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THE
**Umayyad and the 'Abbasid
Khalifates**

The Umayyad and the 'Abbasid Khalifates

BY THE

REV. CANON SELL, D.D., M.R.A.S.

AUTHOR OF 'THE FAITH OF ISLAM', 'THE RELIGIOUS
ORDERS OF ISLAM', 'THE RECENSIONS OF THE
QUR'AN', 'THE LIFE OF MUHAMMAD',
AND 'OUTLINES OF ISLAM'

THE CHRISTIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY
FOR INDIA

MADRAS. ALLAHABAD, CALCUTTA AND COLOMBO

1914

PRINTED AT THE
S. P. C. K. PRESS, VEPERY, MADRAS
1914

PREFACE

THIS book is a continuation of the history contained in *The Four Rightly-Guided Khalífas*. It carries on the history through the period of the Umayyad and the 'Abbásid Khalífates; the one at Damascus, the other at Baghdád. It gives, with some detail in parts, a general view of the history of the period. The subject, however, is large, and the limit prescribed for books in the Islám Series is small, so I have had to omit an account of the growth of the empire in Africa and in Spain, which requires one or more books and which, I hope, will appear in due course.

I have had to set aside the history of the twelve Shí'ah Imáms of the House of 'Alí and of the sects which arose in connexion with them. I have had also to omit an account of the growth of Muḥammadan Jurisprudence, which, after the repression of the free-thinkers by Mutawakkil, settled down into a hard and fast system of law and dogma. The growth of the literature of the period has also been

passed by. All of these subjects invite the attention of competent authors.

I refer to the following books under the names of their respective authors :—

Ma'súdí, *Murúju'dh-Dhahab* (Paris, 1864); Zaydan, *Umayyads and 'Abbásids* (London, 1907); Syúfí, *History of the Khalífas* (Calcutta edition, 1881); Ṭabarí, *Tárikhu'r-Rasúl wa'l-Mildl* (de Goeje's edition, 1882); Ibn Khaldún, *Prolegomènes* (Slane's edition, 1865); al-Fakhrí, *History of the Muslim Dynasties*, French translation, by Emile Amar (Paris, 1907); Syed Amír 'Alí, *A Short History of the Saracens*; Ibn Khallikán, *Biographical Dictionary*; Mírkhúnd, *Rauḍatu's-Ṣafá* (Lucknow edition, 1904); Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*; Le Strange, *Baghdad during the Abbásid Khalífate* (Oxford, 1900); Henri Fournel, *Les Berbers, Etude sur la conquête del' Afrique par les Arabes* (Paris, 1875); Osborn, *Islám under the Arabs*, I quote as Vol. I and *Islám under the Khalífas of Baghdad*, as Vol. II. Osborn has many graphic descriptions of important events. He does not give in foot-notes authorities for his statements, but I have verified all that I have used and have found them correct. I am quite satisfied as to the accuracy of his historical statements.

The Life of Muhammad (C.L.S.), *The Four Rightly-Guided Khalīfas* (C.L.S.) are also referred to.

The Umayyad and Abbāsid Khalīfates when supplemented by some account of the Muslim conquests of Northern Africa and of Spain, during the period already covered, will furnish a fairly complete history of Islām up to A.D. 1258.

This book shows how bitter the strife amongst the Muslim peoples was for many a long year, and how the Arab chauvinism, that arrogant, self-satisfied pride, which looked upon all other races Muslim or non-Muslim as inferior, hindered the consolidation of the empire and finally wrecked it.

E. S.

MADRAS,
February, 1914.

CONTENTS

			PAGE
THE Umayyads	1
THE 'Abbasids	58
INDEX	109

THE Umayyad and the 'Abbasid Khalifates

THE UMAYYADS

IN order to understand the underlying cause of all the turmoil which arose during the Khalífate of 'Alí, it must be remembered that among the Arabs the clan spirit was very strong. Muḥammad by his conquest of Arabia broke it down for a while, and in Madína, at least, formed a united people. There Islám became a bond of union. When his strong personal rule passed away, the tribal spirit, only partially kept in check, began to revive. The firmness of the two first Khalífas, Abú Bakr and 'Umar, kept the unruly in subjection, but under the next Khalífa, 'Uṭhmán, a member of the Umayyad clan,¹ the ancient jealousies began to revive.

'With the accession of 'Uṭhmán', says Browne, 'the old nepotism and clannish feeling once more became evident ; and dangers of sedition and schism, already

¹ This clan was of recognized nobility. A distinguished member of it, Ḥarb ibn Umayya, was the leader of the Meccans in the Fijár war. See Zaydan, p. 49 ; for Fijár war, see Sell, *The Life of Muḥammad*, pp. 12-13.

imminent by reason of the jealousies between Mecca and Madína, between the Muhájirún (Exiles) and the Anşár (Helpers), between the Hášhimite and Umayyad factions of the Prophet's tribe of Quraish, and between this tribe and the other Arabs, who regarded its ascendancy with ill-concealed discontent, were brought to a head by the new Caliph's irresolution and weakness, and misguided furtherance of the interests of his Umayyad kinsmen.'¹

The Khalífa 'Alí, in many ways an excellent man, was a weak ruler and entirely failed to suppress the tribal jealousy. To understand the full force of this tribal hostility, it is necessary to consider how it originated in pre-Islámic days. There were then, in fact, two distinct nations. One traced its descent from Qaḥṭán, the other to Ishmael. The former clan ruled in Yemen, the latter in the Ḥijáz. Yemen lies in the south-west of Arabia, having the Ḥijáz as its northern boundary. The descendants of Qaḥṭán came to be known as the Ḥimyarites, or as Yemenites; a sub-branch of which settled in Madína, as the Baní 'Aus and the Baní Khazraj, afterwards so closely connected with Muḥammad's career there. The clan said to be descended from Ishmael is referred to as the Muḍarites. To this one the Quraish belonged. The Yemenites were the more civilized people. They possessed a system of government, not perhaps highly organized, but sufficient for its purpose. The Muḍarites were

¹ Browne, pp. 213-4.

a nomadic and pastoral people. For centuries a bitter feud existed, fanned by satirical poems of their national bards.¹ Madína and Mecca, representing rival factions, were opposed to each other, which may account for the long delay the Meccans made before accepting Muḥammad, the political chief of the rival city, as their civil and religious leader. I shall refer to these two factions as the Yemenites and the Muḍarites, the former representing generally the Companions of the Prophet and the men of Madína; the latter the Quraish and the men of Mecca.²

Abú Sufyán, the leader of the Meccans against Muḥammad, was a late convert to Islám. He belonged to the Umayyad family and now his son Mu'áwiya held a high official position in the distant province of Syria. The Khalífa 'Umar, probably with the object of getting him away from Madína, had given him this appointment.

