

= Al @-@ Mu 'tadid =

Abu 'l @-@ Abbas Ahmad ibn Talha al @-@ Muwaffaq ( 854 or 861 ? 5 April 902 ) , better known by his regnal name al @-@ Mu 'tadid bi @-@ Ilah ( Arabic : ??????? ????? , " Seeking Support in God " ) was the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad from 892 until his death in 902 .

Al @-@ Mu 'tadid was the son of al @-@ Muwaffaq , who was the regent and virtual ruler of the Abbasid state during the reign of his brother , Caliph al @-@ Mu 'tamid . As a prince , the future al @-@ Mu 'tadid served under his father in various military campaigns , most notably in the suppression of the Zanj Rebellion , in which he played a major role . When al @-@ Muwaffaq died in June 891 al @-@ Mu 'tadid succeeded him as regent . He quickly sidelined his cousin and heir @-@ apparent al @-@ Mufawwad , and when al @-@ Mu 'tamid died in October 892 , he succeeded to the throne . Like his father , al @-@ Mu 'tadid 's power depended on his close relations with the army , first forged in the campaigns against the Zanj and reinforced in later expeditions which the Caliph led in person : al @-@ Mu 'tadid would prove to be the most militarily active of all Abbasid caliphs . Through his energy and ability , he succeeded in restoring to the Abbasid state some of the power and provinces it had lost during the turmoil of the previous decades .

In a series of campaigns he recovered the Jazira , Thughur and Jibal , and effected a rapprochement with the Saffarids in the east and the Tulunids in the west that secured their ? albeit largely nominal ? recognition of caliphal suzerainty . These successes came at the cost of gearing the economy almost exclusively towards maintenance of the army , which resulted in the expansion and rise to power of the central fiscal bureaucracy and contributed to the Caliph 's lasting reputation for avarice . Al @-@ Mu 'tadid was also renowned for his cruelty when punishing criminals , and subsequent chroniclers record his extensive and ingenious use of torture . His reign also saw the permanent move of the capital back to Baghdad , where he engaged in major building activities .

Despite his successes , al @-@ Mu 'tadid 's reign was ultimately too short to effect a lasting reversal of the Caliphate 's fortunes , and the " Abbasid revival " that he spearheaded was too dependent on the presence of capable personalities at the helm of the state . The brief reign of his less able son and heir , al @-@ Muktafi , still saw some major gains , but his later successors lacked his energy . In addition , the factionalism within the bureaucracy that had become apparent during the later years of al @-@ Mu 'tadid 's reign would debilitate the Abbasid government for decades to come , leading to the subjugation of the Caliphate to a series of military strongmen , culminating in the conquest of Baghdad by the Buyids in 946 .

= = Early life = =

Al @-@ Mu 'tadid was born Ahmad , the son of Talha , one of the sons of the Caliph al @-@ Mutawakkil ( r . 847 ? 861 ) , and a Greek slave named Dirar . The exact date of his birth is unknown ; as he is variously recorded as being thirty @-@ eight or thirty @-@ one years old at the time of his accession , he was born either in ca . 854 or ca . 861 . In 861 , al @-@ Mutawakkil was murdered , beginning a period of internal turmoil , known as the " Anarchy at Samarra " from the site of the Caliphate 's capital , which ended in 870 with the rise to the throne of Ahmad 's uncle , al @-@ Mu 'tamid . Real power however had come to lie with the elite Turkish troops and with Ahmad 's own father , Talha , who , as the Caliphate 's main military commander , served as the chief intermediary between the caliphal government and the Turks . Assuming the honorific name al @-@ Muwaffaq in the style of the caliphs , Talha soon became the effective ruler of the Caliphate , a position consolidated in 882 after a failed attempt by al @-@ Mu 'tamid to flee to Egypt led to his confinement in house arrest .

Caliphal authority in the provinces collapsed during the " Anarchy at Samarra " , with the result that by the 870s the central government had lost effective control over most of the Caliphate outside the metropolitan region of Iraq . In the west , Egypt had fallen under the control of Ahmad ibn Tulun , who also disputed control of Syria with al @-@ Muwaffaq , while Khurasan and most of the Islamic East had been taken over by the Saffarids , who replaced the Abbasids ' loyal clients , the Tahirids .

