

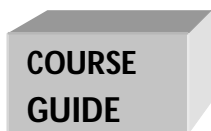


**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**COURSE CODE: ISL 324**

**COURSE TITLE: 'ABBĀSID CALIPHATE II**



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**COURSE GUIDE    ISL 324: ‘ABBĀSID CALIPHATE II**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

You are welcome to ISL 324: The 'Abbāsīd Caliphate II. This is a two-credit unit course. The material contains the continuing part of what has been discussed under the 'Abbasid Caliphate I (ISL272). This course guide gives you an overview of the course. It also provides you with information on the Organization and requirements of the course.

### **Course Aims**

The aim of this course is to help you to learn about one of the important periods in the history of Islam with particular focus on the roles of the founding fathers in the establishment and consolidation of the empire, the effect of the empire on the development or otherwise of Islam and the collapse of the empire.

### **Course Objectives**

To achieve the aims set out above, ISL 324 has overall objectives for the course as a whole. These are not the same with the specific objectives which are at the beginning of each unit and upon which you are advised to read before you start working through the unit. You may want to refer to them during your study of the unit to check your progress.

Presented below are the wider objectives of the course. By meeting these objectives, you regard yourself as having met the aims of the course. On successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

- (a) give the background to the emergence of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate.
- (b) know about the history of the founding fathers, their administrative policies, achievements and their weaknesses.
- (c) appraise the golden era of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate as well as its era of decline and eventual downfall.

- (d) discuss the factors that led to the rise of petty dynasties both in the western and the eastern parts of the empire.
- (e) identify the factors that led to the collapse of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate.

## **Working Through This Course**

To complete the course, you are required to read the study units and other related materials. You will also need to undertake practical exercises for which you need a pen, a notebook, and other materials that will be listed in this guide. The exercises are to aid you in understanding the concepts being presented. At the end of each unit, you will be required to submit written assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of the course, you will write a final examination.

## **Course Materials**

The major materials you will need for this course are:

- Course Guide
- Study Units
- Assignment file
- Relevant textbooks including the ones listed under each unit.

## **Study Units**

There are 8 units (of two modules) in this course. They are listed below:

### **MODULE 1: THE EARLY PERIOD OF THE 'ABBASID CALIPHATE**

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| Unit 1 | The enthronement of the Abbasids                          |
| Unit 2 | The beginning of the golden age of Islam                  |
| Unit 3 | Al-Mu'tasim And Al-Wathīq In The History Of The Caliphate |

### **MODULE 2: THE DECLINE AND FALL OF 'ABBĀSID CALIPHATE**

**Unit 1:** Khalifahs At Samarra: Al-Mutawakkil And His Successors

**Unit 2:** Petty Dynasties In The West

**Unit 3:** Petty Dynasties In The East

**Unit 4:** The Seljuk Turks And The Assassins

**Unit 5:** The Collapse Of The ‘Abbāsīd Empire

## **Textbooks and References**

Certain books have been recommended in the course. You may wish to purchase them for further reading. Assignment must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadline.

## **Assessment File**

An assessment File and a Marking Scheme will be made available to you. In the assessment file, you will find details of the works you must submit to your tutor for marking. There are two aspects of the assessment of this course; the tutor marked and the written examination. The marks you obtain in these two areas will make up your final marks. The assignment must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadline stated in the presentation schedule and the assessment file. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total score.

## **Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs)**

You will have to submit a specified number of the TMAs. Every unit in this course has a tutor marked assignment. You will be assessed on four of them but the best three performances from the TMAs will be used for your 30% grading. When you have completed each assignment, send it together with a Tutor Marked Assignment form to your tutor. Make sure each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline for submissions. If for any reason, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor for a discussion on the possibility of an extension. Extensions will not be granted after the due date unless under exceptional circumstances.

## **Final Examination and Grading**

The final examination will be a test of three hours. All areas of the course will be examined. Find time to read the unit all over before your examination. The final examination will attract 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions, which reflect the kinds of self-assessment exercises and tutor marked assignment you have previously encountered and all aspects of the course will be assessed. You should use the time between completing the last unit, and taking the examination to revise the entire course.

## **Course Marking Scheme**

The following table lays out how the actual course mark allocation is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignments ( best three assignments out of four marked)	=30%
Final Examination	=70%
Total	100%

## **Presentation Schedule**

The date for submission of all assignments will be communicated to you. You will also be told the date of completing the study units and date for examination.



## Course Overview and Presentation Schedule

Unit	Title of Work	Weeks Activity	
Course Guide			
<b>Module 1: The Early Period of the 'Abbasid Caliphate</b>			
1	The enthronement of the Abbasids	Week 1	Assignment 1
2	The beginning of the golden age of Islam	Week 2	Assignment 2
3	Al-Mu'tasim And Al-Wathīq In The History Of The Caliphate	Week 3	Assignment 3
<b>Module 2: The Decline And Fall Of 'Abbāsīd Caliphate</b>			
1	Khalifahs At Samarra: Al-Mutawakkil And His Successors	Week 4	Assignment 1
2	Petty Dynasties In The West	Week 5	Assignment 2
3	Petty Dynasties In The East	Week 6	Assignment 3
4	The Seljuk Turks And The Assassins	Week 7	Assignment 4
5	The Collapse of The 'Abbāsīd Empire	Week 8	Assignment 5
6	<b>Revision of Units 1, and 2</b>	<b>Week 9</b>	
7	<b>Revision of Unit 3</b>	<b>Week 10</b>	
8	<b>Revision of Unit 4</b>	<b>Week 11</b>	
9	<b>Revision of Unit 5</b>	<b>Week 12</b>	
10	<b>Revision of Unit 6</b>	<b>Week 13</b>	
11	<b>Revision of Unit 7</b>	<b>Week 14</b>	
12	<b>Revision of Unit 8</b>	<b>Week 15</b>	
11	<b>Examination</b>	<b>Week 16</b>	

## How to Get the Most from This Course

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecture. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning. You can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to the lecture. In the same way, a lecturer might give you some reading to do. The study units tell you what you have to read, and about relevant materials or set books. You are provided with exercises to do at appropriate points, just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise. Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is introduction to the subject matters of the units, and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next to this is a set of learning objectives. These learning objectives are meant to guide your study. The moment a unit is finished, you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If this is made a habit, then you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course. The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from reading section. The following is the practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any trouble, telephone your tutor. Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need assistance, do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly, it is your assignment.
2. Organize a Study Schedule. Design a 'Course Overview' to guide you through the course. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write in your own dates and Schedule of work for each unit.
3. Once you have created your own schedule, do everything to stay faithful to it. The major reason why students fail is that they get behind with their coursework. If you run into difficulties with your Schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late to help.
4. Turn to unit 1, and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.

5. Assemble the study materials. You will need your text books and the unit you are studying at any point in time. As you work through the unit, you will know what sources to consult for further information.
6. Keep in touch with your study centre. Up-to-date course information will be continuously available there.
7. Well before the relevant due date (about 4 weeks before due dates), keep in mind that you will learn a lot by doing the assignments carefully. They have been designed to help you meet the objectives of the course and therefore, will help you pass the examination. Submit all assignments not later than the due date.
8. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsecured about any of the objectives, review the study materials or consult your tutor.
9. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you can keep yourself on schedule.
10. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your Schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutors' comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also the written comment on the ordinary assignments.
11. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in the course guide).

## **Tutors and Tutorials**

Information relating to the tutorials will be provided at the appropriate time. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must take tutor-marked assignments to the study centre well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor if you need help. Contact your tutor if:

- You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings
- You have difficulty with the exercises
- You have a question or problem with an assignment or with your tutor's comments on assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face-to-face contact with your tutor and ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending the tutorials. You will learn a lot from participating in discussion actively.

### **Summary**

The course gives you an overview of what to expect in the course of this study. The course teaches you about the golden age of the Abbasid caliphate, the petty dynasties which led to decline in the caliphate and the eventual fall of the caliphate.

We wish you success with the course and hope you will find it both interesting and useful.



## **NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

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## **MODULE 1: THE EARLY PERIOD OF THE ABBASID CALIPHATE**

Unit 1	The enthronement of the Abbasids
Unit 2	The beginning of the golden age of Islam
Unit 3	Al-Mu'tasim And Al-Wathīq In The History Of The Caliphate

### **Unit 1: The enthronement of the Abbasids**

#### **Contents**

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Summary of the ascension of the Abbāsids into Khilāfah
3.2	The efforts of Abu Muslim
3.3	Early period of the Abbāsīd dynasty
3.4	The effects of the Abbasid administration
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor Marked Assignments
7.0	References/ Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In ISL272 offered while you were in 200 level of your programme, you were taken through the ascension into the Khilāfah of the Abbasid dynasty after the fall of the Umayyad caliphate. It was there and then the life histories, achievements and weaknesses of some of the Khalifahs of the early Abbasid period were discussed. This ISL324 is the continuation of ISL272 and it is here the concluding part of the Abbasid period, starting from its golden age to its fall, will be discussed in detail.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of our lesson in this unit, student should be able to:

- explain briefly what led to the fall of the Umayyad dynasty
- give a summary of the ascension to power of the Abbasid dynasty
- mention the effects of the Abbasid administration

## **3.0 Main content**

### **3.1 Summary of the ascension of the Abbāsids into Khilāfah**

As you came across in ISL272 (The Abbasid Caliphate I), some ugly incidences that occurred during the later period of the Umayyad dynasty made the dynasty lose its credibility. For example the gruesome massacre at Karbala of Ali's son- Hussein, was considered a great disaster and an irreparable damage done to the household of the Prophet. Added to this was the alienation of the non-Arabs or the Mawālīs and their denial of equal rights which Islam has given to all. Many of the Umayyad Khalīfah ran the dynasty as if it were their personal property. The Hashimids and the Umayyads were the two branches of the Quraysh family. The Prophet belonged to the Hashimid branch which in itself divided into the Alids or Fatimids and the Abbasids. The atrocities of the Umayyads did not go down well with the Alids and the Abbasids who saw themselves as the rightful successors to the Khilāfah and considered the Umayyads as usurpers. The supporters of the Alids formed themselves into a group known as the *Shi'ah* and they were looking for means of avenging the death of Hussein by dethroning the Umayyads and restoring the rights of the Alids. Found in the lead of those who supported the Alids were the Iraqis who, under the Umayyad Khalīfahs, lost all the influences they had enjoyed at the time of Khalīfah Ali ibn Abi Talib who made Kufah the capital of the Arab empire. The Alids, who could not raise an army strong enough to suppress the Umayyads, went into alliance with the Abbasids who were stronger and more organized.

### **3.2 The efforts of Abu Muslim**

The real move towards the displacement of the Umayyads was started during the period of Ibrahim, son of Muhammad, as the head of the Abbasid family. He employed a strong and brave man of Persia decent called Abu Muslim to lead his propaganda against the Umayyads. Abu Muslim, who was said to be

an adherent of an earlier revolutionary movement that centered on Kufah towards the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, enjoyed the backing of the Iraqis and the Persians who saw him as a great hero and a Messiah who had come to deliver the Mawālīs from the Arabs chauvinism. He anchored his propaganda on the banner of “*Ahlul bayt*” to show that he was representing the interest of the family of the Prophet. The Mawālīs were the non-Arab Muslim converts adopted to serve as client under their Arab lords who were considered to be their protectors. The Mawālīs, despite being Muslims, were discriminated against and treated as second class citizens under the Umayyad Khalīfah until the reign of Khalīfah Umar ibn Abdul Aziz who abolished the system.

Thus, Abu Muslim, supported by a large following, championed the Abbāsīd revolution against the Umayyad to fruition. His efforts were intensified until the last ruling Umayyad Khalīfah- Marwān II, was defeated at the battle of the Zab river. Hence, Abu Muslim unfurled the black flag of the Abbasids in Khurasan with the motto “Felicity will come from the People of the House”. This victory over the Umayyads was celebrated in various communities. For instance, it was celebrated on the night of 25 Ramadan, 129 A.H. in Safidhanj, a village on the outskirts of Merv. The Shaykh of the village, Sulaiman ibn Kathir, led a group of people dressed in black to an assembly ground raising two large black banners. It was there and then Abu Muslim chanted a verse from the Qur’ān: ‘Leave is given to those who fight because they were wronged; surely Allah is able to help them’ (22:39). The eventual emergence of Abul Abbas As-Saffah in 750 C.E. as the first Abbasid Khalīfah signaled the beginning of over 500 years reigning period of the Abbāsīd caliphate which came to an end in 1258 C.E.



