be that the Caliph needed him in another position. Being removed from office for this last reason was not regarded as being dismissed, but rather as simply a change of position <sup>(35)</sup>. It should be noted that when the Caliph issued an order for the actual dismissal of his Wazīr, it was not considered proper for the Wazīr to be arrested while he was inside the Caliphal palace or while he was on his way to his own home <sup>(36)</sup>, although sometimes this was what in fact happened. For his work, the Wazīr was paid a salary from the state treasury. There was no fixed method of calculating how much the Wazīr should earn. It seems that salary varied, and depended on the state of the country's finances, and on the goodwill of the Caliph. For instance, the Caliph Mutawakkil paid his Wazīr 'Ubaidullah b. Yahya b. Khāqān 10,000 dinārs monthly <sup>(37)</sup>, while during the reign of Muqtadir, his Wazīrs Abū al-Ḥasan b. al-Furāt, Muḥammad b. 'Ubaidullah b. Yahya b. Khāqān and 'Alī b. 'Isā b. Dāwud b. al-Jarrāh were paid 5,000 dinārs monthly <sup>(38)</sup>. In addition to this salary, vast estates were

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(34) Ṣābī, Rusūm, pp.33, 35

(35) Māwardī, Adab al-Wazīr, pp.35 ff.

(36) Ṣābī, al-Wūzārā', p.291

(37) Tanūkhī, Jām'i al-Tawārīkh, vol.8, p.13

(38) Ṣābī, al-Wūzārā', pp.285, 306

given to the Wazīr<sup>(39)</sup>. These yielded him an annual income amounting to 1,000,000 dinārs<sup>(40)</sup>.

The Wazīrs of the 3rd century A.H. did not have such great power as the Wazīrs of the first 'Abbāsīd period, because the Turks dominated the Caliphate and government. However, some of them did get privileges and became powerful. For instance, this happened during the reign of Mu'tazz when he granted his Wazīr Aḥmad b. Isrā'īl a crown<sup>(41)</sup>. It was said that the Caliph Mutawakkil often visited his Wazīr 'Ubaidullah b. Khāqān when this latter was ill<sup>(42)</sup>. Sourdél remarks that this tribute was an old Persian tradition.

## 2. The Vizirate and the Turks

The Vizirate had come into being in the Islamic state initially as an administrative system during the 'Abbāsīd rule in the years following 132 H. During the first 'Abbāsīd period the rules and regulations of the Vizirate were established. The Caliphs of the first 'Abbāsīd period appointed Wazīrs who were described as men of good character and great influence. It was said that the Wazīr during this period was the right hand of the Caliph. He governed the affairs of state in the name of the Caliph, and both appointed and dismissed regional governors, and supervised the financial affairs of the state. The Wazīr held, in fact, both civil and military power and was

(39) Ṣābī, al-Wūzarā', p.306

(40) Ṣābī, al-Wūzarā', p.349

(41) Tabari, vol.12, p.1647 Aḥmad b. Isrā'īl belonged to a family which had originally been Christian (Nestorian sect) but had later gone over to Islam. See Sourdél, Le Vizirat, vol.1, p.295

(42) Sourdél, Le Vizirat, vol.1, p.682

(43)  
therefore called "Dhū 'l-Ri'āsatayn", which meant just that, and the exercise of these powers was in addition to his ordinary duties as adviser and assistant to the Caliph.

The fact that the Wazīrs of the first 'Abbāsīd period held so influential a position did not mean that the Caliphs were weak. On the contrary, the Caliphs of that period were described as being judicious caliphs who seemed to be willing and eager to make their state a glorious one. The Vizirate system remained powerful until the end of the first 'Abbāsīd period. The

(44)  
Wazīr Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Zayyāt who served during the reign of Mu'taṣim, Wāthiq and the beginning of the reign of Mutawakkil, was described as a wise and astute man, a poet, and as being well versed in political affairs. The Vizirate system reached its peak of power and

(45)  
prestige during his office as Wazīr. Professor Dūrī regards him as the last of the long and powerful line of Wazīrs who held office during the first 'Abbāsīd period, and whose like was rarely seen thereafter (46).

Throughout the reign of Wāthiq, Ibn al-Zayyāt was retained as Wazīr. It was said that the Caliph Wāthiq gave him great power. The Caliph did not issue orders without asking his opinion (47). It seems that the Caliph maintained Ibn al-Zayyāt in his position in spite of having been angered by him while he was a prince, because of his ability in politics and his administrative

(43) The first Wazīr to hold this title was Faḍl b. Saḥil, the Wazīr of Ma'mūn. See p144 in this Chapter.

(44) His family originally came from Gilān. But they had settled in Iraq, in the Daskara district, which lay near Khānaqīn. His father worked as an oil merchant in Baghdad. For further details see Sourdel, vol.1, p.254-55

(45) Jahshiyārī, Lost Fragments of Kitāb al-Wuzarā' Wa-l-Kuttāb, p.64

(46) Dūrī, 'Asr al-'Abbāsi al-Awwal, p.255

(47) Mas'ūdi, Murūj, vol.3, p.487, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.234, Ibn al-Athir, vol.5, p.279

skill. The Caliph indicated the Wazīr's value to him when he said, "By God, I have kept you in office only because I was worried that there might be no one like you in the whole of my state. So I have released myself from my oath by giving alms, because money is expendable and replaceable, but you are neither" <sup>(48)</sup>. However, this may be, the Wazīr Ibn al-Zayyāt attained an influential position during the reign of Wāthiq. He was said to have been authorized to appoint governors (Wilāt) instead of the <sup>(49)</sup> Caliph. As a further sign of his great power, it is most important to note that the Wazīr Ibn al-Zayyāt joined the military commanders and statesmen in 232 H in deciding the question of succession after the death of Wāthiq <sup>(50)</sup>. When Mutawakkil succeeded to the throne, he retained Ibn al-Zayyāt as Wazīr. <sup>(51)</sup> The Caliph depended on him to administer the affairs of state. However, after the Wazīr had been in office forty days, the Caliph changed his mind about him, and he was dismissed. He was later tortured and died in 233 H. This came about through the influence of the Turks, who persuaded the Caliph Mutawakkil to get rid of his Wazīr. It seems that the Turks, noticing that Ibn al-Zayyāt had much influence in the court of the Caliphate, had desired to remove him in order to secure his position for themselves. The Caliph had been indebted to the Turks, who had played a major role during the succession crisis, and had finally succeeded in installing him as Caliph. In addition, the Caliph had been displeased with Ibn al-Zayyāt, because the latter had favoured the appointment of Muḥammad b. al-Wāthiq as Caliph during the crisis. However, after Ibn al-Zayyāt had been removed from his position, the Turks seized the opportunity of eliminating him. The prominent Turkish

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(48) Ibn al-Taḥṭaqa, p.234

(49) Ṭabarī, vol.11, p.1350

(50) See Chapter Two, p.10

(51) Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.172

military commander Waṣīf arrested him and tortured him to death. His  
(52)  
estates and wealth were then seized by the Turks .