When 'Alí became Khalífa the party opposed to the late Khalífa 'Uthmán and the Umayyads came into power. 'Alí's failure to punish the murderers of 'Uthmán gave great offence to the Umayyads;

¹ The poets played a great part in keeping alive a factious spirit. The two most famous poets were Sudaif, a client of the Hāshimites and Sayyah, an adherent of the Umayyads. 'They used to go outside Mecca and satirize the rival families: so two great parties arose which continued down to 'Abbásid times.' Zaydan, p. 18.

² For a fuller and good account, see Syed Amír 'Alí, pp. 71-4; Osborn, vol. i, pp. 271-6; Zaydan, pp. 3-4; and Ma'súdí, vol. iv, p. 121.

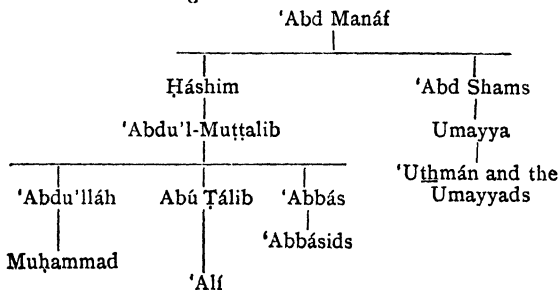
so the antagonism now grew stronger, and the way was prepared for the commencement of a new Khalífate.

Whilst unwise administrative action had much to do with present disputes, the force of the underlying spirit which kept faction alive came, as we have seen, from pre-Islámic times. The most aristocratic and most powerful of all the Quraish clans was the Baní 'Abd Manáf.¹

'The *esprit de corps* which animated the race of Muḍar existed above all in the great Quraish family of 'Abd Manáf and was concentrated in this branch of the Umayyads. All the Quraish recognized their authority, and the other tribes were not disposed to resist them.' 'All the branches of the great tribe of Muḍar gave more obedience to the Umayyads than to any other family, for they recognized their power in the days gone by.'²

There were two branches of this clan—the Baní Umayyads, the more numerous of the two, and the

¹ The following table will make matters clear:—



² Ibn Khaldún, pp. 439-40.

Bani Hāshīm.¹ The Prophet was of a descendant of Hāshīm and the Umayyads opposed and finally compelled him to flee from Mecca. As his relatives followed him, this left the Umayyads supreme in that city. After they became Muslims, they often felt that they were not treated fairly, and that the Muhājirūn, the men who followed Muḥammad from Mecca to Madīna, and the Anṣār, the converts of Madīna, were preferred before them. They complained to Abū Bakr about this, but were reminded that they had embraced Islām only after long opposition, and that they should show zeal in the sacred war equal to the rest of the Muslim forces. The Khalīfa 'Umar saw that it was undesirable to keep a discontented body of men in Madīna and wisely sent them to fight against the Byzantines, with good prospects of a settlement in Syria, where soon after a prominent Umayyad leader became governor. Thus the Quraish Arabs of this clan gathered together in Syria whilst the Hāshimite Arabs remained in their old homes. This accentuated the fact of the clan division.

Mu'āwiya probably quite early in his governorship of Syria aspired to the Khalīfate, but he found some ostensible grounds for taking further action when 'Alī dismissed him from his high office and thus gave cause for the succeeding revolt. The result of the battle of Siffin, A.D. 657, was that the Syrian party publicly acknowledged Mu'āwiya as Khalīfa.

¹ Syed Amir 'Alī, pp. 6-7.

So Islám now saw the spectacle of two Khalífas, Mu'áwiya and 'Alí, the one cursed from all the pulpits of 'Iráq, the other in all the mosques of Syria.

There was a strong difference of opinion as regards the appointment to the Khalífate. The men of Madína claimed the right to appoint a member of the Prophet's family, on the ground that they were the Helpers (Anṣár) to whom he owed so much; the Quraish in Syria, that is the Umayyads, claimed the right to give the office to the head of the clan, which in pre-Islámic days had been the most powerful and the most prominent in Mecca. But it had to be settled by the sword and the Umayyads won.

Mu'áwiya won over to his side many of the chief officers of 'Alí, of whom the foremost was 'Amr binu'l-'Áṣ, the conqueror of Egypt, unwisely dismissed from office by 'Alí. The Yemenites were partisans of 'Alí, but Mu'áwiya, by bribes and skill, attracted many of them to his cause, for he was an astute leader, who overcame all his opponents by tolerance, craft and liberality. He dealt courteously with men of 'Alí's party. The following is an illustration of his policy. 'Alí's brother, 'Uqail, paid him a visit which greatly pleased Mu'áwiya who enquired why he had left his brother. 'I have left him as God and His Apostle would wish, just as I find you as God and His Apostle disapprove.' ¹ Mu'áwiya reminded him that had he not come as a guest and

¹ Zaydan, p. 82.

MU'AWIYA

a suppliant, he would have answered him in a way which would cause pain. He then departed, leaving instructions that 'Uqail should be well entertained and that a gift of money should be presented to him. At a reception on the following day 'Uqail was again asked why he had left 'Alí. This time he judiciously replied, 'I left him better as regards himself than thee, but thou art better as regards myself than he is'.¹ Thus the generosity of Mu'áwiya had won him over. When, however, methods of this kind failed Mu'áwiya did not hesitate to employ stronger measures and used to resort to poison.² Still Mu'áwiya was not able to remove all his opponents. They hoped that after his death the sovereignty would return to one of themselves, and so, as Zaydan says, 'he quieted them by a peaceful demeanour and by lavish gifts, and they, fearing him, acquiesced in his rule'.³

It had been the custom from the spoils of war lodged in the public treasury to pay stipends to the Muslims, who in the early days of Islám were all soldiers. The possession of the treasury was, therefore, a great source of power and Mu'áwiya used it freely. He settled large stipends on 'Alí's sons, Hasan and Husain, and gave lavishly to other members of the Prophet's family. Thus to some extent he conciliated the people of Madína, because these

¹ تركته خيراً لنفسه منك وانت خيراً لي منه. Mas'údí, vol. v., p. 90.

² For instances of this see Zaydan, pp. 84-5.