Abbasid Flag

### Self Assessment Exercise I

Give brief account of what led to the fall of the Umayyad.

### 3.3 Early period of the Abbāsīd dynasty

Abbasid dynasty was formed by two brothers – Abul Abbas and al-Mansur, who both worked together to build the foundation of the dynasty. Abul Abbas, having been proclaimed the Khalīfah both in Khurasan and Kufah, became



very cruel against the Umayyads. He was vindictive and merciless on them especially for killing his brother Ibrahim. For letting much blood of his enemies, he was nicknamed As-Saffah i.e. the blood thirsty. Abul Abbas reigned from 750 to 754 C.E. Upon his death, a number of people from the side of the Alids made attempts to take over the khilāfah. After a period of time, the mantle of leadership fell on the head of As-Saffah's brother, Abu Ja'far Al-Mansur, who reigned from 754 to 775 C.E. as the second recognized Abbasid Khalīfah. It was Al-Mansur that consolidated the young dynasty having subdued different revolts that threatened its stability. The activities of the Byzantine Emperors who always raided the Muslim territories became nightmares to the Al-Mansur's regime. Also, the Rawendiya sect rose in Persia whose peculiar belief that the Khalīfah was God incarnate troubled the Khalīfah Al-Mansur. This group would come to the palace and shout, "It is the house of our Lord, he that giveth us food to eat and water to drink". Khalīfah Al-Mansur dealt decisively with all these challenges and thus got the Abbāsīd dynasty stabilized.

### **3.4 The effects of the Abbasid administration**

The enthronement of the Abbāsīds was considered a victory of the non-Arabs, especially the Iranians, over the Arab-centered Umayyad administrations. The victory leveled up the line of inequality drawn between the Arabs and the non-Arabs. It brought in commercial and economic development as there was expansion of trade and trading activities in different parts of the empire. Muslim coins became popular in places such as Sweden, Denmark, the Balkan and Baltic. Earliest Swedish and English coins were said to be based on Arabic coins.



Coin of the Abbasids, [Baghdad](#), Iraq, 765.

There emerged in the empire the merchant class comprising of people who invested their wealth in trading. Thus, there was large accumulation of capital, massive supply of gold and silver, and large banking credit. All of these facilitated expansion of trade during the early period of the Abbasid Empire.

On the negative aspect, the early Abbasid Khalīfahs, right from Abul Abbas As-Saffah, did not accord due recognition to those who supported them during their struggles against the Umayyad. Although As-Saffah surrounded himself with theologians whom he pretended to take advice from, positions of authority were filled mostly by the Abbasids with great assistance from the Barmakides. The Shi'ites, though sometimes honoured and respected, remained powerless. The Khārijites, who were known to be seriously opposed to the Umayyads, were given little recognition by As-Saffah-led Abbasid administration. Wealthy and popular viceroys, generals, and ministers were executed for fear of becoming threats to the new administration. This continued until the Khilāfah of Hārūn ar-Rasheed who tried to change the status-quo.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

The fall of the Umayyads and the subsequent emergence of the Abbasid dynasty was considered a big success to those who saw the Umayyads as usurpers and unqualified for the Khilāfah. The Abbasid regime was greeted with encomium and with great expectations. However, as you have seen in the discussion above, those who rallied round the Abbāsids, especially the Alids, were disappointed as they were not accorded expected recognition which later resulted in discords and agitations as you will find out later in subsequent lessons.

#### **5.0 Summary**

Following is the summary of what you have learnt in the unit one above:

- People were fed up with the administration of the Umayyads and therefore wanted a change.
- The Alids and the Abbasids capitalized on the weaknesses of the Umayyads to garner support of the people against their (Umayyads') administrations.
- Marwan II was the last Umayyad Khalīfah.
- Abu Muslim was the anchorman of the Abbasid propaganda against the Umayyads.
- Abul Abbas As-Saffah was the first Khalīfah of the Abbasid dynasty.
- Abul Abbas suppressed a great number of revolts and rebellions to get the Abbasid dynasty consolidated.
- There was expansion in trade during the Abbasid period.

- Most of the Abbasid Khalīfahs did not accord expected recognition to their supporters.

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments**

Explain the role played by Abu Muslim in putting the Abbasid regime on the throne.

## **7.0 References/ Further Readings**

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## **Unit 2 The beginning of the golden age of Islam**

### **Content**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Khalīfah Hārūn Rashīd
  - 3.2 The Barmakids
  - 3.3 The fall of the Barmakids
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/ Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

You learnt in the last lesson about the ascension of the Abbasid dynasty, the role played by Abu Muslim who championed the Abbasid propaganda, and the effect of the Abbasid dynasty on the people within the empire. In this unit, we will be looking at the personality of one of the greatest Abbasid Khalīfahs by name Hārūn Rashīd.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of our lesson in this unit, student should be able to:

- give a brief biography of Khalīfah Hārūn Rashīd.
- mention some of the challenges faced by Khalīfah Hārūn Rashīd.
- discuss the rise and fall of the Barmakids
- explain why a period is described as golden in Islamic history

### **3.0 Main content**

#### **3.1 Khalīfah Hārūn Rashīd**

Hārūn Rashīd became the Khalīfah in 786 A.D. at the age of 25. He succeeded his brother, Hadi who died in the same year. He was the second son of Khalīfah Al-Mahdi who ruled between 775 and 785 A.D. Before his death, Khalīfah Al-Mahdi arranged that his two sons, Al-Hadi and Hārūn Rashīd should succeed him into the Khalīfah in that order. However when Al-Hadi became the

Khalīfah, he attempted to disregard the arrangement of their father and nominated his own son, Ja'far, to succeed him. He persecuted Hārūn and those who supported him. Yahya ibn Khalid who was Hārūn's principal adviser and several other servants were imprisoned. This made Hārūn run into hiding for his safety. But at the death of Al-Hadi, it was Hārūn that eventually succeeded him. Khalīfah Hārūn Rashīd was one of the most successful rulers of history. His reign was full of events which brought glory to Islam. Quoting P.K. Hitti on the personality of Hārūn, Abdul (1988) says:

The ninth century opened with two imperial names standing Supreme in the world affairs: Charlemagne in the West and Hārūn al-Rashīd in the East. Of the two, Hārūn was undoubtedly the more powerful and represented the higher culture. The two great monarchs had also entered into friendly relations with each other and in this they were prompted by mutual self interest. Charlemagne cultivated Hārūn as a possible ally against hostile Byzantium and Hārūn desired to use Charlemagne against his rivals and deadly foes, the neighbouring Umayyads of Spain who had succeeded in establishing a mighty and prosperous state.

Khalīfah Hārūn Rashīd dispatched military operations against the rival Byzantine Empire in the North West. The Empress of Byzantium named Irene was said to have reached an agreement with Khalīfah Mahdi to be paying annual tribute to the Islamic caliphate. But Irene was deposed and her successor, a Roman officer named Nicephorus decided to reverse the policy of paying tribute which he considered as making Byzantium subservient to the Khalīfah. Emperor Nicephorus therefore dispatched an ambassador to the Khalīfah Hārūn Rashīd in 804 C.E. with a letter that reads:

From Nicephorus King of the Romans to Hārūn King of the Arabs. The queen who preceded me on the throne looked upon you as a castle and herself as a pawn. She paid to you her wealth, whereas in reality you should have paid twice the amount to her, but that was due to the weakness and foolishness of women. On reading my letter, therefore, you must pay back that which you unjustly took from her or else the sword will decide between us.

Khalīfah Hārūn was very angry having read the letter. He turned the back of the letter and wrote his own reply which reads thus:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. From Hārūn the Commander of the Faithful to Nicephorus the dog of the Romans. I have read your letter, you son of a heathen mother. As for the reply it is for your eyes to see and not for your ears to hear.

On that same day, Khalīfah Hārūn Rashīd led an army of about 35,000 men against Emperor Nicephorus who was defeated and had ignominious tax imposed on him in addition to the tribute which he said he could not pay to the Khalīfah.

### **Self Assessment Exercise I**

Write a short biography of Khalīfah Hārūn Rashīd.

### **3.2 The Barmakids**

The Barmakid family was a famous and powerful Persian family in the history of 'Abbāsīd Caliphate. The head of this family was Khalid al-Barmak who was the son of a *barmak* the chief priest in Buddhist monastery. Khalid embraced Islam when Central Asia was overrun and subdued under the command of Qutaybah ibn Muslim in 84 A.H./705 C.E. He played very significant role in the 'Abbāsīd movement under the leadership of Abū Muslim. The intimacy of Khalid with the Caliph was indicated in the fact that his daughter was nursed by the wife of as-Saffah and the daughter of the Caliph was likewise nursed by Khalid's wife. He began his career very early under the 'Abbāsīd and rose to the headship of the *diwan al-kharaj* (i.e. finance department). He later became governor of Tabaristan where he suppressed a dangerous uprising. He was also at a time an adviser to al-Mansūr and had very considerable influence over the Caliph. Later in his life, he played an important role in the capture of a Byzantine fortress. Khalid became the founder of the illustrious family of *wazirs*.

The importance of this family and their roles were numerous. First, al-Mansūr's successor al-Mahdi had entrusted the education of his son Hārūn to Yahya the son of Khalid. When Hārūn eventually became the Caliph, Yahya ibn Barmak became his vizier with an unrestricted power. The respect accorded Yahya by the new Caliph can be located in the latter's often reference to the former as 'my father'. According to Amir Ali, in the instrument of appointment given to Yahya, Hārūn was quoted to have concluded:

'I devolve upon you the responsibility of my subjects; you may pass judgements as you like, for I shall not occupy my self with these matters with you'

In this regard, Yahya was practically in charge of the administration between 164A.H/786C.E. and 182AH/803C.E. when political intrigues within Hārūn's cabinet threw the Barmakids out of favour with the government.

Meanwhile the popularity they enjoyed was not lost in their life style as they had their palaces in eastern Baghdād. One of these magnificent residences called al-Ja'fari was later occupied by al-Ma'mūn who transformed it into the royal palace. Members of this family were said to have amassed so much wealth that the fractions they saw fit to bestow on panegyrists was enough to make the latter wealthy.

The Barmakids were Shi'ites and did not hide their allegiance to Shi'te leaders. Their ingenuity became known in the various areas by which each member of this family was endowed, for example al-Fadl is reputed with being the first in Islam to introduce the use of lamps in the mosque during the month of Ramadan. Ja'far became famous for eloquence, literary ability and penmanship. In words of Hitti, 'Chiefly because of him Arab historians regard the Barmakids as the founders of the class designated "people of the pen" (*ahl al-qalam*).

### **Self Assessment Exercise II**

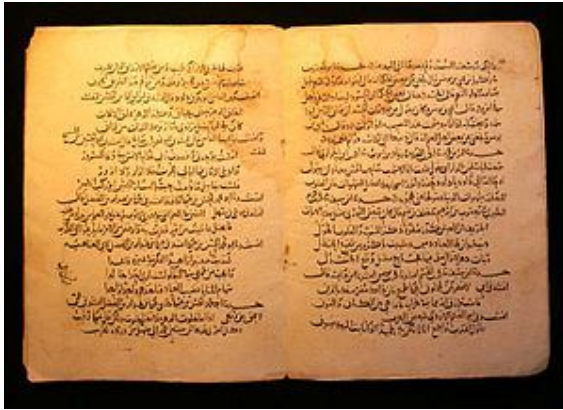
Explain the role played by the Barmakids in the consolidation of the Abbasid dynasty.