After the dismissal of Ibn al-Zayyāt, the Caliph Mutawakkil appointed Ahmad b. Khālīd, known as Abū 'l-Wazīr in his place. It was said that although Ahmad had been given the position of Wazīr, he did not like using his formal title, fearing he might share the same fate as the previous Wazīr. However, he remained in office until he disagreed with the Turks and opposed their interference in the affairs of state. As a result of this, he did not survive as long as Ibn al-Zayyāt had. The Turks arrested him, tortured him severely, and then confiscated his wealth and estates in spite of the fact  
(53)  
that he had been described as a reputable Wazīr . Afterwards, Mutawakkil appointed Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl al-Jarjarā'i, a native Iraqi land owner of  
(54)  
ancient lineage, as Wazīr . This new Wazīr was an educated man and favoured by the Caliph. His position in the court of the Caliphate became an influential one. al-Jarjarā'i, too, was subjected to the pressure of Turkish greed, and the Turks finally succeeded in persuading the Caliph to  
(55)  
dismiss him from office after they had slandered him .

The power of the Wazīr began to diminish, and his remaining in office was closely linked with the desires of the Turks. Yet it surprises most people to learn that the Wazīr Ibn al-Jarjarā'i was the third Wazīr to have been appointed by the Caliph Mutawakkil in the course of a single year. On

(52) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1373, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.172, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.279, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.579

(53) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1378, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.173

(54) His family originally came from Jarjarāya, which lay between Baghdad and Wāsit. For further details see Sourdél, Le Vizirat , vol.1, p.271-72, Sha'bān, Islamic History, p.72

(55) Mas'ūdī, vol.4, p.6, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.238

the other hand, the Turkish military leaders now seemed determined to occupy the Vizirate themselves in order to control all the affairs of state. Waṣīf was elevated to the position of Wazīr, although he held the position without bearing the title. All orders which issued from the central government were signed by him<sup>(56)</sup>. However, this attempt by the Turks to take over the Vizirate seems to have been unsuccessful, due to the rivalry between the Turkish military leaders, caused by their greed and jealousy. As a result, Waṣīf decided to relinquish the Vizirate in favour of his secretary,<sup>(57)</sup> 'Ubaidullah b. Yaḥya b. Khāqān. Mutawakkil supported the appointment of Ibn Khāqān as Wazīr. It seems that the Caliph preferred to have a civilian in this office, and he felt that 'Ubaidullah shared his hostility towards the Turks. In addition, Ibn Khāqān was described as an educated man, wise, generous and with the qualifications of long experience and proven loyalty in the service of the 'Abbāsids<sup>(58)</sup>. The Wazīr Ibn Khāqān was favoured by the Caliph, and the Caliph authorized him to appoint the regional governors as well as the other officials who supervised land tax (Kharāj), post (Barīd) and the courts (Qadā')<sup>(59)</sup>. To add to his influential position in the court of the Caliphate, Mutawakkil finally issued a Caliphal order of affiliation<sup>(60)</sup> (Intisāb), which gave Ibn Khāqān certain privileges of the Caliph's family.

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(56) Tanūkhi, Jām'i al-Tawarīkh, vol.8, p.11, Ṣabī, Rusūm, p.33

(57) His family originally came from Marū in Khurāsān. His father was Mawlā of the 'Arab tribe Azd. 'Ubaidullah went to Baghdad during the reign of Ma'mūn and then worked as secretary for the Wazīr Ḥasan b. Sahil. See for further details Sourdél, Le Vizirat, vol.1, p.273, Sha'bān, p.75

(58) Mas'ūdi, vol.4, p.6, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.238

(59) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.179, Birūni, p.31

(60) Ṣabī, Rusūm, p.122

This honour meant that Ibn Khāqān was considered as one of the associates of the 'Abbāsīd family. But these privileges excited the resentment of the Turkish military commanders, headed by Itākh, who had a great deal of power at this time. At first, they assaulted him and beat him <sup>(61)</sup>. Afterwards they attempted to murder him. But it seems that they could not succeed, because the Caliph Mutawakkil supported him, while Ibn Khāqān seemed to <sup>(62)</sup> have many Turkish supporters as well. Furthermore, he was the commander of the military division, called the Shakiriyya, which was organized by the Caliph Mutawakkil in order to resist the influence of the Turkish military commanders <sup>(63)</sup>. On his part, Ibn Khāqān was said to have tried to remove the Turkish military leaders and their followers. In 235 H he and his master the Caliph succeeded in killing Itākh <sup>(64)</sup>. Then he persuaded Mutawakkil to favour his son Mu'tazz and to keep Muntaşir from power, because the latter supported Turkish generals. For instance, the Wazīr Ibn Khāqān persuaded the Caliph to authorize his son Mu'tazz rather than Muntaşir to lead the Friday prayer at Ja'fariya in the last Friday of Ramaḍān 247 H <sup>(65)</sup>. In the end, however, the tables were turned, for the Turkish military commanders who had occupied the position of Itakh managed to murder Mutawakkil in 247 H, and dismissed the Wazīr Ibn Khāqān from office.

After the murder of the Caliph Mutawakkil, Turks dominated both the affairs of state and the Caliph himself. The Vizirate, consequently, was affected, and became powerless, just like the Caliphate. Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa <sup>(66)</sup>

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(61) Tanūkhi, Jām'i al-Tawārīkh, vol.8, p.12

(62) Ṭabari, vol.12, p.1443, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.238

(63) See Chapter Three, p.48

(64) See Chapter Three, p.49

(65) See Chapter Four, p.64

(66) Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.243



described this state of affairs thus, "Turks held the reins of state after the murder of Mutawakkil, and they found the Caliphs weak. The Caliph was a captive. When they wished, they let him live; when they wished, they dethroned him; when they wished, they killed him". The murderers installed Muntaṣir as Caliph after they had killed his father Mutawakkil. During the reign of Muntaṣir the prestige of the Vizirate further declined, due to the appointment of Ahmad b. Al-Khaṣīb as Wazīr. Ibn al-Khaṣīb seems to have been appointed on the strength of the great influence he had among the Turks at that time. However, appearances to the contrary, he had very little experience in affairs of state. Historians described him as a foolish man, with little good in him and much evil<sup>(67)</sup>. Furthermore, he was neglectful of his duties in office, and had a hasty temper. Accordingly, one day while he was riding his horse, a man stopped him to ask him a favour. But the Wazīr was annoyed, and kicked the man hard in the chest. The man died as a result of this kick<sup>(68)</sup>. Therefore, the people began talking unfavourably about him, and poets attacked him in verse.