³ Zaydan, p. 87.

lavish gifts were all spent in that city. If a tribe fought on his side, he rewarded it with large sums. There were, however, some who, though they outwardly obeyed and flattered him, yet felt that it was not right to do so. Ibn Khallikán relates the following: 'A Muslim came and said: "Commander of the Faithful, if you had not appointed Yazíd as your successor, you would have ruined Islám." Al-Aḥnaf ibn Qais was present and Mu'áwiya asked him why he was silent. He replied: "I fear God in case I lie, and I fear you in case I speak the truth." Mu'áwiya said he hoped God would reward him for his piety and ordered a sum of money to be given him. When he left the Khalífa's presence he was met by the other Muslim, who told al-Aḥnaf that he regarded Mu'áwiya and his son as the worst villains in existence, only they had got the whole wealth of Islám under lock and key, and only such phrases as he had used could extract any of it.' ¹

Under the early Khalífas the money in the treasury was the common property of the Muslims and 'Umar, the second Khalífa, when he wanted more money, always took it as a loan to be repaid. Mu'áwiya considered the treasury to be under his absolute control and ordered his lieutenants to collect money for him. This they did, collecting at the same time much for themselves, so a great period of corruption set in, and personal greed was common

¹ Quoted by Zaydan, p. 93.

amongst all the officials. The State sources of income were the jizya or poll-tax, paid by non-Muslims; the land tax, the alms (zakát) and the tithes. Men often became converts to Islám in order to escape the jizya, but the governors looked upon this as a mere device and still exacted it. The people of Samarqand had apostatized. In order to win them back, they were told that they would then be relieved of the payment of the jizya. They again embraced Islám and the revenue went down. The governor of Khurásán then wrote to the Governor of Samarqand thus: 'The jizya is a source of strength to the Muslims, and I am informed that the people of Sughd and other places have adopted Islám, not out of conviction, but only in order to escape the jizya; find out, therefore, which of them have been circumcised, and who pray the proper number of times and read a Súra of the Qur'án, and only in such cases relieve them of the jizya.' The people then conformed, so a second order came: 'Exact the jizya from the persons from whom you previously took it';¹ so all converts had to pay it in order to keep up the revenue.

The Khárijites (Khawárij)² or Seceders, men in 'Alí's army who objected to the proposal for arbitration after the battle of Siffin, were a source of

¹ Zaydan, p. 98.

² For an account of these fanatics, see Browne, vol i, pp. 220-3.

danger to the inhabitants of Kúfa, who objected to the presence of such fanatics in their neighbourhood, so 'Alí attacked and defeated them, but they still remained a constant source of trouble. At length, when in A.D. 660 a truce was made between Mu'áwiya and 'Alí, by which they mutually agreed to cease hostilities and to accept the present division of territories, the Khárijites were very much vexed. It seemed to them that the theocratic ideal would be lost, and that ungodly kingdoms would block the way of the kingdom of righteousness. Three of their number met together and decided each to kill one man. The victims were 'Alí, 'Amr binu'l-'Áṣ and Mu'áwiya. The assassins at Fustát missed 'Amr who was absent from the mosque on the appointed day. At Damascus Mu'áwiya was wounded but not fatally. At Kúfa, 'Alí was struck and died soon after on January 25, 661.

The people of Kúfa then elected Ḥasan, the eldest son of 'Alí to the Khalífate; but the Kúfans were a fickle set of people, lavish in promises, faithless in performance, and Ḥasan made a treaty with Mu'áwiya, according to the terms of which, Mu'áwiya retained the Khalífate, with Ḥusain, a younger son of 'Alí, as his successor. Ḥasan retired into private life at Mecca, but later on was poisoned at the instigation, it is said, of Yazíd, son of Mu'áwiya.

Though many objected to this mode of settling the succession, Mu'áwiya became the *de facto* Khalífa. Thus amongst all the turmoil of the

times, it came to pass that the son of Abú Sufyán, the most determined enemy of the Prophet for many years, became the chief ruler in that Islám which his father and relatives had so vigorously tried to suppress.

Mu'áwiya, now seated on the throne, turned his attention to foreign conquests. Under the Khalífa 'Umar, the first invasion of Africa, had taken place, and Egypt fell into the power of the Muslims. A steady advance was then made in Northern Africa. In A.D. 670 'Utaba, a celebrated general, built the military city of Qairawán. He then advanced as far west as the shores of the Atlantic.¹ Conquests were also made in the East. The Muslims were able also to hold their own when attacked by the Byzantines nearer home.

The inhabitants of Mecca and Madína were still in opposition, and so in A. H. 51 (A. D. 671) Mu'áwiya went there in order to gain their allegiance, but some of the leading men held aloof, which so encouraged the others that no satisfactory result ensued. Mu'áwiya died in A. D. 680.

'Alí was one day asked, why some Muslims rejected his authority whilst they obeyed Abú Bakr and 'Umar. He replied: 'Abú Bakr and 'Umar commanded men like me: to-day I command men like you.' By these words he gave a hint that religion had lost a moderating influence.

Viewed from a political standpoint Mu'áwiya

¹ For a full account of this advance, see Syed Amír 'Alí, pp. 78-80.

ruled successfully, and the conquests of Islám over other lands were secured by his able lieutenants.

In ignoring the hereditary principle Mu'áwiya changed the character of the Khalífate. The first Khalifas had been elected by the people, were chief among brethren, were respected as spiritual leaders, and on this ground rested their authority. Now this was changed. The Khalifas were just like other Oriental sovereigns, who ruled by force over a nation of men compelled to obey, instead of being the respected leaders of a body of freemen. The early Khalifas dwelt in the sacred city of Madína, the scene of the Prophet's triumphs; the later ones in Damascus, in Baghdád and cities conquered from the infidel. Mu'áwiya abandoned the simple life of Muḥammad, Abú Bakr and 'Umar, and in the splendour of his court at Damascus followed the example of Byzantine emperors and Persian kings.