Most of the Arabian peninsula was likewise lost to local potentates , while in Tabaristan a radical Zaydi Shi 'a dynasty took power . Even in Iraq , the rebellion of the Zanj slaves threatened Baghdad itself , and further south the Qarmatians were a nascent threat . Al @-@ Muwaffaq 's regency was thus a continuous struggle to save the tottering Caliphate from collapse . His attempts to recover control of Egypt and Syria from Ibn Tulun failed , with the latter even able to expand his territory and obtain his recognition as hereditary ruler , but he succeeded in preserving the core of the Caliphate in Iraq by repelling a Saffarid invasion aiming to capture Baghdad , and by subduing the Zanj after a long struggle .

It was against the Zanj that the future al @-@ Mu 'tadid ? at this time usually referred to by his kunya of Abu 'l @-@ Abbas ? would acquire his first military experience and establish the close ties with the army that would characterize his reign . Al @-@ Muwaffaq gave his son a military training from an early age , and the young prince became " a keen horseman and took care to inspect both his troops and their mounts in person " ( Hugh N. Kennedy ) .

Within a decade from the outbreak of the revolt in 869 , the Zanj had seized most of lower Iraq , including the cities of Basra and Wasit , and expanded into Khuzistan as well . In 879 the death of the founder of the Saffarid state , Ya 'qub al @-@ Saffar , allowed the Abbasid government to fully concentrate its attention against the Zanj rebellion , and Abu 'l @-@ Abbas ' appointment in December 879 to command against the rebels at the head of 10 @,@ 000 troops marks the turning @-@ point of the war . In the long and hard struggle that followed , which involved amphibious operations in the Mesopotamian Marshes , Abu 'l @-@ Abbas and his own military slaves ( ghilman ) ? of which the long @-@ serving Zirak al @-@ Turki was the chief ? played the major role : although the Abbasid armies eventually swelled with reinforcements , volunteers , and Zanj defectors , it was the few but elite ghilman who formed the army 's backbone , filling its leadership positions and bearing the brunt of the battle , often under the personal command of Abu 'l @-@ Abbas . After years of gradually tightening the noose around the Zanj , in August 883 the Abbasid troops stormed their capital of al @-@ Mukhtara , putting an end to the rebellion . The detailed account of the war , written by a former Zanj rebel and preserved in the history of al @-@ Tabari , stresses the role of al @-@ Muwaffaq and Abu 'l @-@ Abbas as the heroes who , in defence of the embattled Muslim state , suppressed the rebellion ; the successful campaign would become a major tool in their propaganda effort to legitimize their de facto usurpation of the Caliph 's power .

Following the death of Ibn Tulun in May 884 , the two caliphal generals Ishaq ibn Kundaj and Ibn Abu 'l @-@ Saj sought to take advantage of the situation and attacked the Tulunid domains in Syria , but their initial gains were rapidly reversed . In the spring of 885 , Abu 'l @-@ Abbas was sent to take charge of the invasion . He soon succeeded in defeating the Tulunids and forcing them to retreat to Palestine , but after a quarrel with Ibn Kundaj and Ibn Abu 'l @-@ Saj , the latter abandoned the campaign and withdrew their forces . In the Battle of Tawahin on 6 April , Abu 'l @-@ Abbas confronted Ibn Tulun 's son and heir , Khumarawayh , in person . The Abbasid prince was initially victorious , forcing Khumarawayh to flee , but was in turn defeated and fled the battlefield , while much of his army was taken prisoner . After this victory the Tulunids expanded their control over the Jazira and the borderlands ( the Thughur ) with the Byzantine Empire . A peace agreement followed in 886 , whereby al @-@ Muwaffaq was forced to recognize Khumarawayh as hereditary governor over Egypt and Syria for 30 years , in exchange for an annual tribute . Over the next couple of years , Abu 'l @-@ Abbas was involved in his father 's ultimately unsuccessful attempts to wrest control of Fars from Saffarid control .