### **3.3 The fall of the Barmakids**

Most of the achievements recorded by Hārūn Rashīd and his successors were credited to the support given by the Barmakids especially Yahya son of Khalid, the founder of the Barmakid family. The services of these people raised the glory of the Abbasid and that of Islam to the greater height. This was attested to by Amir Ali as quoted by Rahim (1981) saying: "The people were prosperous, the empire had grown rich and strong, national wealth had increased and the arts of civilized life were cultivated everywhere." However, at a point the Barmakids began to fall both in their status and glory. Although some story tellers attributed their fall to a secret marriage between Ja'far and Abbasa, a sister of Hārūn Rashīd, Ibn Khaldun does not share that belief. According to him, the fall was caused by their too much exertion of power. They became so powerful that even Khalīfah Hārūn had to ask for money from the Barmakid Chancellor. Ibn Khaldun writes, "Their influence was unlimited and their renown had spread in every direction...Their praises were sung by all and they were far more popular than their master." As a result of this, jealousy, rivalry, enmity, and contention started between the Barmakids who were Persians and the Arabs. This rivalry was seen as happening between Shi'ism and Sunnism. The Arabs, who felt bitter and cheated, started to look for a way of regaining their lost positions and their influence in administration. A lot of reports got to



the Khalīfah about the intention of the Persians to overthrow the Abbasid Khilāfah by the Barmakids. In reaction to all these and in an attempt to safeguard the Abbasid dynasty, Khalīfah Hārūn Rashīd ordered the assassination Ja'far and imprisonment of his father and brothers. He also directed that their properties be confiscated. Many of the principal leaders of the Barmakids thus died in prison. This is how the Barmakids, who had one time been trusted loyalists and benefactors of the Abbasids, fell and lost their positions. Their fall was seen by the Arabs as a great victory because it gave them the opportunity to take their coveted position in the Khilāfah.



A manuscript written during the Abbasid Era.

### Self Assessment Exercise III

Briefly explain what led to the fall of the Barmakids

#### 4.0 Conclusion

The coming up of the Abbasids and the successes recorded by their early Khalīfahs could be attributed to the support of the Barmakids who were members of a family of Persian origin. They played major role in establishing and consolidating the dynasty. As a result, they enjoyed unprecedented privileges in the Khilāfah because they occupied high positions and had great influence in administration. However, they were so engrossed by their position that the Khalīfah nearly lost his position and authority to them. This caused enmity and rivalry that led to their eventual fall.

#### 5.0 Summary

Following is the summary of our discussions above:

- Hārūn Rashīd became the Khalīfah in 786 A.D.

- His brother persecuted him greatly just in order to deny him opportunity of succeeding him.
- He was adjudged one of the most successful rulers in history.
- He fought and defeated Emperor Nicephorus of the Byzantine Empire.
- The Barmakids of Persian origin enjoyed significant patronages in the Khilāfah of Hārūn Rashīd.
- The Barmakids misused their positions and this made the Khalīfah to lose his trust in them.
- Enmity and jealousy broke out between the Persians and their Arab hosts.
- The Khalīfah waged war against the Barmakids and thus they lost their positions and honour in the Abbasid administrations.

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

1. Explain the circumstances that brought Khalīfah Hārūn Rashīd to power.
2. Explain how the Barmakids lost their privileges in the administration of Khalīfah Hārūn Rashīd.

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## **Unit 3 Al-Mu'tasim And Al-Wathīq In The History Of The Caliphate**

### **CONTENT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Al-Mu'tasim(213-222A.H./833-842C.E.):Ascension, Administration and Achievements
  - 3.2 Al-Wathīq (222-227A.H./842-847C.E): Ascension, Administration and Achievements
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked assignment
- 7.0 References / Further reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit, an extensive study of al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn was made. In this unit, we shall focus on al-Mutasim and al-Wathiq. The two were the last khalifahs in the glorious era of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate. In addition, the unit shall give an appraisal of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate during the same era.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the rise of al-Mutasim, and al-Wathīq into the Caliphate
- highlight major incidents that characterized the life of each of them as Khalifahs.
- give an account of the 'Abbāsīd administration during the glorious era.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Al-Mu'tasim (213-222A.H./833-842C.E.): Ascension, Administration and Achievements

Before the death of Caliph al-Ma'mūn, he had nominated his brother Ish-āq as his successor. Ish-āq ascended the 'Abbāsīd throne in September 213A.H./833C.E with the name of *al-Mu'tasim bi-llah* (meaning he who takes refuge in Allah.) The reason for his choice by al-Ma'mūn could not be ascertained as his son 'Abbās who was very popular with the army should have been chosen. Al-Mu'tasim's maturity may have favoured his choice by al-Ma'mūn as the better candidate to maintain the continuity of action. The popularity enjoyed by 'Abbās almost caused disaffection among the army who were not disposed to the choice of Mu'tasim, but 'Abbās, not willing to go against his father's wish pledged allegiance to al-Mu'tasim and persuaded the army to support him.

Lack of confidence in the army made Mu'tasim to form new bodyguards consisting of the Turkish slaves. This new element introduced into the army which was hitherto composed of Arabs and Persians was a fatal blunder which ultimately led to the collapse of the Caliphate. The bodyguards were under the command of their own officers who were directly under the sovereign. They were therefore completely separated from the Arab and Persian troops before long, the guards became too powerful and Caliph al-Mu'tasim, feeling insecure moved with his favourite corps to Samarra, north-east of Baghdad. There he built a palace for himself and trenches that could accommodate two hundred and fifty thousand soldiers. He also provided stables for 160,000 horses. The power of the Turks reached its zenith when they assumed the *de facto* authority on who to depose and install as sovereign; all at their will and pleasure.

Caliph al-Mu'tasim, though not as brilliant as his immediate predecessor, faithfully followed the policy of his great brother. He had great interest in learning and patronised scholars. His era witnessed the flourishing of science and philosophy under such distinguished scholars as al-Kindi, "the philosopher of the Arabs". In pursuance of his brother's policy on religion, al-Mu'tasim recognized Mu'tazilite doctrines and put many of its adherents in high offices of the state. With this, Mu'tazilite ideas continued to dominate the life and thought of the empire and whoever refused to accept the doctrine was severely dealt with. Like al-Ma'mūn, al-Mu'tasim concerned himself with the welfare of his people. It is remarkable that under his benevolent rule, agriculture, industry and commerce prospered and people lived in peace and happiness. The reign of Mu'tasim witnessed the appearance of some people on the bank of the Tigris, terrorizing the people of Baghdād and adjoining territories. The forces sent by the Caliph engaged them in severe battle for seven months after which they surrendered themselves to the Muslim generals who brought them to Baghdād. They were settled on the frontiers of Cilicia.

In 217AH /838CE al-Mu'tasim raised a large army equipped; according to Hitti 'as no Caliph's army before had ever been equipped' and penetrated into the heart of Roman lands and although he temporarily occupied

Ammuriyyah, his attempt on the whole was unsuccessful. Also, there was the reappearance of Babek in Mazendran who was giving trouble to the people of Azerbaijan. Al-Mu‘tasim had to deal with him by sending his Turkish general Afshin against him. After three years of intensive fighting, Babek was defeated and captured. He was taken to Samarra where he was executed. While the campaign against Babek was going on, the Byzantine Emperor called Theophilus was attacking the Muslim territories, killing several thousands of people and destroying properties. Al-Mu‘tasim’s plan to advance further in Byzantine territory failed as his discovery of a plot to assassinate him obliged him to abandon the idea. The Caliph returned to Samarra, and got wind of a dangerous rebellion under Madhar, a Magian prince of Tabaristan. His force under Abdullah ibn Tāhir crushed this rebellion after much fighting, and captured him. Madhar disclosed that the Turkish general Afshin had instigated him to this rebellion. Upon investigation, his statement was found to be correct and Madhar was executed. Afshin was confined in his house and starved to death.

Al-Mu‘tasim died in 222A.H./842.C.E. after a reign of about nine years. He was the last great Caliph of the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISES 1**

Account for the circumstances that led to al-Mu‘tasim’s movement of the capital from Baghdād to Samarra.

### **3.2 Al-Wathīq (222-227A.H./842-847C.E):**

#### **Ascension, Administration and Achievements**

Abu Ja‘far Harun, son of al-Mu‘tasim succeeded his father as the ninth caliph of the ‘Abbāsīd empire and bore the title, *al-Wathīq bi-llah* meaning (the one who trusts Allah), simply called al-Wathīq. He was described as an excellent ruler who combined generosity, forbearance and patience. As an able and enlightened ruler, he gave patronage to art and letters and encouraged industry and commerce. His period witnessed peace, prosperity and progress. Against the general misrepresentation of his character especially by the orthodox writers, al-Wathīq’s private life was above reproach. He had personal interest in music as he was also a poet. Al-Wathīq continued the Mu‘tazilite doctrine as a state religion. Al-Wathīq favoured the Turks and appointed a Turk named Ashnasas as “sultan” or lieutenant. Al-Wathīq died in 227A.H./847 C.E. and his death was said to have closed a generation of able rulers of the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Assess briefly the performance of al-Wathīq

### 3.3 Appraisal of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate during its Early Periods

The early periods of the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty indicated a brilliant period of political, religious and intellectual life. The period is usually referred to as the golden era of Islam. The foundation laid by its founding fathers such as al-Saffah and al-Mansūr reached its peak in the period between the reigns of the third caliph, al-Mahdi, and the ninth, al-Wathīq, more particularly in the days of Hārūn ar-Rashīd and his son al-Ma’mūn. It was through these two illustrious khalifahs that the dynasty became a success story in the history of Islam. The dictum quoted by the anthologist al-Thaalibi and cited by Hitti that, of the ‘Abbāsīd khalifahs “the opener” was al-Mansūr, “the Middler” was al-Ma’mūn and “the closer” was al-Mu’tadīd (271-282A.H/892-902 C.E.) is therefore credible. What made this period unique can be explained as follows:

**Adoption of theocratic system of government:** It is generally believed that the achievements of the ‘Abbāsīds during the early period represent the adoption of the true concept of theocratic state as against the purely secular state of the Umayyads. The Religious character of the Caliph during this period was indicated by his accession. These dressings include the mantle (Burdah) once worn by the Prophet and his scepter. Since they came to power on the crest of religion; they have no option at least during this initial period than to lay stress on religious aspects to retain the support of the community. To this extent therefore, they made public observance of religious ceremonies obligatory. In addition, caliph during the period surrounded himself with men versed in Islamic laws whom he patronized and whose advice on matters of state affairs he sought. Unlike the Umayyad Empire which was purely Arab in nature and the government Arab based, the ‘Abbāsīd government was more international with the Arabs forming only one of the many components of the new Neo-Muslim Empire. The early period of the ‘Abbāsīd era also witnessed a high level diplomatic relation between the Arabs and the outside world. Of particular mention was the diplomatic exchange between the Franks (Europeans) at the time of Emperor Charlemagne. According to some Western authors quoted by Hitti: ‘This reciprocity of cordial feelings found expression... in the exchange of a number of embassies and presents.’

The idea of this exchange can be explained in the ultimate desire of both Charlemagne and Hārūn to find a possible ally against their hostile neighbours. For instance, Charlemagne needed Hārūn as a possible ally against hostile Byzantium while Hārūn desired to use Charlemagne against his rivals and deadly foes, the neighbouring Umayyads of Spain, who had succeeded in establishing a mighty and prosperous state. The prosperity of the early period also became manifest in the luxurious living of the Khalifahs and the members of their family, the officials, functionaries and other satellites of the imperial household. Regular payment of heavy stipends from the state treasury was made to the family until the practice was discontinued by al-Mu’tasim. Historical accounts indicate that Caliph Hārūn ar-Rashīd’s mother, al-Khayzurān, usually received an annual income of 160,000,000 dirhams. Another source stated that a certain Muhammad ibn-Sulayman, whose property was confiscated on his death by ar-Rashīd, left 50,000,000 dirhams in cash and

a daily income of 100,000 dirhams from his real estate. Examples could still be drawn from many others who lived opulence lives during the period. The Barmakids represented a good reference point.