Zaydan sums up the character of Mu'áwiya as follows: 'The majority of the Companions (the men who had lived in the days of and with him) of the Prophet acknowledged the claims of 'Alí, and Mu'áwiya saw no method of gaining his way, save by cunning and underhand dealings and in these qualities he was the first man of his age.'¹

A modern writer thus describes him: 'This cool, calculating, thoroughly atheistic Arab ruled over the regions of Islám. The explanation is to be found in two circumstances. The one is that the truly devout

¹ Zaydan, p. 60.

and earnest Musalmán conceived that he manifested his religion most effectually by withdrawing himself from the affairs of the world. The other is the tribal spirit of the Arabs. . . . Greatness had been thrust upon them, but, in the midst of their grandeur, they retained in all their passion, force and intensity, the passions, the rivalries, the petty jealousies of the desert.' ¹

Mu'áwiya has been advised to ignore the compact made with Ḥasan, by which his brother Ḥusain would have been the next Khalífa, so before his death Mu'áwiya nominated his son Yazíd as his successor, thus contravening the principle that the Khálífa should be elected by the people. Henceforth the office became hereditary, when the holder of it was strong enough to overcome his opponents. This caused great discontent, for it was a breach of good faith.

Yazíd who succeeded his father Mu'áwiya in the year A.D. 680 was not an orthodox Muslim. He drank wine, loved dogs, and hated an austere life. The men of Kúfa were scandalized, and he in turn treated them with much contempt. At this time, Ḥusain, the remaining son of 'Alí, was residing at Mecca. He had never taken the oath of allegiance to Mu'áwiya, and so now the men of Kúfa begged him to come, and promised to espouse his cause, if only he would pronounce the deposition of Yazíd, and take away the Khalífate from the House of

¹ Osborn, vol. i, p. 236.

Umayya. The friends of Ḥusain in vain urged that the men of Kúfa were a fickle people, and that they could, if they wished, revolt against Yazíd without his help. Ḥusain, however, accepted the call and started for Kúfa with his family and a small escort of forty horsemen and one hundred foot-soldiers.

But meanwhile Yazíd sent the Governor of Baṣra to block the way, and Ḥusain on the plains of Karbala found his progress arrested by a force of 3,000 men. The people of Kúfa gave no aid. Submission or death was the alternative placed before him. To his followers he said, 'Let all who wish to go do so.' 'O son of the Apostle of God,' was the reply, 'what excuse could we give to thy grandfather on the day of resurrection did we abandon thee?' One by one the small band fell, and at last Ḥusain and his little son, a mere infant, alone remained. Ḥusain sat on the ground. Not one of the enemy seemed to dare touch the grandson of the Prophet. The scene was a strange one—Ḥusain sitting down, his little boy running round him, all his followers lying dead close by, the enemy longing for his blood but restrained by a superstitious awe. Ḥusain took the little lad up into his arms; a chance arrow pierced the child's ear and it died at once. Ḥusain then placed the corpse on the ground, saying, 'We come from God and we return to Him. O God, give me strength to bear these misfortunes.' He stooped down to drink some water from the Euphrates which flowed close by. Just then an

arrow struck him in the mouth. Encouraged by this, the enemy rushed on him and speedily put an end to his life. The plain of Karbala is now a place of sacred pilgrimage to Shi'ahs, and the sad event which took place there is kept alive in their memories by the annual celebration of the Muḥarram. The schism was now complete. A rent had been made in the Muslim world which time has failed to heal. 'The martyred Ḥusain' is a watchword which has kept alive a spirit of hatred and of vengeance even to this day.

The people of Madína then declared the deposition of Yazíd and drove his governor from their city. He retaliated by sending a large army under Muslim bin 'Uqba, a pitiless leader. Madína was taken (A.D. 682) and the Umayyads, forgetting the clemency showed to their fathers and to themselves by Muḥammad who, after the capture of Mecca, treated those who had opposed him with the greatest clemency, showed themselves ruthless and cruel.

Seven hundred Qur'án Readers (i. e. men who know it by heart) and eighty Companions perished. The army then marched on and besieged Mecca. The Ka'ba was ruined and much injury was done, but, after two months had passed by, news was received that Yazíd was dead. The siege was then raised. The decease of a Khalífa has often in Muslim history led to a period of anarchy. 'The action of the laws is suspended, the arm of the executive is smitten with paralysis; the pulse of life having

ceased to beat at the seat and centre of authority, the whole body politic dies also.'¹ It was so now.

The name of Yazíd is held in abhorrence by all Muslims and cursed by all Shí'ahs. His great crime was the murder of Ḥusain at Karbala. It was also a political blunder, for it alienated from the Umayyads all who loved the Prophet's family. We must, however, remember that Ḥusain yielded himself to a treasonable attack upon the *de facto* Khalífa, and so merited punishment though less severe than that inflicted. It must also be put to Yazíd's credit that he treated the women and children of Ḥusain's family with respect.

'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair, the first child born at Madína in Islám, belonged to one of the noblest Quraish families. He was a grandson of Abú Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddiq. He had opposed Mu'áwiya, and refused to take the oath of allegiance to Yazíd. As long as Ḥusain was alive he had no chance of gaining the Khalífate, so he advised him to take the fatal journey towards Kúfa. After Ḥusain's death he proclaimed himself Khalífa in Mecca, and received the allegiance of the people of 'Iráq, Yemen and the Ḥijáz. For nine years he maintained his position in the Holy Cities as a rival ruler, and Yazíd tried in vain to vanquish him; until at last the Khárijites turned against him. They demanded as a condition of their help that the memory of 'Uṭhmán should be denounced. Zubair,

¹ Osborn, vol. i, p. 133.

the father of 'Abdu'lláh, had requested 'Alí to punish the murderers of 'Uthmán, so his son could not consent to curse a man, the murderers of whom his father wished to see punished. The Khárijites, therefore, rose in rebellion and were defeated. They with 'Abdu'lláh were equally opposed to the Umayyads, and so the weakening of them really helped the cause of the Khalífas at Damascus. 'Abdu'lláh seems to have been a pious man, for he rebuilt the Ka'ba which recently had been destroyed. He remained too long inactive in Mecca, instead of taking the field and leading his army in person, and so the opportunity of destroying, or, at least, restricting the power of the Umayyads passed away. He died in A. D. 692.

Yazíd died in A. D. 683 and left a son Mu'áwiya, but he was a sickly lad, quite unfitted to be a ruler. He died forty days after his father and nominated no successor. The Khalífate was open to the strongest man. The Umayyads soon recovered from the dismay caused by the death of Yazíd and his son in such rapid succession. They declined to accept Khálid the brother of the deceased Khalífa, on account of his youth. They chose Marwán ibn Hákim, the eldest member of the clan, who had been a great favourite of the Khalífa 'Uthmán, and proclaimed him Khalífa in Damascus. The partisans of 'Alí at Kúfa and the Khárijites also put forth claimants.