During this period , the relations between Abu 'l @-@ Abbas and his father deteriorated , although the reason is unclear . Already in 884 , Abu 'l @-@ Abbas ' ghilman rioted in Baghdad against al @-@ Muwaffaq 's vizier , Sa 'id ibn Makhlad , possibly over unpaid salaries . Eventually , in 889 , Abu 'l @-@ Abbas was arrested and put in prison on his father 's orders , where he remained despite the demonstrations of the ghilman loyal to him . He apparently remained under arrest until May 891 , when al @-@ Muwaffaq , already nearing his death , returned to Baghdad after two years he spent in Jibal . Al @-@ Muwaffaq , suffering from gout , was already visibly nearing his end ; the vizier Isma 'il ibn Bulbul and the city commander of Baghdad , Abu 'l @-@ Saqr , called al @-@ Mu 'tamid and his sons , including the heir @-@ apparent al @-@ Mufawwad , into the city , hoping to

exploit al @-@ Muwaffaq 's imminent death for their own purposes . Nevertheless , the popularity of Abu 'l @-@ Abbas with the soldiers and the common people was such that he was set free , his opponents ' houses were ransacked by the mob , and the attempt to sideline him failed .

Thus , when al @-@ Muwaffaq died in June 891 , Abu 'l @-@ Abbas succeeded him immediately in his offices , with the title of al @-@ Mu 'tadid bi @-@ llah and a position in the line of succession after the Caliph and al @-@ Mufawwad . Within a few months , in April 892 , al @-@ Mu 'tadid had his cousin removed from the succession ? and probably killed ? so that when al @-@ Mu 'tadid died in October , possibly poisoned , he succeeded to the throne as caliph .

= = Reign = =

Harold Bowen describes al @-@ Mu 'tadid at his accession as " in appearance upright and thin ; and on his head was a white mole , which , since white moles were not admired , he used to dye black . His expression was haughty . In character he was brave ? a story was told of his killing a lion with only a dagger . [ ... ] he had inherited all his father 's energy , and cultivated a reputation of prompt action . " Like his father , al @-@ Mu 'tadid 's power rested on his close relations with the military , and it was military activities which consumed his interest , especially as he usually led his army in person on campaign . As the historian Michael Bonner comments , " [ t ] he role of ' ghaz? caliph ' , invented by Harun al @-@ Rashid and enhanced by al @-@ Mu 'tasim , now had its greatest performance , in al @-@ Mu 'tadid 's tireless campaigning " .

= = = Campaigns of reunification = = =

From the start of his reign , the new Caliph set out to reverse the fragmentation of the Abbasid Caliphate , a goal towards which he worked by a mixture of force and diplomacy ; although an active and enthusiastic campaigner , al @-@ Mu 'tadid was also " a skilful diplomat , always prepared to make compromises with those who were too powerful to defeat " ( Hugh Kennedy ) . This policy became immediately evident in the conciliatory attitude the new Caliph adopted towards his most powerful vassal , the Tulunids : in spring 893 , al @-@ Mu 'tadid recognized and reconfirmed Khumarawayh in his office as autonomous emir over Egypt and Syria , in exchange for an annual tribute of 300 @,@ 000 dinars and further 200 @,@ 000 dinars in arrears , as well as the return to caliphal control of the two Jaziran provinces of Diyar Rabi 'a and Diyar Mudar . In order to seal the pact , Khumarawayh offered his daughter , Qatr al @-@ Nada ( " Dew Drop " ) as bride to one of the Caliph 's sons , but al @-@ Mu 'tadid chose to marry her himself . The Tulunid princess brought with her a million dinars as her dowry , a " wedding gift that was considered the most sumptuous in medieval Arab history " ( Th . Bianquis ) . Her arrival in Baghdad was marked by the luxury and extravagance of her retinue , which contrasted starkly with the impoverished caliphal court . According to a story , after a thorough search , al @-@ Mu 'tadid 's chief eunuch could only find five ornate silver @-@ and @-@ gold candlesticks to decorate the palace , while the princess was accompanied by 150 servants each carrying such a candlestick . Thereupon al @-@ Mu 'tadid is said to have remarked " come let us go and hide ourselves , lest we be seen in our poverty " . Qatr al @-@ Nada died soon after the wedding , and the murder of Khumarawayh in 896 left the Tulunid state in the unsteady hands of Khumarawayh 's under @-@ age sons . Al @-@ Mu 'tadid swiftly took advantage of this and in 897 extended his control over the border emirates of the Thughur , where , in the words of Michael Bonner , " [ he ] assumed , after a long hiatus , the old caliphal prerogative of commanding the annual summer expedition and arranging the defence against the Byzantine empire " . In addition , to secure caliphal recognition of his position , the new Tulunid ruler Harun ibn Khumarawayh ( r . 896 ? 904 ) was forced to further concessions , handing back all of Syria north of Homs , and increasing the annual tribute to 450 @,@ 000 dinars . Over the next few years , increasing domestic turmoil in the remaining Tulunid domains , and the escalation of Qarmatian attacks , encouraged many Tulunid followers to defect to the resurgent Caliphate .