Yet it was ridiculous that the Caliph took no measures to depose him, and instead authorized him to handle all the affairs of state. The Caliph also complied with all the Wazīr's requests. It was said that the Wazīr asked Muntaṣir to remove his two brothers Mu'ayyad and Mu'tazz from the line of succession, because the Wazīr and the military leaders (who had murdered the brothers' father Mutawakkil) did not wish to have in power any other son of Mutawakkil.<sup>(69)</sup> Muntaṣir obeyed. Again, when the Wazīr disagreed with Waṣīf, a prominent general, he asked the Caliph to get rid of him. Muntaṣir appointed Waṣīf to be in charge of the fortresses which guarded the Byzantine border,

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(67) Mas'ūdī, vol.4, p.51

(68) Mas'ūdī, vol.4, pp.48, 49, Ibn al-Taḡtaqa, p.239

(69) Ṭabari, vol.12, p.1486

and then asked him to stay therefore four years in order, effectively, to  
(70)  
exile him .

The Wazīr Ibn al-Khaṣīb remained in office even after the death of Muntaṣir in 248 H. The new Caliph Musta'in may have confirmed Ibn al-Khaṣīb in his position, because the Wazīr had played a major role in installing him on the throne (71) . After Ibn al-Khaṣīb had been in office for two months, he disagreed with two military commanders Waṣīf and Bughā. It seems that the two commanders had great power at that time, and more than the Wazīr. They asked (72) the Caliph Musta'in to exile him to Crete and then confiscated his wealth . Furthermore, they asked the Caliph to exile the former Wazīr 'Ubaidullah b. Khāqān to Barqa (73) . The Caliph complied with their desires. Next, the commanders who seemed to dominate the affairs of state elected one of their number, Autāmish, and appointed him Wazīr (74) . Thus, the Vizirate was again controlled by Turkish military commanders after having been in the hands of civilians.

However, in view of the ignorance of the military commanders regarding the Vizirate system and its regulations, they appointed secretaries (Kuttāb) as their administrative assistants. Autāmish appointed Shujā' b. Qāsim as his own assistant (75) . But it seems that Autāmish did not remain in office for

(70) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1480, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.326

(71) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1501

(72) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1508, Mas'ūdī, vol.4, p.61, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.312, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.328

(73) Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.181, Mas'ūdī, vol.4, p.61, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.312, Abū al-Maḥāsin, vol.2, p.327

(74) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1503, Mas'ūdī, vol.4, p.60, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.311, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.598

(75) Mas'ūdī, vol.4, p.60, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, pp.598, 600

long, because his colleagues, particularly Waṣīf and Bughā, accused him of using his position to amass huge fortunes for himself. They plotted to eliminate him and finally, succeeded in killing him together with his secretary Ibn Qāsim<sup>(76)</sup>. Meanwhile, the Turkish military commanders decided to leave the Vizirate and its troubles in order to concentrate on dominating the Caliphal court and thereby the affairs of state, including the Vizirate. In this way the appointing of the Wazīr could be controlled by the military commanders.

The commanders nominated Abū Ṣāliḥ Abdallah b. Yazdād to the vacant Vizirate, and the Caliph Musta'in gave his agreement. Historians described the new Wazīr as a wise and judicious man. He tried to restore the power of the Vizirate. He realized that the affairs of state could not be restored to their former order unless the state's finances were brought under control and economies made, especially as regards the money being freely given to the Turks. But it seems that his plans were not welcomed by them, particularly Bughā and Waṣīf. They threatened to kill him if he did not change his mind about implementing his ideas for reform. When the Wazīr Ibn Yazdād realized that it would be impossible to continue with his plans, he decided to abandon<sup>(77)</sup> his position and fled to Baghdad in 249 H.

In view of the confusion into which the Vizirate was thrown, the Caliph Musta'in was obliged to re-appoint Muḥammad b. Faḍl al-Jarjarā'i as Wazīr, in view of his experience and because he had held that position during the reign of Mutawakkil, as mentioned above. Ibn al-Jarjarā'i, however, seemed unhappy about renewing his appointment. As evidence of this, we note that

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(76) Ṭabarī, vol.12, p.1512, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.181, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.313  
Abū al-Fidā', vol.2, p.45

(77) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1513-14, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.242, Ibn al-Athīr, vol.5, p.313-14

he held the position without in fact using the title of Wazīr. He remained in office for a few months only, after which he was dismissed. It is possible that he did not want to be involved with the Turks as before <sup>(78)</sup>.

In fact, the following period saw many vicissitudes in the fortunes of the Vizirate. For instance, during the reign of Mu'tazz, which lasted three years, there had been four changes of Wazīr. This unstable position of the Vizirate was due to the greed of the Turks and to the struggle between them to gain more power. <sup>(79)</sup> Abū 'l-Faḍl Ja'far al-Iskāfi, the first Wazīr during the reign of Mu'tazz, was said to have been appointed at the request of the Turks in spite of the fact that the Caliph disliked him because of his sympathies with the 'Alawīs. This Wazīr seems to have been very astute in his dealings with the Turks, and he ensured his remaining in office by offering them gifts and money. Later, however, the Caliph Mu'tazz succeeded in <sup>(80)</sup> removing him from office <sup>(81)</sup>. He then appointed 'Isā b. Farkh-Shāh. It seems that the appointment of this man as Wazīr was part of the Caliph's plans to sow dissension among the Turks, for the Wazīr tried to encourage the already existing conflict between their leaders. However, it soon became clear to them what he was doing, and after he had been in office for a few months, the Caliph, under much pressure from the Turks, was obliged to dismiss <sup>(82)</sup> him.

The Caliph next chose one of the secretaries (Kuttāb), the prominent Ahmad b. Isrā'īl, on the strength of his long experience in the service of the 'Abbāsīd

(78) Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.242, Irbilī, p.229

(79) He came from a Baghdadi family, which had lived in the quarter of Bāb al-I'zj in Baghdad. See Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Irshād al-Arīb, vol.3, p.164

(80) Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.245

(81) There seems to be no information about his origin but his name seems to be Persian.

(82) Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.245

state, and appointed him as Wazīr. The new Wazīr first of all began to take steps aimed at keeping the sources of the state's revenue free from Turkish interference. It seems that his schemes were aimed above all at reducing the ample funds which were often made available to the Turks. The Caliph welcomed and appreciated these schemes, and gave them support. He wanted to keep the military commanders out of fiscal affairs as much as possible. In order to encourage his Wazīr to go ahead and to show his appreciation, he presented him with a crown. The Turks, however, considered the Wazīr Ibn Isrā'īl to be persona non grata, and felt they had to get rid of him as soon as possible. The Turks, therefore, who were led by the general Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf (who had risen to the chief position among the Turks at that time), decided without any hesitation to arrest and kill the Wazīr. Under orders from Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf, they entered the Caliphal court and, showing no respect to the Caliph Mu'tazz, they arrested the hapless Wazīr as he sat with the Caliph. Afterwards, they jailed the Wazīr and tortured him severely. The Caliph, in order to get him released, joined with his mother Qabiḥa in appealing to Ṣāliḥ to free him, but Ṣāliḥ forcefully rejected their request. Moreover, he warned them not to interfere again in his actions. The Wazīr was tortured (83) to death in 255 H and his wealth was seized .