Ma'súdí tells us that Marwán, being struck with

the unanimity shown in the election of 'Abdu'lláh bin Zubair and of the submission shown to him, was inclined to join his party, when 'Ubaidu'lláh bin Ziyád, now arrived in Syria, turned him from his purpose saying: 'Thou art the Shaikh of the Baní 'Abd Manáf, do not be in a hurry'.¹ Had 'Abdu'lláh gone at once to Syria, he would probably have obtained the allegiance of Marwán and of many other Umayyads, but he was irresolute and missed the chance. 'Ubaidu'lláh had tried in Baṣra to get himself elected but failed. He then successfully urged Marwán to oppose 'Abdu'lláh and so no further hope of peace remained. Marwán's difficulties were great, for the Umayyads were divided in their allegiance, but by intrigue and vigorous efforts he soon became master of Syria and Egypt. In order to win over the followers of Khálid, who, at one time, was named as his successor, he married Khálid's mother Fákhlita. Then he took a dislike to the lad who complained to his mother and reproached her for marrying Marwán. She it is said caused Marwán to be put to death in the year A. D. 684.² Before his death Marwán had broken his promise to Khálid and appointed as his successor his son, 'Abdu'l-Malik, who became Khalífa in A. D. 685³ and soon took action against 'Abdu'lláh bin

¹ Ma'súdí, vol. v, p. 198.

² Ibid., pp. 206-7.

³ Syúṭí gives the date as A. D. 692, but that was the date of the death of the rival Khalífa, 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair, and some historians do not consider that 'Abdu'l-Malik was a lawful Khalífa, so

Zubair. The story goes that when the new Khalífa, finding discipline slack in the army, complained to the commander of his body-guard, the latter recommended al-Ḥajjáj bin Yúsuf as commander of the forces. Ḥajjáj soon showed that he could exercise discipline, which led to increased confidence in him on the part of the Khalífa.

In the year A. D. 691 'Abdu'l-Malik determined to invade the holy territories and to subdue 'Abdu'lláh bin Zubair, the rival Khalífa. Men hesitated to attack the holy city, but Ḥajjáj volunteered to go, and with an army of 8,000 men commenced the blockade of Mecca. It lasted for eight months and the sufferings of the people were great, aggravated by the parsimony of 'Abdu'lláh, who had failed to lay in a sufficient stock of provisions. Hunger led many to desert and the fall of Mecca became a certainty. At last the emissaries of 'Abdu'l-Malik thus addressed 'Abdu'lláh: 'You are offered pardon for everything done by you and your followers. You may choose the country where you will live.' 'Abdu'lláh rejected all the promises made, for his mother Asmá said: 'My son have nothing to say to conditions of peace, which you must fear as you fear death. You must die as a soldier. It would be unworthy of you to be taken prisoner or to give

long as 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair was alive. Syúfí omits the name of Marwán for his list of Khalífas and substitutes that of 'Abdu'lláh ibn Zubair: so it was natural that Marwán's son should not be recognized for a time.

yourself up.' 'Mother', replied 'Abdu'lláh, 'I fear the mutilation which would follow my death.' 'Does the sheep which has its throat cut, suffer when it is flayed' asked Asmá. He then embraced his mother and took leave. He spent the night in prayer in the Ka'ba. The next morning the fight commenced and lasted till mid-day. He said to his friends 'Let no one ask where 'Abdu'lláh is; whoever seeks me will find me in the front ranks.' Then praying for help he prepared for the onset. A stone struck him down. His companions tried to save him but all were killed and by the order of al-Ḥajjáj the body of 'Abdu'lláh was impaled on a gibbet at Mecca. Asmá asked Ḥajjáj to give her his body for burial. He refused. Then she said: 'I have heard the Apostle of God say, "Out of the tribe of Thaqif will come an impostor and a butcher." Mukhtár was the impostor, and as for the butcher he is none other than thee.'¹ There were brave women in those days. So passed away the last rival of the Khalífa 'Abdu'l-Malik and the House of Ummayya again regained supreme control.

'Abdu'l-Malik proved to be a vigorous ruler and was well supported by his Syrian subjects. He subdued the Khárijites in Syria and Persia, established his rule as far as Kábul, gained an accession of territory from the Byzantines, and extended his possessions in Northern Africa. He died in A.D. 705.

¹ Ma'súdí, vol. v, pp. 263-5.

He was a strong ruler, and just when justice was not opposed to his rule. Though it is said that he tried to restrain the cruelty of his trusted lieutenant Ḥajjāj, he must bear some of the responsibility for the cruel deeds done in his name. He was the first Khalífa to establish a mint. He organized a good postal service and ordered public registers to be kept in Arabic and not in Persian. The Arabic script was also improved and Ḥajjāj, known better as a ruthless soldier, did much to further the use of vowel marks and of diacritical points placed above or below similar consonants. He thus rendered great service to the study of literature which he encouraged in other ways in Kúfa and Baṣra.

After this reign, the power of the Umayyads began to decline. Their policy alienated four classes of their subjects: (1) The Companions and the Anṣar, and generally the more pious Muslims who were scandalized at the worldliness of the Umayyad chiefs. (2) The whole Shí'ah party. (3) The Khárijites. (4) The clients (Mawálí), the converts to Islám from people outside Arabia, who resented being treated as inferior to the Arabs.

Four sons of Abdu'l-Malik succeeded him in succession and this period A. D. 705 to 743 was a period of comparative repose and prosperity. Al-Walíd assumed the sovereignty in A.D. 705. His reign was chiefly remarkable for the extensive conquests which were made by his armies. They advanced as far as the frontiers of China. The

general of his army demanded a tribute from the Emperor. He kept al-Ḥajjāj in his service but, according to Ibn Abi Hátún¹, seems to have had some qualms of conscience about his cruel deeds, for Walíd said to him: 'Will the Khalífa be judged at the resurrection?' Hátún replied, 'O Prince of the Faithful, art thou more honoured of the Lord, or David? Verily, the Lord united in him the prophetic mission and the viceregency, yet hath He threatened him in His book and said: "O David, verily we have made thee our vice-regent upon earth. Judge, therefore, between men with truth and follow not thy passions, lest they cause thee to err from the way of God. For they who err from the way of God shall meet with a grievous chastisement."'²

'Abdu'l-Malik had nominated Sulaiman, his second son, as the successor to Walíd; but Walíd wished to set his brother Sulaiman aside in favour of his own son 'Abdu'l-'Azíz. In this he had the support of some of his leading men. The result was that Sulaiman for his own safety had to turn to the Yemenites, who, suffering much under the cruel administration of Ḥajjāj, welcomed with delight Sulaiman as the prospective heir to the Khalífate.