In the Jazira the new Caliph struggled against a variety of opponents : alongside an almost thirty @-@ year @-@ old Kharijite rebellion , there were various autonomous local magnates , chiefly the

Shaybani ruler of Amid and Diyar Bakr , Ahmad ibn Isa al @-@ Shaybani , and the Taghlibi chief Hamdan ibn Hamdun . In 893 , while the Kharijites were distracted by internal quarrels , al @-@ Mu 'tadid captured Mosul from the Shayban . Next , in 895 Hamdan ibn Hamdun was evicted from his strongholds , hunted down and captured . Finally , the Kharijite leader Harun ibn Abdallah himself was defeated and captured by Hamdan 's son Husayn in 896 , before being sent to Baghdad , where he was crucified . This exploit marked the beginning of an illustrious career for Husayn ibn Hamdan in the caliphal armies , and the gradual rise of the Hamdanid family to power in the Jazira . Ahmad al @-@ Shaybani retained Amid until his death in 898 , being succeeded by his son Muhammad . In the next year , al @-@ Mu 'tadid returned to the Jazira , ousted Muhammad from Amid , and reunified the entire province under central government control by installing his son and heir , Ali al @-@ Muktafi , as governor .

Al @-@ Mu 'tadid was unable , however , to restore effective caliphal control north of the Jazira in Transcaucasia , where Armenia and Adharbayjan remained in the hands of virtually independent local dynasties . Ibn Abu 'l @-@ Saj , who was now the caliphal governor of Adharbayjan , proclaimed himself independent in ca . 898 , although soon he recognized again the Caliph 's suzerainty during his conflicts with the Christian Armenian princes . When he died in 901 , he was succeeded by his son Devdad , marking the consolidation of the semi @-@ independent Sajid dynasty in the region . In 900 Ibn Abu 'l @-@ Saj was even suspected of plotting to seize the Diyar Mudar province with the co @-@ operation of the notables of Tarsus , after which the vengeful Caliph ordered the latter arrested and the city 's fleet burned . This decision was a major self @-@ inflicted wound on the centuries @-@ long war against Byzantium , for in the past decades the Tarsians and their fleet had played a major role in the raids against the Byzantine frontier provinces . While a Syrian fleet under the renegade Damian of Tarsus sacked the port of Demetrias in ca . 900 , and Arab fleets would go on wreak havoc in the Aegean Sea over the next two decades , on land , the Byzantines , strengthened by an influx of Armenian refugees like Melias , began to expand their control over the border regions , scoring victories and founding new provinces ( themes ) in the former no @-@ man 's land between the two empires .

In the Islamic East , the Caliph was forced to acknowledge the reality of the Saffarids ' domination and established a modus vivendi with them , perhaps hoping , according to Hugh Kennedy , to harness them in a partnership analogous to that which the Tahirids had enjoyed in previous decades . Consequently , the Saffarids were recognized in their possession of Khurasan and eastern Persia as well as Fars , while the Abbasids were to exercise direct control over western Persia , namely Jibal , Rayy and Isfahan . This policy gave the Caliph free hand to recover the territories of the Dulafids , another semi @-@ independent local dynasty that was centred on Isfahan and Nihavand . When the Dulafid Ahmad ibn Abd al @-@ Aziz ibn Abi Dulaf died in 893 , al @-@ Mu 'tadid moved swiftly to install his son al @-@ Muktafi as governor in Rayy , Qazvin , Qum and Hamadan . The Dulafids were confined to their core region around Karaj and Isfahan , before being deposed outright in 896 . Nevertheless , Abbasid hold over these territories remained precarious , especially due to the proximity of the Zaydi emirate in Tabaristan , and in 897 Rayy was handed over to Saffarid control .