Afterwards, the Turks, on the orders of Ṣāliḥ had Abū 'l-Faḍl Ja'far al-Iskāfi appointed as Wazīr. This, however, was a great challenge to the Caliph who had previously succeeded in deposing this Wazīr. As far as the Turks were concerned, al-Iskāfi was a more acceptable Wazīr, who fitted in with their desires, as we mentioned above, and they therefore had him re-appointed (84) in spite of the unwillingness of the Caliph . But it seems that at this

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(83) Ṭabarī, vol.12, pp.1706, 1720, Ya'qūbī, vol.3, p.187, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.245, Ibn Khaldūn, vol.3, part 3, p.626

(84) Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.245

time the Wazīr was almost powerless, as all the official orders which were issued from the office of the Vizirate had to be signed by Ṣālīḥ b. Waṣīf, (85) who was effectively Wazīr. Therefore, al-Iskāfi was Wazīr in name alone. Very shortly after this, the Caliph Mu'tazz was deposed and killed by the Turks. They then installed one of his nephews who took the title of Muhtadī. As regards al-Iskafi, the Turks retained him as Wazīr to the new Caliph. It seems that the Caliph Muhtadī, as Mu'tazz had done before him, took a dislike to the personality of his Wazīr. As a result, when Ṣālīḥ b. Waṣīf was killed by his former followers during the conflicts amongst the Turkish leaders who were constantly struggling to gain power and privileges, the Caliph quickly (86) removed al-Iskāfi and replaced him with Sulaimān b. Wahb, who had been secretary of state. The new Wazīr was highly praised by the historian Ibn al-Taḡṭaqa (87), for his long experience as secretary of state. It seems, however, that the Caliph's choice of Wazīr was linked with his plans of restoring all the affairs of state as they had been prior to the Turks' interventions. The Wazīr Ibn Wahb cooperated wholeheartedly with the Caliph Muhtadī in this work. But a year after the Caliph's installation, the Turks came into serious disagreement with him, and particularly with his new plans which were aimed at reducing their privileges. They succeeded in killing him and in jailing his Wazīr Ibn Wahb.

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(85) Mas'ūdī, vol.4, p.84

(86) He belonged to a family which had originally been Christian but had later gone over to Islam. His father had been in the service of the Barmakid Ja'far b. Yahya and later in that of al-Faḍl b. Sahl. At the age of 14 Sulaimān became secretary to the Caliph al-Ma'mūn. He later entered the service of the generals Itākh and Ashinās. See The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol.4, p.522 (Leyden 1934)

(87) Ibn al-Taḡṭaqa, p.247

Nevertheless, when Mu'tamid was firmly established on the throne in 256 H, the Caliphate began to recover its power and prestige, and the Turkish influence started shrinking. This trend took effect after the Caliph's brother Muwaffaq, who was described as judicious and strong of character, took charge of all affairs. He led military expeditions himself, saw to the protection of the fortresses guarding the frontiers, and then successfully quelled the many disturbances which the Caliphate had been facing. In addition, he took firm control of administrative affairs. Consequently, the Vizirate during the reign of Mu'tamid regained its former dignity, especially after he had appointed well-qualified wazirs who had had long experience of the affairs of state. The Caliph appointed 'Ubaidullah b. Yahya b. Khāqān as his first Wazīr. This man was considered (88) to be a highly qualified statesman. After his death in 263 H, the Caliph (89) appointed al-Ḥasan b. Makhlad b. al-Jarrāh, who had been secretary to his brother Muwaffaq, and had served for a long time in various offices of state. Historians praised him as one of the most distinguished statesmen of (90) his time. The Wazīr Ibn al-Jarrāh discharged his responsibilities extremely (91) capably and Muwaffaq was moved to award him the title "Dhū 'l-Wizāratayn".

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(88) Ya'qūbi, vol.3, p.189, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.203, He had been favourite Wazīr of the Caliph Mutawakkil, and had risen to a position of great importance, which he had kept until the murder of the Caliph in 247 H.

(89) He was an Iraqi who administered the Caliphal estates from 243 H onwards. The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol.2, p.401

(90) Shābushti, p.175, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.204

(91) Suyūṭī, p.365. This means that he was in charge of military as well as administrative affairs. This title was discovered on the dinārs which were coined during the reign of Mu'tamid in 256 H. See Ḥusaini, al-'Umla al-Islāmiyah fī al-'Ahd al-Atābiki, p.23

However, the Caliph removed Ibn al-Jarrāh from office and appointed Sulaimān b. Wahb in his place. The new Wazīr was regarded as another of the great Wazīrs of the 'Abbāsīd state <sup>(92)</sup>, and we note that he had been Wazīr during the reign of Muhtadī. But he was soon replaced by another highly qualified man, Abū al-Ṣaqr Ismā'īl b. Bulbul <sup>(93)</sup>, who rose to a place of great influence. For instance, it was said that he had charge of the administration of both civil and military affairs "al-Saif wa 'l-Qalm" <sup>(94)</sup>. Nevertheless, he in turn was replaced by Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ b. Shīrẓād, who was well-versed in secretarial affairs. But this new Wazīr remained in his office for one month only, and was then replaced by 'Ubaidullah b. Sulaimān b. Wahb who was praised by Ibn al-Ṭaṭṭaqa a very capable Wazīr and as a man of honour <sup>(95)</sup>. This policy of using many Wazīrs for a short period each and then dismissing them, even though they were all skillful statesmen and well-qualified for their office, was probably a result of the threatening circumstances which the 'Abbāsīd state was facing. It is possible that these circumstances caused the Caliph to replace his Wazīrs often in an attempt to find a man who was even more capable of dealing with the critical political and economic situation of the Caliphate, which the Caliph had found in disorder to begin with, and which had been exacerbated by rebellions such as the Zanj's movement <sup>(96)</sup>. It is of great importance to note that this Caliphal policy was

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(92) Jahshiyārī, Lost Fragments of Kitāb al-Wuzarā' wa-L-Kuttāb, p.65

(93) He came originally from al-Madā'in in Iraq. He and his family went to Baghdad during the reign of Mu'tamid. The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol.2, p.546

(94) Ibn al-Ṭaṭṭaqa, p.204

(95) Ibn al-Ṭaṭṭaqa, p.206. His father Sulaimān b. Wahb had been Wazīr during the reigns of Muhtadī and Mu'tamid.

(96) Ibn al-Ṭaṭṭaqa, p.206, Suyūṭī, p.363



not brought about by Turkish pressure; as previous policies regarding the Vizirate had been. It was the Caliph himself who decided upon it <sup>(97)</sup>.