The conflict between Ḥajjāj and Yazíd ibn Muhallib began now and led finally to a great revolt, which in time very seriously injured the Umayyad dynasty. Muhallib was a famous general who, after

¹ Syúṭí, p. 228.

² Súratu Šád (xxxviii) 25.

crushing the power of the Khárijites, became governor of Khurásán and was succeeded by his eldest son, Yazíd, an able leader in war, hospitable and generous in times of peace. At this time Ḥajjáj, who had married Hind, the sister of Yazíd bin Muhallib, was governor of 'Iráq.¹ Jealous of his brother-in-law, whose command of the frontier province of Khurásán gave him great opportunities for showing his power by conquests over the Infidel, he feared lest he himself should be supplanted, or that, at least, he would have to take an inferior position to that of Yazíd. He addressed the Khalífa, insinuating that Yazíd was becoming too powerful and would set up a separate kingdom for himself. The Khalífa at last yielded to the importunity of Ḥajjáj, and Yazíd was deposed from his office and summoned to 'Iráq. Ḥajjáj then cast him and two of his brothers into prison in which Yazíd was kept for eleven years. Ḥajjáj demanded the payment of a sum equivalent to £2,500 and tortured his prisoner in the hope of getting it. Having heard that Yazíd had been wounded in the thigh and that an arrow head was still in it, he ordered men to beat the prisoner on that thigh. Hind, his sister, hearing her brother's cries went out and wept. This so enraged Ḥajjáj that he at once divorced her.

At length, Yazíd and his brothers made their escape.² This alarmed Ḥajjáj, for he knew how

¹ He was appointed in A. D. 694. Ṭabarí, Series II, vol. ii, p. 863.

² Mírkhúnd, vol. iii, p. 112.

popular they were in Khurásán. He despatched couriers with the news to the governor of Khurásán and to the Khalífa Walíd. Yazíd, however, did not go to Khurásán but found protection in the house of a relative by whom he was introduced to Sulaiman, who at once took him under his protection. Indeed he was glad to have now on his side the ablest soldier of the day and all who were so attached to him. It counterbalanced the wrong his brother sought to do in trying to deprive him of the succession to the Khalífate, and was some compensation for the hatred of Ḥajjáj, now increased at the sight of his enemy in the confidence of the heir apparent.

Walíd, seeing the importance of detaching so strong an ally from Sulaiman, demanded his surrender. This was refused. Then Yazíd, not wishing to cause further trouble between the brothers, begged to be sent to Walíd. Sulaiman, much distressed, at last consented and, as the order was that Yazíd should come into the presence of Walíd in chains, he sent his own son Ayyúb, also in chains, with him. Sulaiman in his letter besought the Khalífa not to bring disgrace on their family by injuring one who had sought hospitality. Yazíd then recounted all that Muhallib his father, his brothers and he himself had done for the empire. To his credit it must be said that Walíd recognized the obligation, admitted the innocence of Yazíd, gave him a handsome present and set him free. We shall hear of Yazíd again later on.

During the reign of Walid an expedition into India led to the annexation of Sind and part of Northern India. Central Asia was also subdued. The authority of the Khalifa was restored amongst the Berbers in North Africa, and in order to weaken the Byzantine attacks, the islands of Majorca and Minorca were captured and incorporated with the Muslim empire.

Walid died in A.D. 715. His reign was prosperous. Though despotic and often cruel like most rulers of that age, he was probably more humane than some of his predecessors and of his successors. He built the great mosque at Damascus and restored those of Mecca and Madina. The founding of hospitals for the sick and afflicted, of schools for the charge of orphans, and of other charitable institutions shows the good side of his character, and places him above the general average of the Umayyad Khalifas.

The attempt of Walid to set aside the decision of his father that his brother Sulaiman should succeed him in the Khalifate having failed, Sulaiman now became the Khalifa in the year A.D. 715. As soon as he was invested with power, he ascended the pulpit and, after having praised and glorified God and called down His blessings on the Prophet, he spoke as follows: 'Praise be to God who doeth what He willeth, who giveth or taketh away as He pleaseth, who exalteth or humbleth at His good pleasure. O ye people! know the world is a place

of illusion, of falsehood, and of vain delight. Those who dwell thereon are the sport of its revolutions, for it puts laughter in the place of tears and tears where laughter should be; it makes fear replace security and security give way to fear; it enriches the poor and impoverishes the wealthy. Servants of God! take for your guidance the book of God, submit to its injunctions; make it your guide and your conductor. For it has abrogated all that was before it but nothing from henceforth shall do away with it. Know, O faithful, this book will drive far from you the traps set by Satan and all his temptings even as the dawn at the breaking of day turns away the mists of night.' ¹

Ḥajjāj was now dead, but his lieutenants ruled over the richer parts of the empire—Khurásán, 'Iráq and Sind. They felt dismay at the change of power, but had little to hope for from Sulaiman, the new Khalifa, whose succession they had not approved. They were men of ability, but now their harsh treatment of their opponents was repaid them in full. The family of Ḥajjāj and his friends were arrested. The ruler in Sind was executed. Qutaiba, the Governor of Khurásán, was assassinated and Yazíd was appointed governor of the two 'Iráqs. The party which had so ably supported Ḥajjāj was now completely ruined. One of the first acts of Sulaiman was to give liberty to a large

¹ Ma'súdí, vol. v, pp. 398-9.

number of persons whom Ḥajjáj had imprisoned,¹ to remove his tax-collectors and to lighten the burdens placed upon the people.

An expedition under Maslama against the Byzantines was unsuccessful, partly because the Khalífa gave him very inadequate support. This reverse however, was counterbalanced by Yazíd's success in Tabaristán and in Kúhistán, countries lying on the south-west of the Caspian.² Yazíd captured the fortress of Jurján, hitherto considered impregnable, and the whole country fell into his power. His victory was sullied with his cruel treatment of his prisoners, of whom twelve thousand were put to the sword. He reported, against the advice of his secretary, the amount of the rich booty he had secured, an admission which soon after led to his downfall.

Sulaiman's character was a very mixed one. He showed favour to his friends, but, as in the case of the family of Ḥajjáj, he was very cruel and vindictive. Occasionally he was energetic, but he was fond of pleasure, good living and ease. The historians describe his love of eating, which amounted to gluttony. Ma'súdí tells us that he was a great glutton and that his appetite passed all bounds. Sometimes his cooks prepared roast fowls on sticks for him. Though richly apparelled he would seize the hot fowl in his hands and tear it in pieces with his teeth. A story

¹ He thus gained the title of Miftáhu'l-Khair—key of blessing.