The Abbasid ? Saffarid partnership in Iran was most clearly expressed in their joint effort against the general Rafi ibn Harthama , who had made his base in Rayy and posed a threat to both caliphal and Saffarid interests in the region . Al @-@ Mu 'tadid sent Ahmad ibn Abd al @-@ Aziz to seize Rayy from Rafi , who fled and made common cause with the Zaydis of Tabaristan in an effort to seize Khurasan from the Saffarids . However , with Amr mobilizing the anti @-@ Alid sentiments of the populace against him and the expected assistance from the Zaydis failing to materialize , Rafi was defeated and killed in Khwarazm in 896 . Amr , now at the pinnacle of his power , sent the defeated rebel 's head to Baghdad , and in 897 the Caliph transferred control of Rayy to him . The partnership finally collapsed after Mu 'tadid appointed the Saffarid ruler Amr ibn al @-@ Layth in 898 as governor of Transoxiana , which was ruled by his rivals , the Samanids . Al @-@ Mu 'tadid deliberately encouraged Amr to confront the Samanids , only for Amr to be crushingly defeated and taken prisoner by the latter in 900 . The Samanid ruler , Isma 'il ibn Ahmad , sent him in chains to Baghdad , where he was executed in 902 , after al @-@ Mu 'tadid 's death . Al @-@ Mu 'tadid in

turn conferred Amr 's titles and governorships to Isma 'il ibn Ahmad . The Caliph also moved to regain Fars and Kirman , but the Saffarid remnant under Tahir proved sufficiently resilient to thwart the Abbasid attempts at capturing these two provinces for several years . It was not until 910 that the Abbasids managed to regain the coveted Fars province .

At the same time , the Caliphate faced a new threat , the Qarmatians . A radical Islamic sect founded in Kufa around 874 , the Qarmatians were originally a sporadic and minor nuisance in the Sawad , but their power grew swiftly to alarming proportions after 897 : under the leadership of Abu Sa 'id al @-@ Jannabi , they seized Bahrayn in 899 and in the next year defeated a caliphal army under al @-@ Abbas ibn Amr al @-@ Ghanawi . In the years following al @-@ Mu 'tadid 's death , the Qarmatians " were to prove the most dangerous enemies the Abbasids had faced since the time of the Zanj " ( Hugh Kennedy ) . The same period also saw more anti @-@ Abbasid regimes established on the periphery of the Islamic world : the Fatimids seized power in Ifriqiya , and another Zaydi dynasty was established in Yemen .

= = = Domestic government = = =

The Abbasid army , following the reforms of al @-@ Mu 'tasim , was a smaller and more professional fighting force than the caliphal armies of the past . Although it proved militarily highly effective , it also posed a potential danger to the stability of the Abbasid regime : drawn from Turks and other peoples from the Caliphate 's periphery and the lands beyond , it was alienated from the society of the Caliphate 's heartlands , with the result that the soldiers were " entirely reliant on the state not just for cash but for their very survival " ( Hugh Kennedy ) . As a result , any failure by the central government to provide their pay resulted in a military uprising and a political crisis , as was demonstrated in the Anarchy at Samarra . Consequently , ensuring the regular payment of the army became the prime task of the state . According to Hugh Kennedy , based on a treasury document from the time of al @-@ Mu 'tadid 's accession , " out the total expenditure of 7915 dinars per day , some 5121 are entirely military , 1943 in areas ( like riding animals and stables ) which served both military and non @-@ military and only 851 in areas like the bureaucracy and the harem which can be described as truly civilian ( though even in this case , the bureaucrats ' main purpose seems to have been to arrange the payment of the army ) . It seems reasonable to conclude that something over 80 per cent of recorded government expenditure was devoted to maintaining the army . "

At the same time , however , the Caliphate ' fiscal basis had shrunk dramatically after so many tax @-@ paying provinces had been lost from the central government 's control . The caliphal government was now increasingly reliant on the revenue of the Sawad and the other areas of lower Iraq , but there the 9th century witnessed a rapid decline in agricultural productivity due to the disruption of the civil wars and neglect of the irrigation network : by the early 10th century the Sawad , which in the reign of Harun al @-@ Rashid provided annual revenue of 102 @,@ 500 @,@ 000 dirhams ? more than double the revenue of Egypt and three times that of Syria ? provided less than a third of that figure . The situation was further exacerbated by the fact that in the remaining provinces , semi @-@ autonomous governors , grandees and members of the dynasty were able to establish virtual latifundia , aided by the system of muqata 'a , a form of tax farming in exchange for a fixed tribute , which they often failed to pay . To maximise their revenue from the territory remaining to them , the Abbasids increased the breadth and complexity of the central bureaucracy , dividing the provinces into smaller tax districts as well as increasing the number of the fiscal departments ( diwans ) , allowing for a far closer oversight of both revenue collection and the activities of the officials themselves .