In fact, the office of Vizirate was able to remain free from Turkish interference during the reigns of the Caliphs Mu'tadid, Muktafi, due to powerful personalities of these Caliphs. Mu'tadid devoted himself to reducing the power of the Turks and restored the Caliphal dignity. Poets were said to have praised him by calling him a second Saffāh (al-Saffāh al-Thānī) when he regained possession of Banū 'l-'Abbās <sup>(98)</sup>. So, in the course of the reigns of these Caliphs the Vizirate regained the dignity and power it had had during the first 'Abbāsīd period, and the Wazīr's position was one of greater power.

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(97) Jahshiyari, Lost Fragments of Kitāb al-Wuzarā', p.65, Shābushtī, p.175-76, Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaqa, p.204

(98) Suyūtī, p.369

### Conclusion

The Turks were originally brought into the Islamic state to provide an efficient regular army to defend the 'Abbāsid empire against internal and external threats. Tribal life and their fighting qualities made them suitable for that job. Some of them were bought as slaves such as Itākh, Ashinās, Waṣīf but others were rulers from Turkestān such as Jif b. Baltakīn and Ḥaider b. Kāwus (Afshīn) who were persuaded to join the 'Abbāsid army. The numbers are uncertain for the reign of Mu'taṣim, but there was probably about 18,000 Turks. This estimate relates only to the Turkish slave troops and historians do not mention any specific numbers after that.

During the reign of Wāthiq, the Turks controlled the affairs of state. As a result they were able to attain high positions such as the leadership of the 'Abbāsid army. However, during the reign of Mutawakkil an attempt was made to break the power of the Turks, because he felt that they constituted a great danger to the Caliphate itself. In 235 H, the Caliph succeeded in eliminating Itākh and his two sons Muẓaffar and Maṣṣūr, and in 247 H, he ordered the confiscation of Waṣīf's estates in Iṣfahān and Jibāl. At the same time he decided that he would have Bughā, Autāmish and others killed on Thursday, the fifth of Shawwāl, 247 H. The latter measure failed because the Turks were aware of his plans, therefore, they allied with Mutawakkil's son, Muntaṣir, in attempt to assassinate the Caliph. They succeeded in this and killed him with his secretary Fatih b. Khāqān who hated the Turkish military leaders because they held the monopoly of power and authority in the state. It would seem unreasonable to deny that Muntaṣir's support of the Turks was influenced by certain factors, the primary one was Mutawakkil's hostile policy to the 'Alawīs, whom Muntaṣir sympathized with them and liked. There is ample evidence not only that Muntaṣir appointed

'Alawīs as governors, but also that he was said to have informed his governors: "If you want to please me, you have to treat the 'Alawīs well."

After the murder of Mutawakkil, Turks came to the zenith of their power. They acquired freedom to choose the person whom they wished to have as Caliph. Turks appointed Muntaṣir to the vacant throne in accordance with their wishes. But after six months they turned against him and killed him. Possibly, they were urged to do that, because the Turks did not welcome the sympathetic attitude of Muntaṣir to the 'Alawīs, as the latter began to constitute a great threat to them by sharing power with them.

Although the Turks dominated the Caliphate during this period, but we must not forget the efforts of the Caliphs Mutawakkil, Muntaṣir, Musta'in, Mu'tazz and Muṭadī to struggle against Turkish domination and to try to restore the Caliphate's dignity and power. The significant measures which were made by the former Caliphs in order to eliminate the Turks, were:

Firstly, the Caliphs conspired against the Turkish military leaders by assassinating them one by one as the opportunity arose. Itākh was one of them, who was killed after Mutawakkil's plot was successful.

Secondly, the Caliphs began to sow the dissension among the Turks favouring certain Turkish leaders more than others. When Musta'in for example came to the throne he began to use this new strategy. He favoured Autāmish and Shāhik al-Khādīm by giving them freedom to use the state treasuries and other Caliphal affairs. Whereas, he removed Waṣīf and Bughā from their positions and appointed them as governors of distant provinces. The latter began therefore to seek the downfall of Autāmish, believing that he had had a hand in their change of position. Finally, they succeeded in killing him with the approval of the Caliph Musta'in, who made known throughout the state that Autāmish was to be cursed. During the reign of Mu'tazz, the Caliph also, used the same strategy. When he was attempting to murder Waṣīf, he gave his favours to Bughā al-Sharābī and offered him a crown. Later, when Bughā fell into disfavour, the Caliph allowed Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf and Baikabāk to rise in power.

Thirdly, the Caliphs used the tactics of dispersing Turkish troops and their leaders to the fringes of the empire. The Caliph Muntasir was said to have sent Wasīf and his Turkish adherents off to the Byzantine frontier, and ordered them to remain there for four years. The Caliph Muhtadī also adopted the same policy by sending Mūsā b. Bughā, Muflīh al-Turkī and Baikabāk with their followers to Khurāsān.

Fourthly, in order to counteract the Turks, the Caliphs embarked on the most important actions by making use of other groups. Tāhirids were favoured by the Caliphs after proven loyalty in the service of the 'Abbāsids. The latter gave them various offices in Iraq, in addition to the governorship of Khurāsān for over fifty years. In turn the Tāhirids cooperated with caliphal authority and aided the Caliphs with their resistance to the influence of the Turks. For instance, when the Caliph Mutawakkil decided definitely to rid himself of Itākh the governor of Baghdad, Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Tāhirī arrested Itākh and his two sons and jailed them. When the Caliph Mu'tazz appealed to the governor of Khurāsān Tāhir b. Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Tāhir to aid him with his plans against the Turks. Tāhir sent the troops of Khurāsān, led by his uncle Sulaimān b. 'Abdallāh to Sāmarrā'. The Caliphs organized new non-Turkish military divisions such as Maghāribā and Shākiryā, who proved more faithful towards the Caliphate and were hostile to the Turks. Maghāribā, for instance, did not hesitate to support the popular movements which aimed to diminish Turkish influence and to restore the dignity of the Caliphate. There is considerable evidence, however, that Maghāribā joined the rebels in 249 H, during the events which had occurred in Sāmarrā' in demonstrating their resentment against the Turks. The Turks were sometimes aided by Ḥarīm intrigues. Qabiha (Mutawakkil's wife and mother of Mu'tazz), for example, played an important role in killing the Caliph Musta'in by the Turks. It is clear that she actually hit one of Musta'in's slave women, because she cried for her master. It is

more significant that she inadvertently caused the death of her son Mu'tazz when she sided secretary with Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf who had had a bad relationship with her son the Caliph Mu'tazz.