The period had its great landmark in the intellectual awakening which was followed by many of their successors in later periods. This awakening which had briefly been discussed under each caliph upon whom it flourished was due in a large measure to foreign influences, partly Indo-Persian and Syrian but mainly Hellenic. It is therefore not surprising that after the establishment of Baghdād the Arabic-reading world was exposed to the chief philosophical works of Aristotle, the medical writings of Galen, as well as of Persian and Indian scientific works. Hārūn and even al-Mansūr were said to have got a number of books from the east. Since many of these works were in foreign languages and the Arabians could not read them, they had at first to depend upon translations made by their subjects, among who were Jews, Heathen and more particularly Nestorian Christians. These Nestorians translated the works first into Syrian and then from Syrian into Arabic. They thus became the strongest link between Hellenism and Islam.

Abu-Yahya ibn al-Bitriq is credited to have been the pioneer translator of Greek works, having translated for al-Mansūr the major works of Galen and Hippocrates. But evidently all these early translations were not accurate and had to be revised under ar-Rashīd and al-Ma'mūn.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The early period of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate indicated an era of able rulers whose tenure witnessed an empire at the zenith of its power. With the exception of al-Amīn, the zeal and commitment with which they pursue the state matters speak volume of their foresight, resilience and industry by which they became known in world Islamic history.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

- Before the death of al-Ma'mūn, he has nominated his brother, al-Mu'tasim as Caliph.
- Mu'tasim was not comfortable with the army who showed more loyalty to 'Abbās, his nephew than to himself.
- To safeguard himself against possible army revolt, he raised four thousand bodyguards composed mainly of Turkish slaves.
- The freedom given to these guards got into their heads and they began to persecute the people.
- The caliph, afraid of possible violent reaction from the people moved the seat of his government to Samarra.
- Al-Wathīq succeeded al-Mu'tasim as the ninth caliph
- By character, he was generous and patient
- His reign was the last among the able rulers of the 'Abbāsīd dynasty.
- 'Abbāsīd caliphate reached its zenith during the early periods of its existence and the period witnessed progress and prosperity.



## 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Briefly appraise the golden era of the ‘Abbāsid caliphate.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Abdul, M. (1988) *The Classical Caliphate Islamic Institutions*: Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau
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## **MODULE 2: THE DECLINE AND FALL OF ‘ABBĀSID CALIPHATE**

### **Unit 1 Khalifahs At Samarra: Al-Mutawakkil And His Successors**

#### **CONTENT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Khalifahs at Samarra: Al-Mutawakkil and His Successors.
    - 3.1.1 Al-Mutawakkil (227-242A.H./847-861C.E)
    - 3.1.2 Al-Muntasir (242-243A.H/861-862C.E) and other Khalifahs
  - 3.2 Appraisal of the Events in Samarra
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

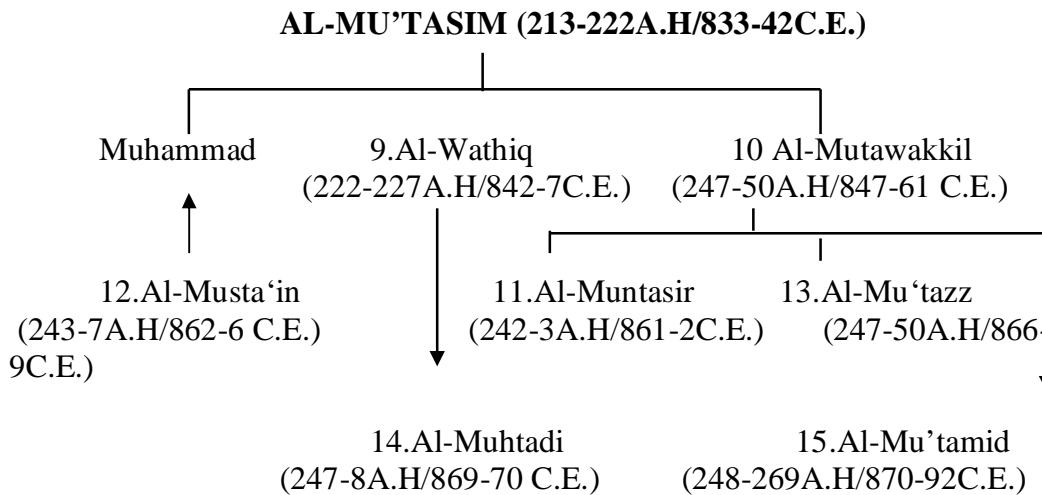
In the last unit, we discussed how al-Mu’tasim moved the capital from Baghdād to Samarra. In this unit, we shall explain the consequences of this movement and its far-reaching implications on the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate. To do this, the unit shall discuss the six successors to al-Wathīq at Samarra beginning with al-Mutawakkil from whose reign the caliphate began to decline. It would also include an appraisal of the events that characterized the period.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the reign of Mutawakkil and his successors in Samarra
- explain the consequences of al-Mu’tasim and his seven successor’s movement from Baghdād to Samarra.
- appraise the events that characterized that period

## 1.0 MAIN CONTENTS



### 1.1 Khalifahs at Samarra: Al-Mutawakkil and His Successors.

#### 1.1.1 Al-Mutawakkil (227-42A.H./847-861C.E.)

Caliph al-Wathīq died without appointing any successor. After his death, the Qādī, the vizier and other courtiers wanted to give the throne to his young son Muhammad. But the Turks under the leadership of Wasif opposed this and supported the claim of Wathīq's brother. The will of the Turks prevailed and Ja'far ascended the throne with the title: "*Al-Mutawakkil ala llah*" (the one who relies on Allah). He is fondly called "the Nero of the Arabs" and was the first Caliph in the period of decline. Al-Mutawakkil was regarded as a bad ruler for his incompetence, obstinacy and cruelty. He began his reign by putting to death the vizier Ibn al-Zayyat who was said to have opposed his succession to the Caliphate. He also put to death his supporter Wasif for his arrogance. Al-Mutawakkil continued the persecution of the orthodox scholars until the second year of his reign when he issued a ban on Mu'tazilite doctrine and restored the old dogma. From this period, the Mu'tazilites had a hard time in his reign as he began to persecute them. The Qādī Abū Dāwūd, his son Ahmad and other prominent Mu'tazilites were thrown into prison and their properties confiscated. In 230A.H/850C.E. Al-Mutawakkil resumed the early practice of oppressing the Alids and the persecution of the Shiites. He destroyed the tomb of Ali at al-Najaf and that of al-Husain at Karbala; two actions that earned him the everlasting hatred of all Shiites. But Mutawakkil's persecution was not confined to those mentioned above alone, non-Muslims also suffered from his excessiveness. They were excluded from the employment of the state, and were put in several other disadvantages.

His reign witnessed several disturbances like the rebellions at Armenia, Hims and other Byzantine lands. The Armenia and Hims rebellions were suppressed after some fighting but the Byzantine incursions into Egypt and Asia Minor were serious. In 232AH/852CE, the Byzantines destroyed the Egyptian coast and all the fortifications near Tunis. Along the line, they carried many people as prisoners of war and carted away properties. They also

raided from the side of Asia Minor, as far as Darbakr and returned with 10,000 prisoners. In 240A.H/859C.E. however the Muslims engaged them in a fierce battle and defeated them severely; captured their fleet and ravaged their territories. Al-Mutawakkil was the first caliph to introduce the practice of wearing the sword round the waist; following the Persian tradition. This is against the old Arabian way of carrying it over the shoulder. It was during his reign too that Alī ibn Sahl Rabbān al-Tabari from Tabaristan changed to Muslim and became the caliph's physician. This physician has the great reputation of writing in 230A.H/850C.E. a book, 'Firdaws al-Hikmah' (paradise of wisdom), one of the oldest Arabic compedia of medicine. Al-Mutawakkil was not only a drunkard; he was also reckless with women. Report quoted in Hitti has it that the caliph had four thousands concubines, all of who shared his nuptial bed. He was also said on one occasion to have received as a present two hundreds slaves from one of his generals.

The cruelty of the Caliph had attracted a host of enemies, including members of his own family who were outraged by his behaviour, and therefore had no affection for him. His attitude also caused the displeasure of the Turkish soldiers from whom he lost the needed loyalty. They conspired to put him to death and with the connivance of his son Muntasir who abhorred his cruelties, their plan was perfected. One night when he was asleep, his palace was besieged by the Turkish guards who killed him. If Mutawakkil's cruelty created enemies for him, his weak and oppressive rule greatly undermined the integrity of the empire. His reign which saw the rise of the ascendancy of the Turks in administration was to continue in the reigns of his successors all of whom became mere puppets in the hands of the Turks.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

How would you reconcile the personal character of Mutawakkil with his role as a caliph of Islam?

### **3.1.2 Al-Muntasir (242-243A.H/861-862C.E) and other Khalifahs**

When al-Mutawakkil died, his son, Abū Ja'far Ahmad popularly known as *Muntasir bi-llah* (the victorious by the help of Allah) was proclaimed caliph. Al-Muntasir was described as pious, just, fore-bearing and generous. He was very intelligent and had honest desire for the welfare of his people. He put right all the wrong that was done by his father especially to the descendants of Ali and the non-Muslims. The Caliph died after a reign of barely six months and was the first 'Abbāsid caliph to whose grave a tomb was built. Abūl 'Abbās Ahmad, the grandson of al-Mu'tasim was raised to the throne upon the death of al-Muntasir with the title; *al-Musta'īn bi-llah* meaning he who seeks the assistance of the Lord.' This caliph was only in power by name as the

Turks who were at this time deciding the fate of the caliphate did not give him any authority to rule. Moreover, the death of al-Muntasir had further given the provincial governors the freedom to convert themselves into feudal lords in their respective areas of control; a development that further reduced the power of the caliph into a nominal suzerainty. The inability of this caliph to tolerate the control of the Turkish chiefs informed his decision to escape from Samarra to Baghdād.

Al-Mu'tazz was nominated as a successor to al-Musta'in. But this caliph who was the second son of al-Mutawakkil was soon forced to abdicate and al-Muhtadi was enthroned. The removal of al-Muhtadi was followed by the nomination of al-Mu'tamid to replace him. The period of al-Mu'tamid witnessed the emergence of petty dynasties one after the other; all of which shall be discussed in subsequent units.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Give examples on how the 'Abbāsīd Khalifahs became puppets in the hands of their former Turkish slaves.

### **3.2 Appraisal of the Events in Samarra**

As stated earlier, the eighth 'Abbāsīd caliph, al-Mu'tasim, son of Hārūn by a Turkish slave, was the first to move the seat of his government from Baghdād to Samarra. The purpose was to run away from the uprising of the people caused by the menace of his Turkish bodyguards recruited from Transoxiana. The movement of the seat to Samarra in 216AH/836CE was the beginning of the Turkish total control of subsequent rulers and the mark of a gradual decline of the empire as a whole. Samarra, a very beautiful city was to remain the capital for fifty-six years (216 -269A.H/836-92C.E.) during which period eight successive khalifahs reigned. The life of the caliph in the new capital was almost like that of a prisoner, as indicated by Hitti who added that, 'the murder of al-Mutawakkil by them (the Turks) in December 242A.H/861 C.E., at the instigation of his son, was the first in a series of events in the course of which the mighty structure of the 'Abbāsīd dynasty-already shaken-stood face to face with imminent collapse'. After the death of al-Mutawakkil, subsequent khalifahs became pippets in the hands of their former slaves. Historical account also shows that in some cases women in the court usually played important political roles through their influence over these slaves. This action

sometimes created some confusion too difficult to explain. Two examples may be cited here. The first was the case of al-Musta'īn who was forced to abdicate the throne and his slave-mother curiously shared the supreme power of the caliphate with two Turkish generals. Another one was the case of al-Mu'tazz who succeeded al-Musta'īn. His mother was said to have refused to pay the sum of 50,000 dinars which might have saved the life of her caliph son, despite the fact that she had a saving of 1,000,000 dinars in addition to priceless jewellery in her possession. Such was the case that for two centuries the history of the disintegrating caliphate present a gloomy picture of confusion. The only place where there was peace and security albeit occasionally, were in the provinces where a governor, practically independent, held the reins with an iron hand.