To combat this fiscal crisis , the Caliph would often personally devote himself to the supervision of revenue , acquiring a reputation for " a spirit of economy , verging on avarice " ( F. Maltby @-@ Douglas ) ; he was said to " examine petty accounts that a commoner would scorn to consider " ( Harold Bowen ) . Fines and confiscations multiplied under his rule , with the resulting revenue , along with the income from the crown domain and even a portion of the provincial taxation , flowing to the caliphal privy purse ( bayt mal al @-@ kha??a ) . The latter now acquired a leading role among the other fiscal departments , and it frequently held more money than the public treasury (

bayt mal al @-@ ?amma ) itself . By the end of al @-@ Mu 'tadid 's reign , the once empty privy purse would contain ten million dinars . On the other hand , in gesture aimed to ease the tax burden of the farmers , in 895 the Caliph changed the start of the tax year from the Persian New Year in March to 11 June ? which became known as Nayr?z al @-@ Mu 'tadid , " al @-@ Mu 'tadid 's New Year " ? so that the land tax ( khar?j ) was now collected after the harvest instead of before .

The Caliph 's policies strengthened the position of the civil bureaucracy , which now reached the apogee of its influence , and especially the vizier , whom even the army came to respect as the spokesman of the caliph . In terms of personnel , al @-@ Mu 'tadid 's reign was marked by continuity among the senior leadership of the state . Ubayd Allah ibn Sulayman ibn Wahb remained vizier from the start of the reign until his death in 901 , and was succeeded by his son , al @-@ Qasim , who had from the start been deputizing his father during the latter 's absences from the capital . The freedman Badr , a veteran who had served under al @-@ Muwaffaq and whose daughter married the Caliph 's son , remained commander of the army . The fiscal departments , especially of the Sawad ( Lower Iraq ) , were managed first by the Banu 'l @-@ Furat brothers Ahmad and Ali , and after 899 by the Banu 'l @-@ Jarrah under Muhammad ibn Dawud and his nephew , Ali ibn Isa . The original administrative team was so effective and harmonious that according to the 11th @-@ century historian Hilal as @-@ Sabi , it was said by subsequent generations that " there had never been such a quartet , Caliph , Vizier , Commander , and chief of the diwans , as al @-@ Mu 'tadid , Ubayd Allah , Badr and Ahmad ibn al @-@ Furat " . On the other hand , Michel Bonner points out that the later reign of al @-@ Mu 'tadid " saw a growth of factionalism within this bureaucracy , observable also in the army and in urban civilian life " . The rivalry between the two bureaucratic dynasties of the Banu 'l @-@ Furat and the Banu 'l @-@ Jarrah , with their extensive networks of clients , began at this time . Although a strong caliph and vizier could restrain this rivalry , it would dominate the Abbasid government over the next decades , with the factions alternating in office and often fining and torturing their predecessors to extract money according to a well @-@ established practice known as mu?adara . In addition , al @-@ Qasim ibn Ubayd Allah was of an altogether different character than his father : soon after his appointment , he plotted to have al @-@ Mu 'tadid assassinated , and tried to involve Badr in his scheming . The general rejected his proposals with indignation , but al @-@ Qasim was saved from discovery and execution by the Caliph 's sudden death . The vizier then tried to dominate al ? Muktafi , moved swiftly to have Badr denounced and executed , and was involved in yet more intrigues against the Banu 'l @-@ Furat .

Al @-@ Mu 'tadid also completed the return of the capital from Samarra to Baghdad , which had already served as his father 's main base of operations . The city 's centre , however , was relocated on the eastern bank of the Tigris and further downstream of the original city , where it has remained to this day . As the 10th @-@ century historian al @-@ Mas 'udi wrote , the Caliph 's two main passions were " women and building " ( al @-@ nisa? wa?l @-@ bana? ) , and accordingly he engaged in major building activities in the capital : he restored and expanded the Great Mosque of al @-@ Mansur which had fallen into disuse , enlarged the Hasani palace , built the new palaces of Thurayya ( " Pleiades " ) and Firdus ( " Paradise " ) , and began work on the Taj ( " Crown " ) Palace , which was completed under al @-@ Muktafi . He also took care to restore the city 's irrigation network , cleaning up the silted @-@ up Dujayl canal , paying for it with money from those landowners who stood to profit from it .