The Turks vigorously opposed attempts to move the Caliphate from Ṣāmarrā' where they could control events, to any other centre where there would be rivals among the local people. When the Caliph Musta'in moved from Ṣāmarrā' to Baghdad in attempting to rid the Caliphate of interference by the Turks, the latter were worried and puzzled about the departure of the Caliph. On the one hand, the Turks thought the presence of the Caliph in Ṣāmarrā' was necessary to strengthen and legitimize their power. On the other hand, the Turks of Ṣāmarrā' realized that they had no supporters among the people of Baghdad, particularly the Ṭāhirids. Therefore, they sent a mission to the Caliph, and the mission admitted their sins and asked the Caliph to forgive them and to come back with them to Ṣāmarrā'.

It is noteworthy that after they had eliminated the Caliph Muntaṣir, the Turks became more hostile to the 'Alawīs, they persecuted them and their main supporters and encouraged the people to hate them. In addition, the leaders of military expeditions against the 'Alawīs were Turks. One may reasonably ask why the Turks opposed the 'Alawīs more than the Caliphs did? The answer, must be, of course, the greedy aspirations of the Turks towards the power. 'Alawīs were eager to regain control over the Caliphate and they had support among the common people, particularly in Iran, Ḥijāz and Kūfa in Iraq who were hostile to the Turks. Therefore, the Turks were scared of them believing that the 'Alawīs if they succeeded in controlling the state, the Turks would lose their positions.

There is little information about the Turks' attitude to non-Muslims because the historians of the time concentrate on political events. In point of fact, however, the Turks certainly continued to use non-Muslims as secretaries, and personal physicians.

The Turkish domination led to a variety of local disturbances which were directed more against Turkish control than against the 'Abbāsids as such. In Baghdad and Sāmarrā' there were popular uprisings which recalled the great rebellion at the time of Amīn. In H̱ijāz and Syria 'Arab groups protested against their exclusion from power while in Armenia the 'Arabs made common cause with the local Christians against Turkish governors. The 'Arabs had expressed their disapproval of the Turks to the representative of the Caliph Wāthiq, when he was sent, in 232 H, to investigate the causes behind their disturbances in H̱ijāz. They informed him that they condemned the employment of those slaves ('Abīd) and savages ('Ulūj) in the high offices of the state.

The Tāhirids were also hostile to the Turks. Possibly, because the Tāhirids were closely allied to the people of Baghdad who had opposed the Turks from the time they had arrived in Baghdad. On the other hand Tāhirids owed the legality of their position to the Caliphate. They were keen to defend it and aid it in the most critical times. Therefore, it is natural that Tāhirids were antagonistic towards the Turks, who undermined the Caliphate.

Under Mu'tasim and Mutawakkil there had been two parties in the state, the civilian Kuttāb in the bureaucracy, who were mostly 'Arab or Iranian and the army, who were mostly Turkish. After the death of Mutawakkil, the Turks tried to control the office of the Vizirate, first by appointing the Wazīrs and then by taking over the office themselves after it had been in the hands of civilians in order to control all the affairs of state. Waṣīf and Autāmish, the Turkish military commanders were elevated to the position of Wazīr. However, this attempt by the Turks to take over the Vizirate seems to have been unsuccessful. This was due to these factors:

1. The rivalry and internecine conflicts between the Turkish military leaders.
2. The Turks did not have the training to do the job.
3. The Caliphs were, in fact, always trying to retain control of the Vizirate themselves and to prevent the Turks from taking over the Vizirate completely. Eventually, the Wazīrs were again appointed by the Caliphs, when the Caliphate recovered its power and prestige during the reign of Mu'tamid.

In point of fact, the Caliphs during this period were far from being puppets. They tried valiantly and continuously to throw off Turkish influence and in the end, after many setbacks they succeeded. The successful Caliphs Mu'tamid and his successors were only able to exercise control again through efforts of their less fortunate predecessors.

The thesis presented here concentrates on the Turks and assesses their impact on the Islamic state from the time of their arrival in the reign of Ma'mūn to the death of Muhtadī in 256 H. Whereas Tikritī thesis, mentioned in the survey of sources, gives a more general account of affairs in the years he has chosen and devotes much of his attention to divisions and rivalries within the 'Abbāsīd family. My conclusion is also substantially different.

Tikritī takes the traditional view that the Caliphs were essentially powerless prisoners in the hands of the Turks. On the other hand, I have tried to show that all of them struggled, with varying degrees of success but always with courage and determination to free themselves from Turkish control.