One of the most important events of the period was the rebellion of the Zanj slaves led by one 'Ali ibn Muhammad. The leader of the group which consisted mainly of Negroes imported from East Africa used the opportunity of the disturbed conditions in the capital to claim in September 248AH/869CE that he was an Alid called to 'their deliverance by visions and occult science'. He got overwhelming support from many slaves who saw him as their Messiah. Many forces were sent to suppress the strange rebellion, but being on a familiar territory the Negroes subdued them and according to historical account, mercilessly put all prisoners and non-combatants to the sword. During fourteen years (248-262A.H/870-83C.E.) of. The reign of al-Mu'tamid witnessed this war and the estimated number of people who perished was conservatively put at over half a million. A source claimed that after one engagement the unclaimed heads of Muslims were so numerous that the Negroes dumped them into a canal which carried them into al-Barah, where they could be identified by relatives and friends. It took the intervention of the caliph's brother al-Muwaffaq who had taken personal charge of the operations to break the backbone of this insurrection. In 262A.H/883C.E. Ali ibn Muhammad was killed when his fortress called *al-Mukhtarrah* was stormed. In the words of Hitti, "thus ended one of the bloodiest and most destructive rebellion which the history of Western Asia records." It was in the course of this war that Egypt fell under the rule of ibn-Tulūn.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

Briefly discuss the rebellion of the Zanj led by Ali ibn Muhammad.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The life of the khalifahs at Samarra which was likened to that of prisoners by Hitti is a clear indication of the loss of total control of the caliphate by the 'Abbāsīd. Murder and deposition of Khalifahs at will by the Turkish slaves turned masters did not only make nonsense of the past glory attained by the founding fathers of this dynasty, it also became the beginning of the rise of petty dynasties which eventually led to the collapse of the empire itself.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

- Al-Mutawakkil was elected by the Turks under the leadership of Wāsif.
- Al-Mutawakkil who was the first caliph in the era of decline was said to be incompetent, cruel and obstinate
- His reign witnessed several disturbances
- For his cruelty, he paid dearly as he was killed by the Turkish guards with the full support of his son.
- From al-Muntasir, appointment and desposition of Calipha became the primary preoccupation of the Turks.
- It was the period when the caliph could no longer do anything on their own volition.

#### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Explain in detail the effect of the movement of 'Abbāsīd seat of power from Baghdād to Samarra.

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## **Unit 2: Petty Dynasties In The West**

### **CONTENT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Petty Dynasties in the West
    - 3.1.1 The Umayyads in Spain (128A.H/750C.E.)
    - 3.1.2 The Idrisids (165A.H./785C.E.)
    - 3.1.3 The Aghlabids (171A.H/800C.E)
    - 3.1.4 The Tulunids (247 A.H/868C.E)
    - 3.1.5 The Ikhshidids (316A.H/935C.E)
    - 3.1.6 The Hamdanids (308A.H./929C.E)
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked assignment
- 7.0 References/Further reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit, we focused on the commencement of the decline of the 'Abbāsid era. In this unit, discussion shall continue on this era with particular attention to petty dynasties that sprang up in the western part of the empire. Major dynasties of particular study here include the new Umayyad in Spain (128A.H/750C.E.), the Idrisid (165A.H/785C.E.), the Aghlabid (171A.H/800C.E.), the Tulunid (247.A.H/868C.E.), the Ikhshidid (316A.H/935C.E.) and the Hamdanid (308A.H/929C.E).

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the various dynasties that emerged in the the west
- give account of their roles in the emphire
- narrate how the dynasties contributed to the decline of the empire.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 PETTY DYNASTIES IN THE WEST**

#### **3.1.1 The Umayyads in Spain (128A.H./750C.E.)**

The early period of ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate witnessed the emergence of a dynasty established outside its main control. Precisely five years after the foundation of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate the only Umayyad scion to escape the massacre of his family in the hands of the ‘Abbāsīd, the youthful ‘Abd-al-Rahman, arrived Qurtuba in Spain and established there a brilliant dynasty. It thus became the first province ever stripped off the ‘Abbāsīd Empire.

#### **3.1.2 The Idrisids (165A.H./785C.E.)**

An independent dynasty emerged in 165AH/785CE when Idris ibn- ‘Abdullah, a great-grandson of al-Hasan, participated in one of the many Alid uprisings in Madīnah. The insurrection which occurred during the reign of al-Hādī was suppressed and Idris managed to escape to Mauritania, where he founded a kingdom that bore his name. The dynasty which lasted between 168A.H./788C.E. and 355A.H/974CE had Fez as its capital. It was the first Shi‘ite dynasty in history. The dynasty which enjoyed the full support of the Berbers collapsed as a result of their disadvantaged location. Sandwiched between the Fatimids of Egypt and the Umayyads of Spain, the Idrisids was finally destroyed through the attack of a general during the reign of Caliph al-Hakam II of Qurtuba (342-357A.H/961-976 C.E).

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Write a short note on the Idrisid dynasty.

### **3.1.3 The Aghlabids (179A.H./800C.E.)**

The Aghlabid dynasty came into existence over the territory called Ifriqiyah (Africa Minor) when Hārūn al-Rashīd ceded the so called area to Ibrāhīm ibn al-Aghlab his governor in 179A.H./800C.E. Ibn al-Aghlab ruled this area which composed mainly the Tunisians as an independent sovereign, devoid of any control from the ‘Abbāsīd caliph in whatever form. The Aghlabids gave their leaders the title *amir*, and from al-Qayrawan their capital, they dominated the mid-Mediterranean for more than a century.

The dynasty was involved in many conflicts with Europe having been encouraged by its well-equipped fleet that gave it the audacity to attack the coasts of Italy, France, Corsica and Sardinia. For instance, one of its leaders, Ziyādat-Allah I (196-218A.H./817-838C.E) was said to have sent an expedition against Byzantine Sicily in 208A.H./827C.E.

It is to the credit of this dynasty that the great Mosque of al-Qayrawan, still standing as an icon vis-à-vis the famous holy mosques of the East was built. Its construction began under Ziyādat-Allah and completed by Ibrāhīm II (253-281A.H./874-902 C.E). The mosque which stood at the site in which the primitive edifice of ‘Uqbah, founder of al-Qayrawān, had stood became to the Western Muslims the fourth holy city, ranking after Makkah, Madīnah and Jerusalem. It was also under this dynasty that Ifriqiyah became finally transformed from an outwardly Latin-speaking, Christianity-professing land to an Arabic-speaking, Islam-professing region. The dynasty came to an end when the last Aghlabid called Ziyadat Allah III took to flight when the Fatimids conquered his territory without offering any resistance.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Assess briefly the contributions of the Aghlabids to the development of Islam in Africa minor during the ‘Abbāsīd period.

### **3.1.4. The Tulunids (247A.H./868C.E)**

The Tulunid dynasty which reigned between 247-284A.H./868–905C.E. in Egypt and Syria was formed by Ahmad ibn-Tulūn. His father, a Turk from Farghanah, had been sent in 196A.H./817C.E. by the Samanid ruler of Bukhara as a present to al-Ma’mūn. Ahmad was deployed to Egypt as lieutenant to its

governor where, by audacity he refused to send financial aid to Caliph al-Mu'tamid when the latter needed it to prosecute the Zanj rebellion. Further to this, Ahmad took a bold step to establish an independent dynasty in Egypt. This event became a turning point in the life of Egypt because it marked the total freedom from exploitation by the Baghdādi khalifahs and their appointed governors, who usually shared the huge revenue. With Ibn Tulūn in power therefore, money remained within for the development of the city.

Ibn-Tulūn (247-263A.H/868-884C.E.) fortified his new state with a stable army that was well organized to meet any enemy threat. He had an army of about a hundred thousand soldiers consisting mainly of the Turkish and Negro slaves. He assumed the control of Syria without much opposition when its governor died in 256A.H/877 C.E. and developed a naval base at 'Akka (Acre) to maintain his hold on this neighbouring country. This period marked the beginning of many centuries rule of Syria from the valley to the Nile.

The Tulūnid regime interested itself in irrigation and it was the first since the Arab conquest to make Muslim Egypt famous as a centre of art. Ahmad Ibn Tulūn was said to have built a sixty-thousand-dinar hospital in Fustat, the capital of his dynasty. He also built a mosque that still bears his name and yet remained one of the principal religious monuments of Islam.

Many annalists wrote about the palace of Khumarawayh, Ahmad's extravagant son and successor, who was said to have covered its wall with gold. In the general assessment of Ahmad ibn-Tulūn as a typical founder of the many states on the ruins of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate, he was said to be a good example of a leader that had a firm grip over his army. But despite this, the Tulunid, the Ikhshidid that followed them as well as most of the other dynasties, did not possess any national basis in the lands over which they ruled and therefore were short-lived. In the words of Hitti, their 'weakness consisted in the absence of a strong coherent body of supporters of their own race. The rulers were themselves intruders who were obliged to recruit their bodyguards, which were their armies, from various alien sources'. According to him, 'such a rule can only be maintained by men of outstanding personal influence, and no sooner does the mighty arm of the founder relax or pass away than disintegration sets in'. No wonder that we find the state founded by Ibn-Tulūn reverting to the 'Abbāsīd under his son and fourth successor, Shaybān in 283-284A.H./904-905C.E.

### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Give an account of the roles of ibn Tulūn to the emergence of the Tulūnid dynasty.

#### 3.1.5 The Ikhshidids (316A.H./935C.E)

The Ikhshidid, a Turkish dynasty of Farghanah origin was established at al-Fustat by Muhammad ibn-Tughj in 316A.H/935C.E. The founder who received the title, Ikhshid from the Caliph al-Radi in 321A.H./939C.E. followed the Tulūnid precedence by adding Syria-Palestine to his semi-autonomous state. Both Makkah and Madīnah were to be incorporated as part of areas under Ikhshidid control. Ibn Tughj was succeeded by two sons, one after the other both of whom ruled only in name, and left the reins of the government to an able Abyssinian eunuch Abu-al-Misk Kafūr. This black slave whose freedom was originally bought by Ikhshid from an oil merchant for the equivalent of eight pounds became the sole ruler from 345A.H-966C.E. to 347A.H./968 C.E. He was successful in the defence of his territory against the rising power of the Hamdānid. His case as a black slave rising from the humblest origin to wield absolute power was said to be the first but not the last in Islamic history. Like other dynasties the Ikhshidids and especially their founder had been accused of lavishing state wealth to curry favour from their subjects. They had no time to embark on the development of their dynasty. ‘They made no contribution to the artistic and literary life of their domain and no public works have been left by them’ so says Hitti. The last representative of this dynasty was Abu al Fawaris Ahmad, an eleven-year-old boy, who lost the country to the illustrious Fatimid general, Jawhar in 347A.H/969C.E.



Image of the [Amir](#) of [Khorasan](#) [Isma'il ibn Ahmad](#) on the [Tajikistani somoni](#) who exercised independent authority from the Abbasids.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4**

Give a brief account of the Ikhshidid dynasty

### **3.1.6 The Hamdānids (308A.H./929C.E.)**

The Hamdānids were the descendants of Hamdān ibn-Hamdūn of the Taghlīb tribe that originally established their dynasty in northern Mesopotamia with their capital at Mosul. The Hamdanids advanced in 323A.H./944C.E. into the northern part of Syria under the leadership of the future Sayf-al-Dawlah (the sword of the dynasty), wrested Aleppo (Halab) and Hims from the Ikhshidid lieutenant in charge and became the founder of a north Syrian dynasty which lasted until 382A.H./1003C.E..