² Ṭabarí, Series II, vol. ii, p. 137.

is told how one day, waiting for his regular dinner, he had some breasts of lamb brought to him, which he eagerly devoured, and then afterwards sat down with his guests to dinner and ate as though he had previously eaten nothing.¹ He had, however, better moments than these, and this saying is attributed to him: 'I have eaten of the most delicate dishes, worn the softest raiment, mounted the most splendid horses, but I prefer only one thing, and that is to have a friend in whose company I can rid myself of all the precautions which my safety demands.'²

In his last illness Sulaiman consulted Rája binu'l-Hayát about the succession, saying that he wished to appoint his own son. He was, however, persuaded to nominate his cousin 'Umar bin 'Abdu'l-'Azíz. A document to this effect was then drawn up and sealed, and Rája was instructed to secure the allegiance of the people to the person named in the document. They, not knowing who it was, refused, whereupon Sulaiman ordered them to be beaten into submission.³ This had the desired effect and 'Umar in due course became Khalífa. His successor was to be his uncle Yazíd, the son of the Khalífa 'Abdu'l-Malik. So all was satisfactorily settled.

'Umar II became Khalífa in A. D. 717. In his private life and habits he was very different to Sulaiman. His mother was a granddaughter of

¹ See Ma'súdí, vol. v, pp. 400-2. ² Ibid. vol. v, p. 404.

³ Syútf, p. 231.

'Umar, the second Khalífa, and the Sunnís regard him as the fifth of the lawful Khalífas. 'Umar was a pious and humble man.¹ 'He recalled all the agents appointed by the Umayyads his predecessors, and replaced them by the most honest men he could find. These men conformed their conduct to his. They ceased henceforth to curse the name of 'Ali in the pulpit, and they recited in its stead the verse: "O our Lord! pardon us and our brothers who have preceded us in the faith," [Súratu'l-Hashr (lix) 107] or according to another opinion this verse: "Verily God enjoineth justice, and the doing of good and gifts to kindred, and he forbiddeth wickedness, wrong and oppression." ' [Súratu'n-Nahl (xvi) 92]² One man wrote thus to 'Umar: 'If you wish that all shall prosper during your reign, employ only good men.' 'There', said 'Umar, 'is advice which is all-sufficient.'

'Umar one day said to one of his courtiers, Sálím as-Suddí, "Are you glad on account of my accession or sorry?" The reply was, "Glad for the people but sorry for you." 'Umar said: "I fear I have brought perdition on my soul." Sálím replied, "If you are afraid it is good: I only fear that you may no longer fear." "Give me a word of counsel," said

¹ 'Umar tried to regulate his conduct according to the Companions of the Prophet and the early Khalífas.' (Ibn Khaldún, vol. i, p. 420.) 'Of all the Umayyads 'Umar II was the only truly believing and pious prince.' Dozy, quoted by Browne, vol. i, p. 234.

² Ma'súdi, vol. v, p. 419.

'Umar. The reply came, "Our father Adam was driven out of Paradise for one sin."'¹

'Umar's first address to the people after his accession was to this effect: Men here assembled, we are the branches still living of roots which have disappeared; but can a branch live long when separated from the trunk? Mankind here on earth is naught else but one of the accidental manifestations of substance ceaselessly destroyed by death, and a prey to all sorts of evil: every mouthful of water costs an agony and every mouthful of bread a suffocation. Man obtains one blessing only by losing another. For every single day added to the life of those among you still living an existence is ended and extinguished.²

The anecdotes recording his simplicity of life, religious devotion, and desire to do justice are very numerous. Many are given in full detail by Jalálu'd-Dín as-Syútí and other historians.³ In his early youth he had shown signs of piety. The cause of his conversion is thus recorded: He was inflicting punishment on a black slave. 'Master,' said the slave, 'why are you going to beat me?' 'Umar reminded him of some fault. 'And you,' rejoined the slave, 'have you never by some wrong exposed yourself to the wrath of your Master.' 'Yes,' replied 'Umar. 'And did he not punish you.' 'My

¹ Ma'súdí, vol. v. p. 419.

² Ibid. p. 420.

³ Syútí, pp. 233-48; Ma'súdí, vol. v, pp. 424-34.

God, No.' 'Then, wherefore, are you so eager to punish me who have but done to you what you have done to your Master.' 'Rise', said 'Umar, 'in the name of God, I pronounce you a freeman.'¹

There was great dismay among the courtiers, when one so religiously inclined came into power, for they knew that now all the frivolity and gay pleasures of the court would come to an end. The Khalífa adopted a simple life. He sold the horses in the royal stables and put the proceeds into the public treasury. His wife's jewels were also disposed of and the money thus realized was dealt with in the same manner. He gave back to the Jews and the Christians their places of worship, wrongfully taken from them. He tried to allay the discontent against the reigning dynasty by disallowing the cursing of 'Alí and his family from the public pulpits.

This policy of conciliation came too late, but in after days it was remembered, for, when, on the downfall of the Umayyad dynasty, the graves of the rulers were desecrated, 'Umar's tomb was respected.

He was anxious to bring persons into the fold of Islám. So he sent to the governors of the various provinces instructions not to employ Dhimmís in any State offices. The Governor of Egypt replied that if this order were carried out all the Dhimmís² would become Muslims, cease to pay the *jizya*, or poll-tax, and that there would be, in consequence,

¹ Ma'súdí, vol. v, p. 426.

[payment of the *jizya*.

² Dhimmís are non-Muslims, permitted to live as such on

a great loss of revenue. 'Umar was highly displeased at such laxity in the conversion of infidels, and sent an express order that the governor should receive thirty blows on the head as a punishment for his wicked words. The order concluded thus: 'I should be beyond measure happy if all the Dhimmís became Muslims, for God sent His Prophet to do the work of an Apostle and not to act as a collector of taxes.'¹

This proselytizing zeal, by which non-Muslims were to be degraded, so long as they remained outside the fold, had the effect of drawing forth the sympathy of such people with the revolt of Yazíd ibn Muhallib, which shortly followed the promulgation of the Khalífa's edict. Another result was the nominal conversion of large numbers of Persians, who affected much zeal for the cause of the House of 'Alí, and so proved in time to be formidable enemies to the Umayyad dynasty.