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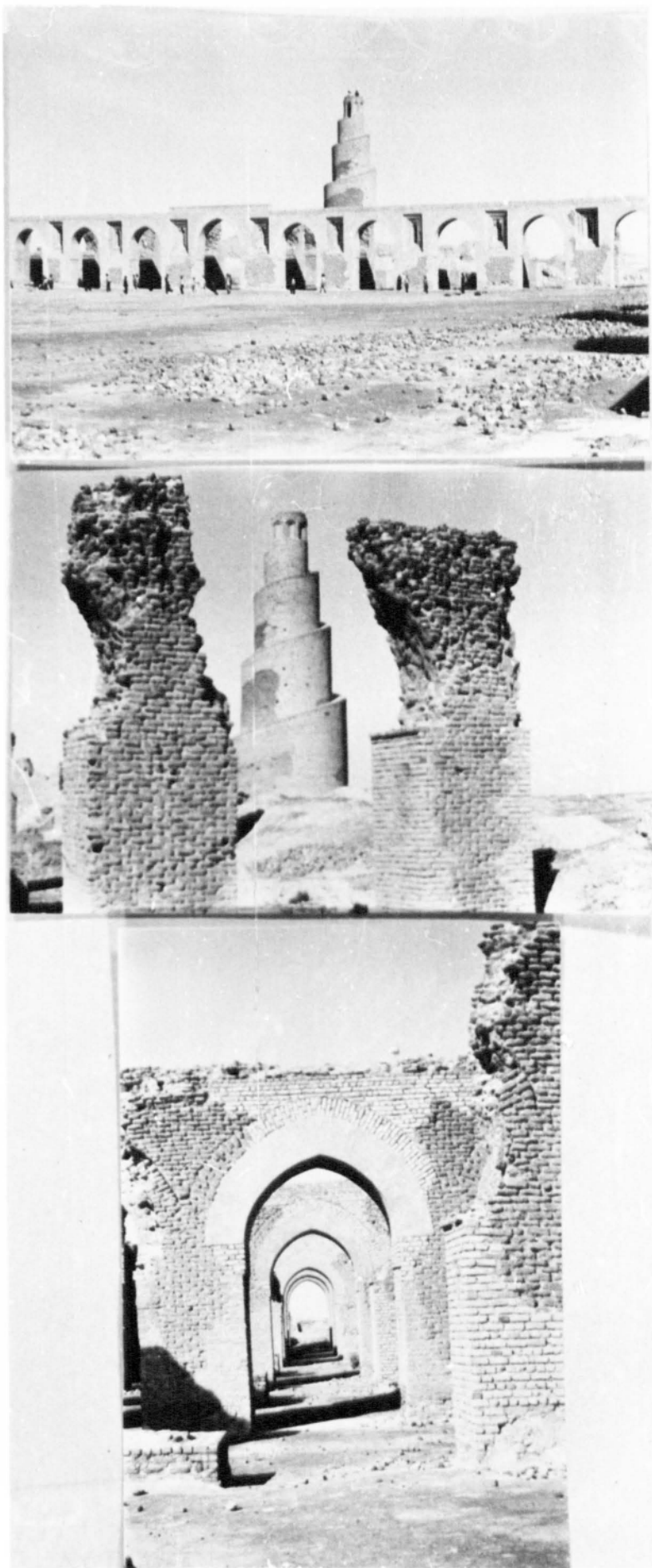
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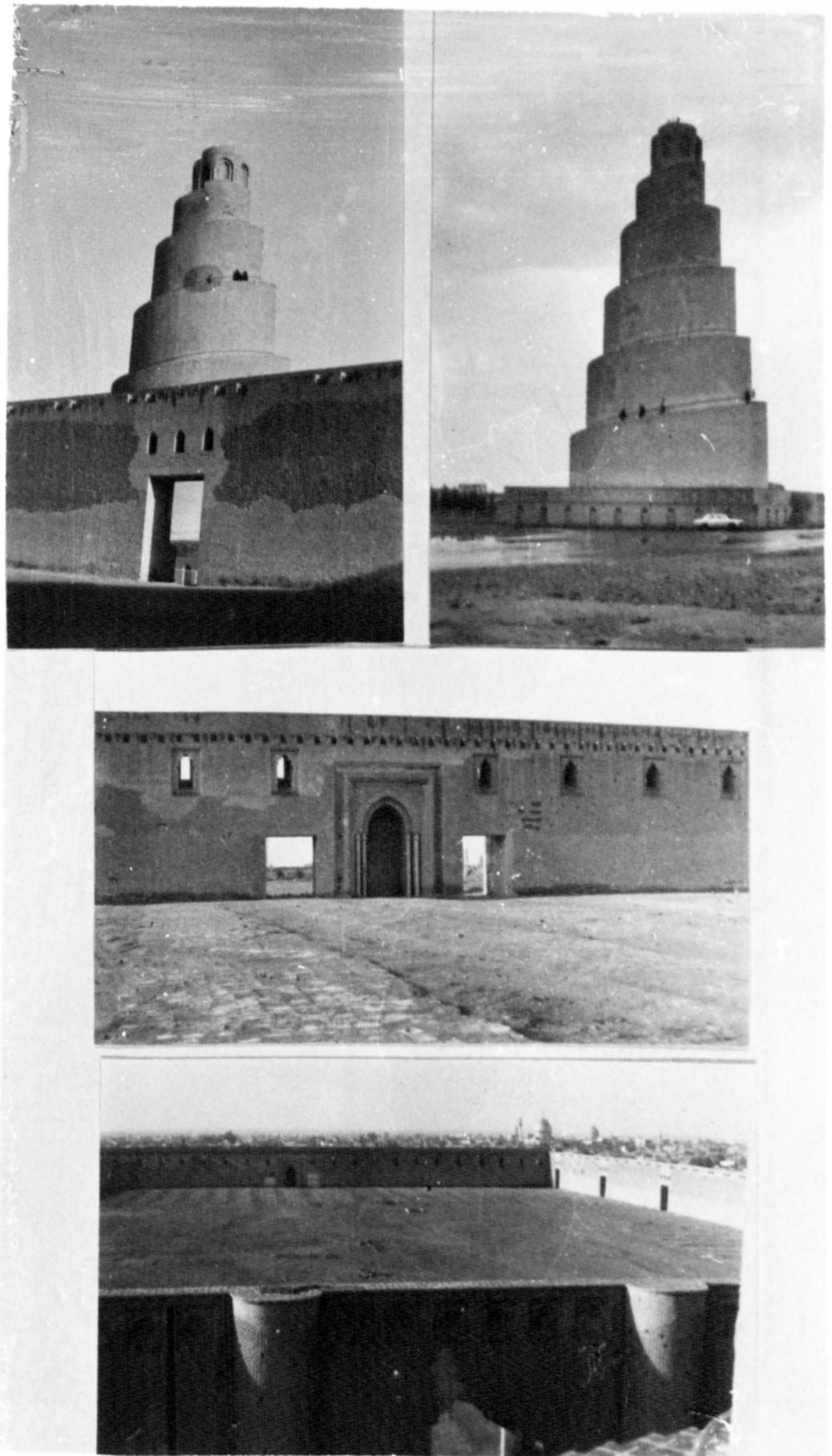
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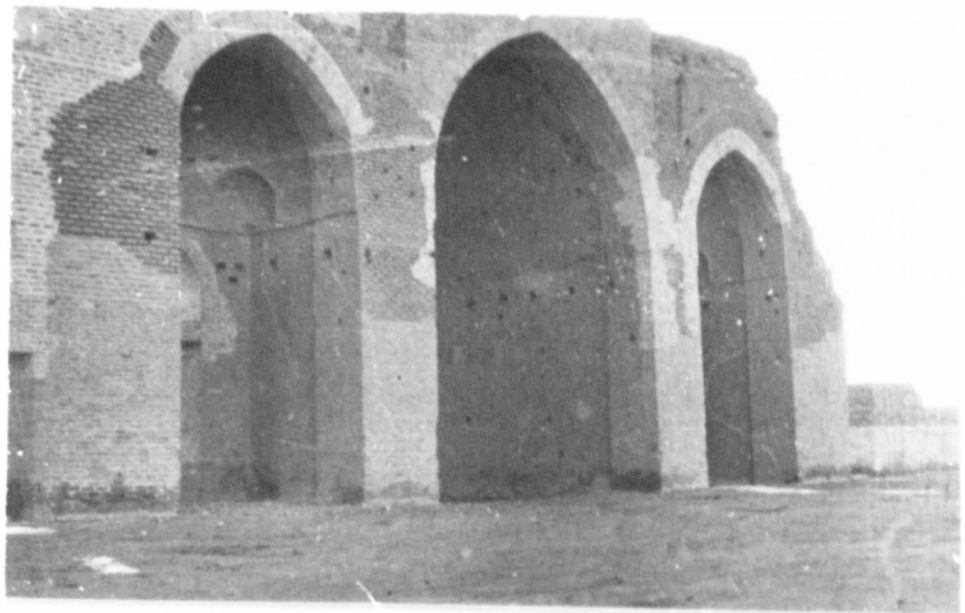
W. Barthold, Turkistan Down to the Mongol Invasion