Sayf-al-Dawlah became famous in history as a result of his passion for scholarship. He organized a literary circle which included the celebrated philosopher-musician al-Farabi, the historian of literature and music, al-Isbahāni, court preacher ibn-Nubatah, and the poet al-Mutannabi' as well as the philosopher poet Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri. Sayf-al-Dawlah consolidated his position in northern Syria, and from 326A.H./947C.E., he began an annual campaign into Asia Minor for some twenty years. The success initially achieved by this caliph was short-lived as the brilliant performance of Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimisce, both future emperors, saved the day for Byzantium. In 340A.H./961 C.E. Nicephorus captured the capital, Aleppo and killed over ten thousand of its youth that were captured in the war. Further raid continued when Nicephorus became the emperor. Areas conquered by his troops included Cyprus and occupied Cilicia. Soon after his occupation of Antioch, Nicephorus' general entered Aleppo and forced Sayf's son and successor, Sa'd-al-Dawlah into a humiliating treaty. Thus began the adoption of a new policy of consolidating the conquests in Cilicia and northern Syria as well as plan the final goal of freeing Jerusalem.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Sayf-al-Dawlah owes his fame in Arab history to his exceptional patronage of scholarship. Discuss.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

The petty dynasties in the West were founded by the Turks and Persians who had virtually seized the reign of leadership from the Arabs. The manner of their rise, their 'intruding presence' and rule in another man's lands were the basic reasons why they could not hold on for many years before their collapse. However, despite this, there were few of them like the Aghlabids and the Tulunids who tried in their little way to achieve success as independent sovereign states in the West. Abassids

## 5.0 SUMMARY

- The first dynasty outside the 'Abbāsid imperial control was the one founded in Spain by Abdur Rahmān of the Umayyad dynasty in 134A.H/765C.E. The dynasty ended in 410A.H/1031C.E.
- In 168A.H/788C.E. another dynasty emerged when Idris, the participant in the Alids revolt in Madīnah escaped to Mauritania and founded a kingdom bearing his name.
- The dynasty which has its principal capital at Fez was the first Shiite dynasty in history and it lasted till 353A.H/974 C.E.
- Ibrāhīm ibn Al-Aghlab ruled the independent Aghlabid dynasty ceded to him by Hārūn ar-Rashīd and has its capital in al-Qayrawān where they dominated the mid-mediterranean between 179AH/800C.E. and 288A.H/909C.E.
- Apart from the dynasty's foray into Europe, it has the unique credit of building the great Qayrawān mosque and the transformation of Ifriqiyyah from Latin-Speaking, Christianity professing land to an Arabic-Speaking, Islam-professing region.
- The Tulunid dynasty owed its origin to Ahmad ibn Tulūn who proclaimed an independent dynasty in Egypt and later assumed additional control of Syria.
- He had a well organized army composed mainly of Turkish and Negro slaves and also engaged in irrigation, beautification of Fustat; and construction of a big hospital.
- The Ikhshidid dynasty; also of Turkish origin also originated from Fustat through Muhammad ibn Tughj in 316A.H/935C.E. and was succeeded by two sons who left the rein of government in the hands of a black freed slave called Misk Kafūr.
- The dynasty which was unable to achieve any success in the area of development because the leaders engaged themselves in lavish adventures was finally sacked in 348A.H/969C.E. by Jawhar; the illustrious Fatimid general.

- The Hamdanids were the rival dynasty of the Egyptian Ikhshidids and was founded by the descendants of Hamdān ibn Hamdūn with their capital in Mosul.
- One of the leaders of this dynasty is Sayf al-Dawlah who became famous for his patronage of scholarship.
- Sayf-al-Dawlah engaged in so many wars in the Asia Minor for about twenty years.
- His initial successes were diminished by the onslaught of Nicephorus Phocas whose devastating blows on the Muslims led to the occupation of their lands.
- The conquest of Muslim lands made Sayf's son and successor to sign a humiliating treaty with Nicephorus; an action that marked the beginning of the Christian crusade against Islam.

## 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Write short note on any of the following:

- a. Idrisid dynasty
- b. Aghlabid dynasty
- c. Tulunid dynasty

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## **Unit 3: Petty Dynasties In The East**

### **CONTENT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Petty Dynasties
    - 3.1.1 The Tāhirids
    - 3.1.2 The Safarids
    - 3.1.3 The Samanids
    - 3.1.4 The Gaznawids
    - 3.1.5 The Buwayhids
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked assignment
- 7.0 References / Further reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit, the new dynasties that emerged in the west were the central focus of analysis. In what follows, the eastern part of the 'Abbāsīd Empire shall be the primary area of study. Attention shall be paid to the Tahirid dynasty, the Safarid dynasty, the Samanid dynasty, the Ghazwanid dynasty and the Buwayhid dynasty.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- give account of the petty dynasties in the eastern part of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate.
- explain their roles in the empire and their influence on the 'Abbāsīd khalifahs
- discuss the effects of their roles on the decline of the empire.

## **2.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **2.1 PETTY DYNASTIES IN THE EAST**

#### **3.1.1 The Tāhirids**

The once trusted general of al-Ma'mūn, Tāhir ibn-al- Husayn of Khurasan was the first to establish a quasi-independent state east of Baghdād. Tāhir, the descendant of a Persian slave, was rewarded in 199A.H/820C.E. by al-Ma'mūn with the governorship of all lands east of Baghdād. The centre of his power was located in Khurasan. Tāhir died two years later in his capital, Marw, but before his death the caliph's name was no more mentioned in the Friday prayer. Tāhir's successors extended their area of control as far as the Indian frontier and moved the seat of government to Naysābūr, where they remained in power till 251.A.H/872C.E. when they were taken over by the Safarids.

#### **3.1.2. The Safarids (248A.H./867C.E)**

The Safarid dynasty owed its origin to one Ya'qub ibn-al-Layth al-Safar and reigned for forty-one years beginning from 248A.H/867C.E. Al-Safar had been a brigand avocation and his conduct as head of a band of outlaws caught the attention of the caliph's governor at Sijistān. Entrusting him with the command of the governor troops was all that he needed to launch his dynasty when he eventually succeeded his benefactor. Within the few years of his dynaty's existence, al-Safar put almost all Persia and the neighbourhood of India under his control. He was even said to have threatened Baghdād under the Caliph al-Mu'tamid. The Safarid dynasty later fell only to give way to the Samanid dynasty.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Write short note on either

- The Tāhirid dynasty **or**
- The Safarid dynasty

#### **3.1.3 The Samanids (253A.H/874C.E.)**

The Samānid dynasty originated in Transoxiana and Persia between 253A.H./874C.E. and 378A.H/999C.E. and their founder was Nasr ibn-Ahmad (253-371A.H./874-992 C.E.). While Nasr was the founder, the one who really

established and consolidated its power was his brother Ismā'il who engaged the Safarids in a battle that won him Khurasan in 369A.H./900 C.E. Beginning as Muslim sub-governors under the Tāhirids, the Samanids under Nasr II ibn-Ahmad extended their kingdom to include places like Sijistan, Karman, Jurjan, Rayy and Tabaristan, in addition to Transoxiana and Khurasan.

The capital of the Samanids, Bukhara and their leading city, Samarqand, became renowned centres of learning and art from where reputable scholars emerged.

The Samanids were to face the usual problems of succession in the hands of Turkish slaves with whom they had filled their court. The southern part of Samanid territory was taken over in 373A.H./994C.E. by the Ghaznawids, who rose to power under one of these slaves.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Bukhara, and Samarqand, the two major towns under the Samanid rule almost eclipsed Baghdad as centres of learning. Discuss.

### **3.1.4 The Ghaznawids (341A.H./962C.E.)**

The Ghaznawid dynasty came into being through one Alptigin, one of the Turkish slaves of the Samanids who began his career as a member of the bodyguard. Alptigin rose through ranks to become the governor of Khurasan. Later, he fell out of power as a result of a minor misunderstanding with the new Samanid ruler and left for the eastern border of the kingdom. In 341A.H./962 C.E. he captured Ghazna in Afghanistan where he exercised an independent control. The area later developed into the Ghaznawid Empire of Afghanistan and Punjab with Subuktigin as the real founder in 341A.H./962 C.E. Subuktigin, a slave and son-in-law of Alptigin was succeeded by sixteen rulers who were his direct descendants. Subuktigin extended his territory to Peshawar in India and Khurasan in Persia, which he first held under the Samanids. Subuktigin's son Mahmud reigned between 378A.H./999C.E. and 409A.H./1030C.E. and was a distinguished leader who was responsible for series of campaigns eastward. He was reputed to have conducted no less than seventeen campaigns during which period he annexed the Punjab, Lahore, and part of Sind. He was one of the first in Muslim history to be bestowed with the title *al-ghazi*, i.e. someone who distinguished himself in war against unbelievers.

Mahmud's spate of conquest also extended to the western borders of his domains including the Persian 'Iraq. As a Sunnite, Mahmud acknowledged the nominal suzerainty of the Caliph al-Qādīr from whom he later received the title *Yamin-al-Dawlah* (the right arm of the state). Mahmud constructed many magnificent buildings in his capital and founded a large academy which he also endowed. His court became the mecca for eminent poets and men of learning among whom were Arab historian al-Utbi, the celebrated scientific and historical author al-Biruni, and the illustrious Persian poet Firdawsi. The rise of the Ghaznawid dynasty has always been said to represent the first victory of the Turkish element in its struggle against the Iranian element for ultimate mastery in Islam. Immediately after Mahmud's death however, the provinces east of the dynasty began to separate themselves gradually from the capital in the highlands and therefore marked the beginning of further breakdown of the dynasty into series of independent Muslim dynasties of India. In 565A.H./1186C.E. the Ghurids of Afghanistan decisively routed the last Ghaznawids in Lahore.

### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Explain the roles of Mahmud ibn Subuktigin in the expansion of his dynasty's territory

#### 3.1.5 The Buwayhids

The Buwayhid dynasty originated from three Buwaihid brothers, Ahmad, Ali, and Hasan. Their father, abu-Shuja' Buwayh, who claimed descent from the ancient Sasanid kings, was the chief of a warlike horde from Deilem and had been for some time in the service of the Samanids. The three brothers had been called by Caliph Mustakfi to assist in checking the insurgence of the Turks. After their victory, Caliph al-Mustakfi made Ahmad ibn-Buwayh his *amir al-umara'* with the honorific title of *Mu'izz al-Dawlah* (he who renders the state mighty). He also conferred the title of *Imād ud-Dawlah* on Ali and *Rukn ud-Dawlah* on Hasan. The three brothers began their expedition and gradually worked their way southward, occupying Isfahān, and then Shirāz with its province (313A.H./934C.E.) and within two years the provinces of al-Ahwāz and Karman were included. The Buwayhids had chosen Shiraz as the capital of the new dynasty. In addition, *Mu'izz – al – Dawlah* insisted that he be mentioned along with the caliph in the Khutbah and that his name should be embossed on the coin. Like their predecessors, the Buwathids installed and

deposed khalifahs at will. They maintained several magnificent palaces in Baghdad and referred to them collectively as *dar al-mamlakah* (the abode of the kingdom). As a Shiite, Mu'izz al-Dawlah declared the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Muharram as a national day of mourning to commemorate the Karbala massacre. The new status assumed by the Buwayhids made the caliph to realize; rather too late that he had changed one master for another. His attempt to free himself from this disgraceful position informed his decision to uplot against Mu'izz al-Dawlah. Mu'izz al-Dawlah got wind of this conspiracy and took prompt action. In January 325A.H./946C.E., the unfortunate al-Mustakfi was blinded and deposed by Mu'izz-al-Dawlah, who choose al-Muti', another son of Muqtadir in 325A.H./946C.E, as the new caliph. Mu'izz al-Dawlah died in 346A.H./967C.E. leaving behind his son Bakhtiyar Izzud-Dawlah to succeeded him. The new caliph was soon ousted by his uncle Adud-Dawlah.

**‘Adud al-Dawlah:** The Buwayhid dynasty reached the peak of its power under ‘Adud-al-Dawlah (the supporting arm of the state) who ruled between 328A.H./949C.E. and 362A.H./983C.E. ‘Adud was regarded as the greatest Buwayhid and the most illustrious ruler of his time. He was said to have united all the several petty kingdoms that had risen under Buwayhid rulers in Persia and al-Iraq, in 356A.H./977C.E. ‘Adud-al-Dawlah got married to the daughter of Caliph and also gave out his descendant to assume the caliphate. ‘Adud was the first ruler in Islam to bear the title *shahanshah*. He repaired canals and constructed many mosques, hospitals and public buildings in many cities. ‘Adud built the famous hospital in Baghdād which he called al-Bimaristan al-‘Adudi; completed in 357-8A.H./978-9C.E. and endowed with 100,000 dinars. ‘Adud had chosen a Christian named Nasr ibn Hārūn his vizier. With the authorization of the Caliph, he erected and repaired churches and monasteries.