In terms of doctrine , al @-@ Mu 'tadid from the outset of his reign sided firmly with Sunni traditionalist orthodoxy , forbidding theological works , and abolishing the fiscal department on property in escheat , which Hanbali legal opinion regarded as illegal . At the same time he also tried to maintain good relations with the Alids , to the point of seriously considering ordering the official cursing of Mu 'awiya , the first Umayyad caliph and author of the death of Ali ; he was only dissuaded at the last moment by his advisers , who feared what unforeseen consequences such an act might have . Al @-@ Mu 'tadid also maintained good relations with the breakaway Zaydi imams of Tabaristan , but his pro @-@ Alid stance failed to prevent the establishment of the second Zaydi state in Yemen in 901 .

In the dispensation of justice , he was characterized by what F. Malti @-@ Douglas describes as "

severity bordering on sadism " . While tolerant of error and not above displays of tenderness , when his wrath was aroused he resorted to torture in the most ingenious ways , and had special torture chambers constructed underneath his palace . Chroniclers like al @-@ Mas 'udi and the Mamluk historian al @-@ Safadi describe in great detail the tortures inflicted by the Caliph on prisoners , as well as his practice of making an example of them by having them publicly displayed in Baghdad . At the same time , however , they tend to justify his severity as legitimate , in service of the interests of the state . F. Malti @-@ Douglas remarks that when al @-@ Safadi compared al @-@ Mu 'tadid with the founder of the Abbasid state , calling him " al @-@ Saffah the Second " , this was not only to emphasize his restoration of the Caliphate 's fortunes , but also a direct allusion to the meaning of al @-@ Saffah 's name , " the Blood @-@ Shedder " .

= = = Death and legacy = = =

Al @-@ Mu 'tadid died at the Hasani palace on 5 April 902 , at the age of either 40 or 47 . There were rumours that he had been poisoned , but it is more likely that the rigours of his campaigns , coupled with his dissipate life , severely weakened his health . During his final illness , he refused to follow the advice of his physicians , and even kicked one of them to death . Al @-@ Mu 'tadid was the first Abbasid caliph to be buried within the walls of Baghdad . Like his sons after him , he was buried in the former Tahirid palace in the western part of the city , which was now used by the caliphs as a secondary residence .

According to the Orientalist Karl Vilhelm Zetterstéen , al @-@ Mu 'tadid " had inherited his father 's gifts as a ruler and was distinguished alike for his economy and his military ability " , becoming " one of the greatest of the Abbasids in spite of his strictness and cruelty " . Al @-@ Mu 'tadid 's capable reign is credited with having arrested the Abbasid Caliphate 's decline for a while , but his successes were too dependent on the presence of an energetic ruler at the helm , and ultimately his reign " was too short to reverse long @-@ term trends and re @-@ establish Abbasid power on a long @-@ term basis " ( Hugh Kennedy ) .

Al @-@ Mu 'tadid had taken care to prepare his son and successor , al @-@ Muktafi , for his role by appointing him as governor in Rayy and the Jazira . Although al @-@ Muktafi tried to follow his father 's policies , he lacked his energy . The heavily militarized system of al @-@ Muwaffaq and al @-@ Mu 'tadid required the Caliph to actively participate in campaigns , setting a personal example and allowing for the formation of ties of loyalty , reinforced by patronage , between the ruler and the soldiers . Al @-@ Muktafi , on the other hand , did not " in his character and comportment [ ... ] , being a sedentary figure , instil much loyalty , let alone inspiration , in the soldiers " ( Michael Bonner ) . The Caliphate was still able to secure major successes over the next few years , including the reincorporation of the Tulunid domains in 904 and victories over the Qarmatians , but with al @-@ Muktafi 's death in 908 , the so @-@ called " Abbasid restoration " passed its high @-@ water mark , and a new period of crisis began .

Power was now wielded by the senior bureaucrats , who installed the weak and pliable al @-@ Muqtadir on the throne . Over the next decades , the expenditure of both the court and the army increased , while maladministration and strife between military and bureaucratic factions intensified . By 932 , when al @-@ Muqtadir was assassinated , the Caliphate was effectively bankrupt , and authority soon devolved on a series of military strongmen who competed for control of the caliph and the title of amir al @-@ umara . This process culminated in the capture of Baghdad in 946 by the Buyids , who put an end to caliphal independence even in name . Thereafter the caliphs remained as symbolic figureheads , but were divested of any military or political authority or independent financial resources .