The Mosque of Abū Dulaf in the town of Ja'fariyah

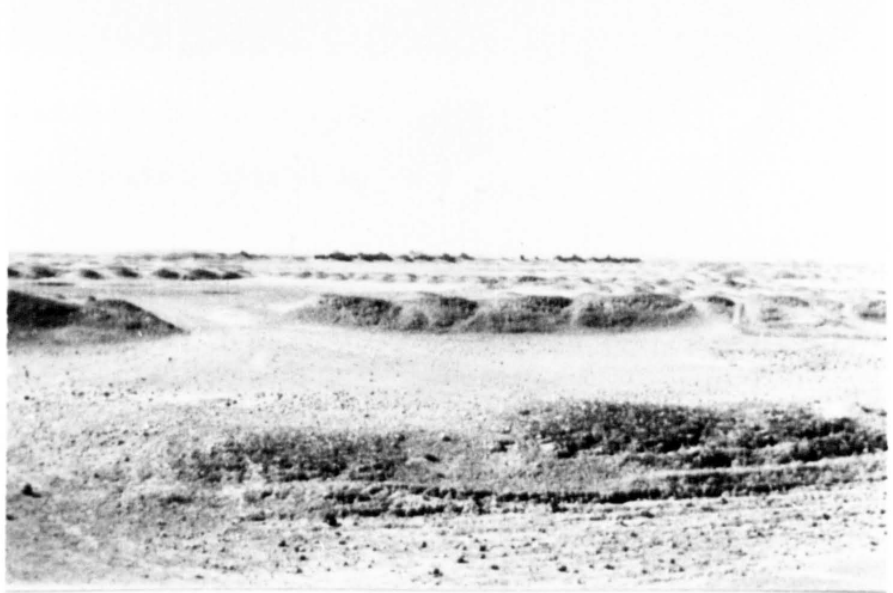


The Great Mosque (Masjid al-Jāmi') in Sāmarrā', with the famous Minaret (Malwiyah). Present day Sāmarrā' can be seen behind the Mosque.  
This Mosque was founded by Mu'tasim and later enlarged by Mutawakkil.



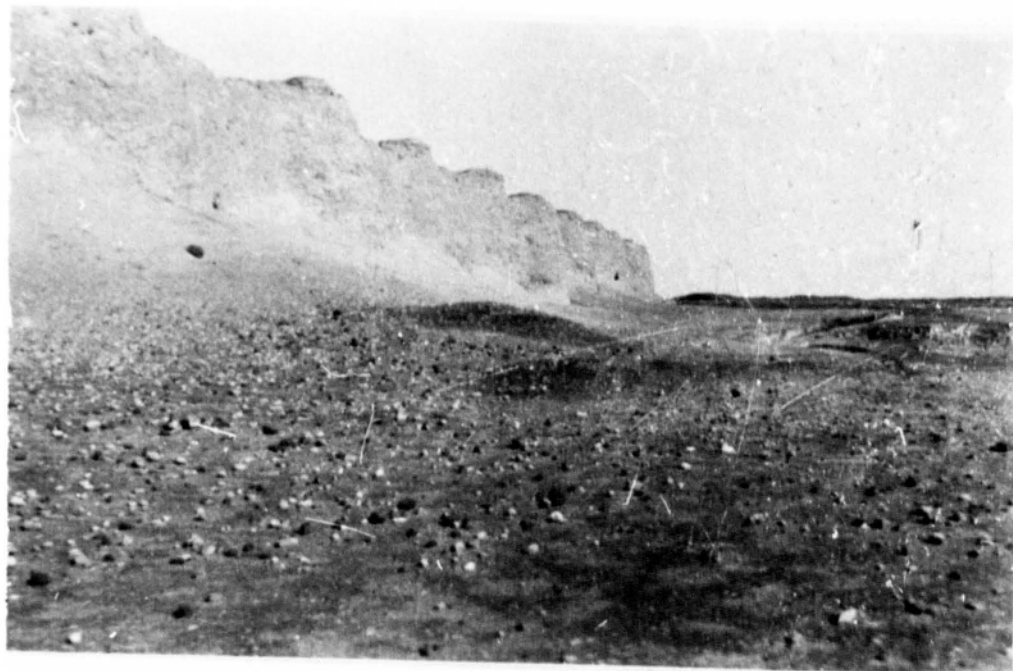
The Palace of Jawsaq al-Khāqāni. This was built by Mu'taṣim, and was the centre of government during the reigns of Mu'taṣim and Wāthiq.





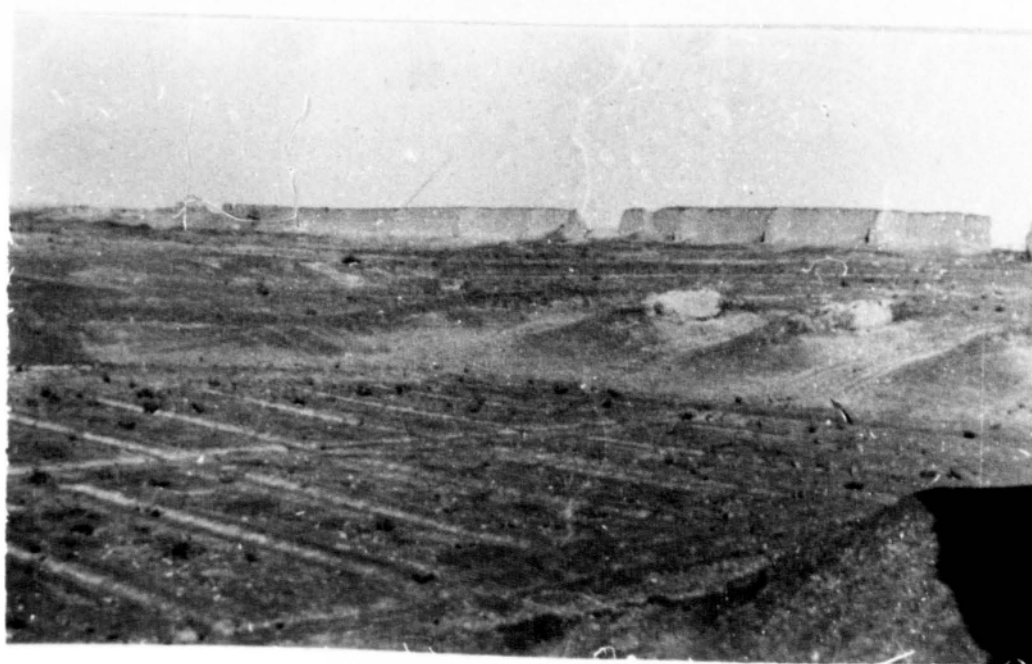
The ruins of J'fariyah (Mutawakkiliyah).

The Mosque of Abū Dulaf is visible in the top photograph. This is the new city which Mutawakkil built to escape from domination of the Turks in Sāmarrā'.



The Palace of Ashinās, the Turkish leader.

The local people still know it by this name.



The Palace of Mutawakkil (Ja'fari), showing remains of one wall and of the foundations. This is where Mutawakkil was assassinated in 247 H.