‘Adud had passion for literary and scientific studies and his passion was followed by his successor son Sharaf-al-Dawlah (362-368A.H./983-89C.E). The Ikhwān al-Safa’, also flourished under the Buwayhid regime. The achievements of the Buwayhids were shortlived by internal quarrels that greatly weakened them and finally in 434A.H./1055C.E., the last of the family, Malik Rahīm, was ousted by the Seljuk Tughril Beg who entered Baghdād and put an end to Buwayhid rule. Malik Rahīm ended his days in confinement.

#### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4**

Assess the roles of ‘Adud ad-Dawlah to the flourishing of the Buwayhid dynasty.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The control of the Turks under whom the succeeding 'Abbāsīd khalifahs became the puppets became more pronounced with the rise of several kingdoms and the election and deposition of the khalifahs at will. The only charge witnessed was that the Turks came in different tribes, each struggling to have its shares in the power and the resources of the people over whom they were struggling to control. The result remain the same; leading to the decline of the once flourishing 'Abbāsīd Empire.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

- Tāhir ibn al-Husayn of Khurasan founded a quasi-independent state called Tahirid dynasty with capital first at Marw and later in Naysabur where the dynasty remained in power till 251A.H./872C.E. when they were taken over by the Safarids.
- Ya'qub ibn al-layth al-Safar; a head of a band of outlaws was the founder of Safarids dynasty with Sijistan as their original home.
- Ya'qub who was entrusted with the command of Sijistan troops later succeeded his master and extended his domains to almost all parts of Persia and India neighbourhood.
- Nasir ibn Ahmad was the founder of the Samanid dynasty but his brother Ismail was the one who actually established its power.
- Under the Samanids, scholarship thrived with many scholars holding sway.
- The Samanids power began to decline when the authority of the state fell into the hands of the Turkish slaves in their courts.
- While Alptigin was the pathfinder of the Ghaznawi dynasty, Subuktigin was its real founder and was succeeded by sixteen Ghaznawids who were his lineal descendants.
- Famous among these was his son called Mahmud who engaged in many conquests that earned him the title, al-Ghazi i.e. he who distinguished himself in war against unbelievers.
- The death of Mahmud led to the separation of the eastern provinces into many dynasties.
- Ghaznawid dynasty came to an end when the Ghurids of Afghanistan dealt a final blow on its remnant in Lahore in 565A.H./1186 C.E.
- Ahmad ibn Buwayh founded the Buwayhid dynasty; in 324A.H./945 C.E.
- When together with his three sons occupied Isfahan; Shiraz and its province, al-Ahwaz and Karman and made Shiraz the capital of the new dynasty.

- Sharaf al-Dawlah, son of ‘Adud stepped on his father’s shoes and performed creditably well as a ruler.
- The dynasty was later sacked by the Seljuks and the cause was the disunity between Sharaf, Baha and their third brother; Samsam al-Dawlah.

## 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Write short note on any of the following

- a. The Ghaznawid Dynasty
- b. The Buwayhid Dynasty

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## **Unit 4: The Seljuk Turks And The Assassins**

### **CONTENT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Contents
  - 3.1 The Seljuk Turks
  - 3.2 The Crusades
  - 3.3 The Assassins
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Further discussion on those forces that contributed to the decline of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate was undertaken in the last three units. The number of the dynasties that made up these forces and the magnitude of their contributions will be examined in this unit. Therefore, the unit shall look into other important dynasties like the Seljuks and the Assassins to see how their emergence had contributed in no small measure in bringing down the 'Abbāsid caliphate.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- give account of the emergence of the dynasties under discussion.
- explain major events that took place during the life of these dynasties.
- give insight into the effects of their rise on the downfall of the 'Abbāsid Empire.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENTS**

#### **3.1 The Seljuk Turks**

The Seljuks Turks consisted of a large number of Turks who came from Turkistan to settle at Transoxiana with the permission of Sultan Mahmud. They were to be in that territory as a result of an agreement to be paying tribute to the Sultan. These people, known as Seljuk Turks after the name of their

leader Seljuk also had one of their tribes that settled at Khurasan. It was not long before these people became so powerful that they rose in arms against Sultan Mahmud's son and successor Mas'ūd and defeated him. They thereafter established an independent kingdom in Khurasan and elected Tughril, a grandson of Seljuk as their ruler. As a powerful general and ruler of his time, Tughril Beg successfully conquered Jorjan Khawarism and Persia and established a strong empire. He was conferred with the title of sultan by caliph Qā'im for assisting him to gain his freedom from the influence and control of the Turkish chief called Arslan al-Basasiri. He (Tughril Beg) was also given the supreme authority to have direct and absolute control of the affairs of the Caliph.

**Alp Arslan:** When Tughril Beg died in 442A.H./1063C.E. he was succeeded by his nephew Alp Arslan who was invested with the title and prerogative of Sultan by Caliph Qā'im. Alp Arslan was noble, benevolent, just and wise. He was also pious, generous and brave. He fought and conquered Armenia, Georgia and Byzantine. When he defeated the large Roman army at Asia Minor, their emperor Romanus made peace with the Seljuk ruler by ceding the Roman territories in Asia Minor to him in 451.A.H./1072C.E. For effective administration of the newly acquired territory, Alp Arslan seconded his nephew Sulaiman there. Sulaiman extended the Empire to the Hellesont in the north and the Mediterranean in the west and also forced the Byzantine emperor to pay tribute to the Seljuks.

**Jalal al-Dīn Malik Shah (452-488A.H./1073-1109C.E.):** Jalal al-Dīn Malik Shah succeeded his dead father in 452A.H./1073C.E. and was equally invested with the power of a Sultan by Caliph Qā'im. The Caliph died in 454A.H./1075C.E. and was succeeded by his grandson Muqtadi. Malik Shah was a great ruler and his reign was described as a glorious period in the history of Islam to the extent that in the area of knowledge and culture, it was ranked parallel to that of Caliph al-Ma'mūn. Malik Shah was also said to be wise, noble and magnanimous. An incident that underscored the nobility of his character is illustrated from an incident that occurred at the early period of his reign. His brother had rebelled against him with the aim of obtaining sovereign power. He was said to have told his vizier that he had prayed to Allah to give victory to his brother, if he was more worthy than himself to rule over the Muslims. Malik Shah's empire extended from the confines of China to the Mediterranean and from Georgia to Yaman. By his benevolent rule, Malik

Shah endeared himself to his subjects and also became the master of the vast empire.

**Nizam al-Mulk:** Nizam al-Mulk was the vizier of Malik Shah who formerly served his father in the same capacity. Nizam al-Mulk whose real name was Khwaja Hasan of Tus was a great scholar and statesman of history. He was a devoted and gifted vizier that enjoyed the confidence of his master so much that he was given the absolute control of the civil administration. Like Malik Shah, Nizam al-Mulk was also wise, benevolent and cultured. Peace and security prevailed in the empire during his period. Nizam al Mulk constructed numerous roads, canals and colleges in the empire and encouraged agriculture, industry and commerce.

Many scholars flourished under the patronage of Malik Shah and his worthy vizier Nizam al-Mulk. Among them was Umar Khayyam, who distinguished himself as a poet, astronomer and mathematician. The Persian calendar was also reformed under Malik Shah in 454A.H./1075C.E. and became known as 'Jalali Calendar, after the name of Jalal al-Dīn Malik Shah. In the reign of Malik Shah, a group headed by one Hasan ibn Sabbah sprang up and was known as the Assassins. The approach of this group to attaining power was to terminate the lives of rulers through poison and dagger. They assassinated Nizam al-Mulk in 470A.H/1091C.E. and Malik Shah's effort to suppress this brotherhood proved abortive as he died in 470A.H/1091C.E., at the age of thirty-nine. After the death of Malik Shah the dynasty began to decline. According to Rahim; 'The weakness of his successors, the rise of many small Seljuk dynasties in the empire and other civil wars accounted for the decline of the Seljuks'. This period also provide an opportunity for the Christians of Europe to launch crusade against the Muslims in Western Asia.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

- (a) Describe the position of Tughril Beg in the history of the Seljuks
- (b) Write short note on the following:
  - (i) Alp Arslan
  - (ii) Jalal al-Dīn Malik Shah
  - (iii) Nizam al-Mulk

### **3.2 The Crusades**

The Christians of Europe began religious wars against the Muslims in the early 11<sup>th</sup> Century. These wars known as the crusades were caused by many factors mainly religious. The Christians had wanted to recover Jerusalem which up till that time was under Muslims' control. Moreover, they wanted to assert their authority over Islam and to ensure their domination over Muslim Asia.

The second factor which was social in nature had to do with the rise of feudalism under the influence of the church. The negative effects of this development which included robbery, anarchy and corruptions were all that the reigning Pope then needed to direct the Spirit of these warring factions into religious wars against the Muslims. Commercial factors also played significant roles in the war of the Christians against the Muslims during this period. Since the countries in the Eastern Mediterranean had become subject to Muslim control, the access of Italian cities to direct and profitable trade had been blocked. To merchants living in these cities, the Crusade would once again open for them these eastern territories for their prosperous commerce.

The first Crusade began in 475A.H/1096C.E. and was led by Walter The Penniless. Between this period and 628A.H/1249C.E. eight wars were prosecuted during which many people were killed. Among many Seljuk rulers who reigned during these periods were Imamuddin Zangi (502-525A.H./1123-1146C.E), Nuruddin Mahmūd (525-553A.H/1146-1174C.E.) and Salahuddin the Great (496-572A.H./1117-1193C.E.) all of whom at one time or another fought gallantly to crush the crusaders and restore the lost glory of the caliphate. The eighth crusades were led by Louis IX of France against the Muslims of Egypt in 628AH./1249C.E. The force captured Dimyat and was on its way to Cairo when Turan Shah, son of Malik Sālih engaged the Crusaders in heavy war in which the latter were defeated and Louis IX and his men taken prisoners.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Write a short note on the Crusades

### **3.3 The Assassins**

The Assassins were a fraternity formed by Hasan ibn Sabbah at the time of Malik Shah. He was a descendant of the Himyarite kings of South Arabia and had served Alp Arslan as his mace – bearer. He left the service as a result of a misunderstanding and returned to his native – place Rayy. Later, ibn Sabbah

went to Syria where he became an agent of the Fatimid Khalifahs. Another version claimed that he joined the Fatimid propaganda because of his failure to occupy a high position in Seljuk state. Being jealous of the great rise of Nizam al-Mulk who was said to be his old school mate therefore, Hasan Ibn Sabbah aimed at the destruction of all authority. To achieve this aim, he organized the brotherhood of the Assassins.

In 469A.H./1090C.E., Hasan Ibn Sabbah occupied the Alamut castle in the mountains of Mazendran which he also made his headquarters. As the grand master of the brotherhood, he was called Sayyidina (our lord) as well as Shaykhul Jabal (Lord of the Mountain). Below the Shaykh al Jabal in the descending order of authority were three *Dai al Kabir* (great emissaries) for the three provinces of Jabal, Kuhistan and Syria. The *Fadais* were, a special class of disciples who acted as bodyguards and who also used to execute without hesitation the order to assassinate opposition persons. *Lasik* is the name by which ordinary followers of this brotherhood is called. The Assassins had used both poison and dagger to kill many people among the Seljuk family and some distinguished other too. As stated earlier, they secretly poisoned the great vizier Nizam al-Mulk Tusi in 470A.H./1091C.E. and after the death of Malik Shah, they occupied many mountainous territories in Persia, Iraq and Syria. When Hasan ibn Sabbah reached the old age, he became a good Muslim and forced his followers to strictly observe the injunctions of the Qur'ān. Hasan ibn Sabbah's son called Buzurg Umaid succeeded his father as Shaykh al Jabal for 24 years. Buzurg Umaid's son and successor ruled 25 years while the last of the line of Shaykh al Jabal called Ruknuddin was defeated and captured by Hulagu in 635A.H./1256 C.E.

#### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4**

Account for the reasons why the Assassins emerged and explain their structural set up.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The emergence of the Seljuk dynasty and the Assassins is still the manifestation of the 'Abbāsid caliphate in decay. It also signifies the magnitude of selfish ambitions that characterized our era of discourse in this course; all without putting Islam into consideration, the very first thing that formed the fundamentals upon which the existence of the entire empire was primarily based.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

- Seljuk dynasty was founded by the Seljuk Turks who had occupied Khurasān at the permission of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznawi.
- Their leader was Tughril Beg, a successful general who conquered many places like Khawarizm, Jorjan and Persia.
- He was conferred with the title of Sultan and given the authority to control the affairs of the Caliphate for assisting Caliph Qa'im.
- Arslan succeeded Tughril in 442A.H./1063C.E. and was said to have conquered, Armenia and Georgia as well as inflict defeat on the Romans.
- The period witnessed the attack of the Christians of Europe on Muslims in what is known as the Crusades.
- Religious, social and economic factors account for the causes of these wars which were fought between 475A.H./1096C.E. and 628A.H./1249C.E.
- Jalal al-Dīn succeeded his late father Arslan in 452A.H./1073C.E. and was given the title of Sultan by Caliph Qa'im before the latter's death in 453A.H./1075C.E..
- His empire was vast as it extended from the confines of China to Mediterranean and from Georgia to Yaman and his period witnessed peace and prosperity.
- Khwaja Hasan of Tus surnamed Nizam al-Mulk served both Alp Arslan as governor and his son Malik Shah as the vizier.
- The period of Malik and his vizier Nizam al-Mulk witnessed the flourishing of many scholars and the reform of Persian calendar called the Jalali.
- Nizam al-Mulk was assassinated in 470A.H./1091C.E. by the Assassins, a fraternity formed by Hasan ibn Sabbah.
- The empire of the Seljuks declined after the death of these men.
- They (the Assassins) assassinated many members of the Seljuk family and acquired the mountainous territories of Persia, Iraq and Persia.
- Hasan ibn Sabbah repented and became a good Muslim at old age and enforced his followers to do the same.
- Ibn Sabbah was succeeded by Buzurg Umaid as Shaykh Jabal for twenty four years and the latter was also succeeded by his son who also ruled for twenty five years.
- Ruknuddin was the last ruler of the Assassins before he was defeated and captured by Hulagu in 635A.H./1256 C.E.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Account for the factor(s) that led to the rise of the Seljuks

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## **Unit 5: The Collapse Of The ‘Abbāsīd Empire**

### **CONTENT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Collapse of the ‘Abbāsīd Empire
    - 3.1.1 The Hulagu invasion of Baghdād
  - 3.2 Causes of the ‘Abbāsīd downfall
  - 3.3 Administration of the ‘Abbāsīds
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked assignment
- 7.0 References / Further reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit, the focus of study was on the part played by the Seljuks, and the Assassins in the decline of the ‘Abbāsīd Empire. In this unit, several factors that led to the collapse of the empire shall be studied with special reference to the religious, tribal, moral and social forces that were at work. In this unit also, efforts shall be made to highlight the basic features of the ‘Abbāsīd administration.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the factors that contributed to the collapse of the ‘Abbāsīd Empire.
- give account of the implications of the collapse on Islam as a religion.
- discuss about the general lives of the people under the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENTS**

#### **3.1 Collapse of ‘Abbāsīd Empire**

##### **3.1.1 The Hulagu Invasion of Baghdād**

While the Assassins were having a field day in their areas of operations, the Mongols or the Tatars (as they were fondly called) were also spreading havoc and destruction wherever they went. They have virtually wiped out of existence, the cultural centers of Eastern Islam where formerly stately palaces and libraries had been. It was stated that in Harat alone, out of a population of 100,000, about 60,000 people were gruesomely murdered. The magnitude of devastation was best described by Ali in the following words: ‘The mosques of Bukhāra, famed for piety and learning, served as stables for Mongolian horses. Many of the inhabitants of Samarqand and Balkh were either butchered or carried into captivity. Khawarizm was utterly devastated’. What seems to be the final blow on the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate occurred in 632A.H./1253 C.E. when Hulagu, a grandson of Chingiz Khan led a huge army from Mongolia with the primary purpose of destroying the Assassins. He sent an invitation to the Caliph al-Musta’sim to join in this campaign. He got no response. By 635A.H./1256C.E. many strongholds of the Assassins had been captured effortlessly and their power subdued. After this conquest which was so terrible as to include the killing of babies, the conquering invader sent an ultimatum to the caliph demanding his surrender and began the demolition of the outer city wall. This also got no reply. In January 637A.H./1258 C.E., Hulagu, leading his men began the operation of pulling down the walls of the capital. By February of the same year, the Hulagu hordes invaded the city and in an attempt to save their lives, the Caliph with his three hundred officials and Qadis opted to surrender unconditionally. Ten days later, they were all put to death. Hulagu and his forces laid siege on Baghdād and it lasted forty days and set buildings on fire. To save his life and those of his family, the caliph decided to surrender, and went to the Mongol camp. Hulagu asked the Caliph to assemble the entire people of Baghdād for the purpose of taking their census and they were all killed. Properties including books were burnt. The streets ran with blood and the Water of Tigris turned red as a result of the massacre that lasted six weeks. Patients in the hospital, the students and professors were not spared. All were killed. The accumulated treasures for five centuries; so says Amir Ali were thus for ever lost to humanity. Musta’sim himself, together with members of his family were beaten to death. According to Amir Ali again; Baghdād the abode of learning, was ruined for ever. Quoting ibn Khaldun, Ali put the total number of people killed as one million and six hundred thousand.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Describe the brutal raid on Baghdād by Hulagu and the result on the eventual collapse of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate.

### **3.2 Causes of the 'Abbāsīd Downfall**

Many factors have been attributed to the fall of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate. Generally speaking, one may cite the roles of the Mongols as the final straw that broke the camels back; their invasion of Baghdad according to Hitti was only contributory. More fundamental than this were the internal problems that have permeated the entire caliphate since the reign of al-Mutawakkil. These problems are:

1. Problem of consolidation: Many of the conquests made were mainly nominal and sometimes inconclusive. This made it difficult for these khalifahs to consolidate the empire properly. In fact, the problems became acute with the extension of the empire that soon became too vast to be controlled by later weak rulers.
2. System of Administration: The 'Abbāsīd system of administration did not give room for stability and continuity. Extensive powers were sometimes concentrated in the hands of the provincial governors most of whom later asserted their independence. In fact in some cases, this independence was facilitated by the khalifahs' magnanimous gifts of such province to be ruled by hereditary right. Good examples can be cited of the Aghlabids in Africa and the Tāhirids in Khurasan. With governors as the commanders of the provincial forces and the cases of military governorship in later periods; it is natural that the central administration will be weakened and forced to disintegrate.
3. Racial cleavage: All the racial elements that constituted the entire caliphate were more conscious of their racial identity than see themselves as members of a united community. In the word of Hitti 'lines of cleavage between Arabs and non-Arabs, between Arab Moslems and Neo-Moslems, between Moslems and Dhimmis remained sharply marked. Even within the Arabs, there was the manifestation of dichotomy between the northern and southern Arabs. More fundamental than this was the enmity that usually arose from this cleavage. This enmity and rivalry which persisted throughout the caliphate period contributed in no small measure to the disintegration of the empire.
4. Emergence of religio-political sects: The emergence of many religio-political sects one after the other dominated the entire 'Abbāsīd period. Mention can be made of the Shiites, the Kharijites, the Fatimids, the

Carmathians, the Ismailites and the Assassins among others. Not even Islam could be able to unite its devotees into a corporate whole. All these contributed one way or the other to the disintegration and the eventual collapse of the empire.

5. Economic Factor: Another major factor that led to the decline and eventual fall of the ‘Abbāsid caliphate was the economic decay that set in during the period. Exploitation and over-taxation of the government in the provinces by the central government made the latter rich at the expenses of the poor. It also led to the impoverishment of the rural areas as it discouraged farming and industry. Moreover, incessant warfare that characterized the entire period of the caliphate led to the death of many able bodied men who were needed as manpower for agriculture and other developments.

Further to this was the spread of epidemics like small pox, malaria and other ailments which deplete the population in large areas. It was stated by Hitti that ‘no less than forty major epidemics are recorded in the Arabic annals of the first four centuries after the conquest’. Finally is that this economic decay will naturally affect the intellectual development and stifle creative thought.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2**

Examine the effect of economic decay on the downfall of the ‘Abbāsid caliphate

### **3.3 Administration of the ‘Abbāsid**

The policy of administration: ‘Abbāsid khalifahs internationalize their system of government by involving the non Arab elements in administration. This system is a substitute for the Arab’s racial aristocracy. The ‘Abbāsid caliphate was a period of consolidation and civilization which afforded the khalifahs the opportunity to devote themselves to the peace, prosperity and progress of the empire. Absolute monarchy was also the fashion before the era of the Turkish *amirs*. The Caliph also doubled as the head of the state and the Imam of the Sunni Muslims. He was also the commander-in-chief of the army. Sometimes the caliph took advice of an informal council composed of the vizier and heads of departments particularly on important issues. The ‘Abbāsids established the institution of the vizierate with the vizier (*wazīr*) as the head of administration. Various administrative departments were created with specific functions. Among the important departments of the central government were:

1. Treasury (*Dīwān al-Kharaj*): This originated from the Umayyads and continued in the ‘Abbāsid era. The head of this department called *Sahib*

*Dīwān al-Kharaj* was also an outstanding figure in the court of the Caliph.

2. Police Department (*Dīwān al-Shurtah*) headed by *Sahib al-Shurtah* (chief of Police) who was also the head of the Royal Bodyguard.
3. Postal Department (*Dīwān al-Barīd*): Postal department handled official as well as private correspondence. It also supervised the intelligence service.
4. Military Department (*Dīwān al-Jaysh*) was responsible for the recruitment, training and discipline of troops as well as looking after their welfare.
5. Chancellery (*Dīwān al-Rasā'il*): This was headed by the Principal Secretary with the responsibility of drawing up imperial mandates, diplomas, letters patent and political correspondence generally.
6. Audit Department (*Dīwān al-Zimam*) concerned itself with audit and account it was founded by al-Mahdi.
7. Appellate Court (*Dīwān al-Nazar fī al-Mazālim*): It is a kind of appeal court intended to redress cases of miscarriage of justice in the administrative and political departments.

The provincial administration was conducted by governors appointed by the caliph but whose powers and jurisdiction were considerably circumscribed. The judicial authority as in central administration was entrusted to the provincial Qadi ably supported by a number of deputies, stationed in the different towns.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

Appraise the system of Administration under the 'Abbāsīd caliphate

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The zeal with which the founding fathers of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate pursued the state affairs became lost in the administration of the subsequent rulers. Greed, over-ambition, luxurious life, lack of foresight and incompetence were the common symptoms that eventually combined themselves before the eventual raid of Hulagu in 1258 C.E. Despite this however, their progress in the area of infrastructural development, intellectual awakening and improvement of life generally still make them forces to be reckoned with in the history of Islam.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

- The Mongols waged fierce wars with the Muslims; destroyed many properties and killed people.

- After sacking a lot of cities and making them desolate, they shifted their directions to Baghdād.
- The Mongol forces under Hulagu laid siege on Baghdad and wrecked it.
- The cause of the ‘Abbāsīd downfall include problem of consolidation of each government; unstable and ill-defined system of administration and racial division.
- Others are the emergence of various religio-political sect as well as economic factor.
- The Caliphate established some important department like *Diwan al-Kharaj*, *Diwan al-Shurtah*, *Diwan al-Barid* and others.

## 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Mention and explain two factors that led to the collapse of the ‘Abbāsīd Empire.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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