Between a man of 'Umar's character and Yazíd, a dissolute pleasure-loving man, there was very little in common. Yazíd was recalled from his governorship and men of the Muḍar tribe were sent to replace the officials belonging to the Yemenite faction. Yazíd was ordered to give up the booty, the acquisition of which he had reported to Sulaiman (*ante* p. 27). He was kept in confinement during 'Umar's life time.² After 'Umar's death he made his escape³ and headed a revolt which, though unsuccessful at the

¹ Osborn, vol. i, pp. 321, 383-4.

² Ṭabarí, Series II, vol. iii, p. 1349.

³ Ibid. p. 1356.

time, produced effects which ultimately led to the fall of the Umayyad dynasty.

The fanatical Khárijites made a revolt during 'Umar's reign, but he received an embassy from them with whom he held a long discussion.¹ On the whole, however, they seem to have given little trouble; probably they liked the man and approved generally of his policy. 'Umar sought to consolidate his vast empire rather than to extend it. He recalled the army under Maslama, now seeking to take Constantinople which was ably defended by Leo the Isaurian,² and stopped expeditions in other directions. In Spain, his governor as-Saruh reformed the administration, took a census of the people, made a survey of the land, built bridges, and erected a fine mosque at Saragossa.

His son 'Abdu'l-Malik one day asked his father why he did not make greater efforts to root out the evils which were corrupting Islámic Society. 'Umar replied: 'My beloved son, what thou tellest me to do can only be achieved by the sword, but there is no good in the reform which requires the use of the sword.'³

¹ Ma'súdí, vol. v, pp. 434-40.

² It was well the attack failed, for Freeman says: 'Never were they in such awful peril, as when Maslama landed before Constantinople. As far as we can see had the Caliph once been acknowledged at St. Sophia, all that Constantinople then represented—law, literature and theology—all that distinguished the Christian West from the Muslim East must have perished from the earth.' *History and Conquests of the Saracens*, p. 92.

³ Syed Amír 'Alí, p. 128.

Such a peace-loving ruler, whose desire was to see justice prevail in the land, and honesty and uprightness in his servants was naturally extremely unpopular amongst the Umayyads, who saw that their influence must decline, their power decrease and their hope of gains grow less. The usual result followed and 'Umar was poisoned. He died in A.D. 701. So passed away the best of all the Umayyad Khalífas. The Byzantine Emperor, on hearing of his death, expressed in the presence of a Muslim embassy his high regard for 'Umar and his regret at his death.¹ Ibn Khaldún says of him: 'Throughout his life 'Umar tried to regulate his conduct according to that of the Companions of the Prophet and of the first four Khalífas.'² 'It was a common saying at Damascus that under Walíd people talked of fine buildings, under Sulaiman of cookery and the fair sex, while in the reign of 'Umar the Qur'án and religion formed favourite topics of conversation.'³

Yazíd II was the third son of 'Abdu'l-Malik. He ascended the throne in A.D. 702. His reign is chiefly remarkable for the revolt of Yazíd bin Mahal-lib,⁴ who soon after the death of 'Umar bribed his guards, escaped from prison and went to 'Iráq, for he could expect no mercy from the new Khalífa.

¹ Ma'súdí, vol. v, p. 422.

² Ibn Khaldún, vol. i, p. 413.

³ Al-Fakhri, p. 73 quoted by Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 203.

⁴ Ṭabarí, Series II, vol. iii, p. 1379.

Yazíd II had married a niece of Ḥajjáj, and, when Yazíd bin Muhallib¹ extorted from the family of her uncle much of their property, he had not spared her. This was known to the Khalífa, now her husband, and so Yazíd's only chance of safety was to raise the standard of revolt. This in conjunction with his brother he soon did. The Khalífate was now in danger, for Yazíd, fighting for his life, was an astute and formidable opponent. The Governor of Baṣra was warned about Yazíd, and was also ordered to cast all of his family into prison. This was done but Yazíd was soon before the city. The governor set forth to attack him, but his soldiers, mostly Yemenites, deserted him and flocked to the standard of the more popular Yazíd. At first, he does not seem to have wished to head a rebellion, and so he offered to postpone an attack, provided that his brothers and relatives were set at liberty. The offer was declined. Fighting commenced and after three days Baṣra was captured. Yazíd had made overtures to the Khalífa who sent the deputies back with a message of peace. On their way home they heard the news of the capture of the city, retraced their steps and reported to the Khalífa that Yazíd was now in actual rebellion. All hope of peace then passed away and a fierce conflict was the only issue.

Yazíd then assembled the people in the mosque of Baṣra and addressed them thus :² ' I call you to

¹ Ṭabarí, Series II, vol. iii, p. 1379.

² See Osborn, vol. i, p. 326 *et seq.*

the observance of the book of God and the law of the Prophet, and entreat you to make the holy war against the people of Syria. . . . These Syrians murdered Ḥusain, the son of 'Alí, and all his family, and cursed 'Alí from their pulpits.' It was a new rôle for the pleasure-seeking, sceptical Yazíd to pose as a preacher, calling on men as a righteous act to avenge the disasters of the family of the Prophet. One, at least, of his auditors, Ḥasan the Baṣrite,¹ saw the inconsistency and cried out: "Yazíd bin Muḥallib, call the people to the observance of the book of God and the precepts of the Prophet!" Then turning to Yazíd he said: "By God, we have seen you both as governor and subject. How dare you, then, come here and hold such language?" Ḥasan was justly revered for his piety and devotion and was a famous theologian and philosopher. He tried in vain and, at the utmost personal peril, to dissuade his fellow citizens from joining in the revolt and failed. Yazíd would not allow him to be slain, for he knew that such an act would ruin his cause. Again Ḥasan protested that Yazíd was a reprobate and impious and that he deserved punishment. The people then said:

¹ Ḥasan's mother was a slave girl attached to the household of Umm Salma, one of the wives of the Prophet. He received his freedom and retired to Baṣra, where he led an ascetic life. He was opposed to the Umayyads and his courage often brought him into danger, but he was much respected by the people. For many curious anecdotes about him, see Field, *Mystics and Saints in Islám*, Chapter II.

“What are you become the apologist for the Syrians (that is, the Umayyads).” “I make an apology for them! May God never forgive them!” scornfully replied the indignant speaker.’

The people of Baṣra, ever fickle and excitable, paid no heed to the advice given them. They declared that the Khalífa Yazíd II could not any longer be recognized as the supreme ruler. The standard of revolt once raised soon drew large numbers, eager to take revenge on their Umayyad oppressors. Yazíd was advised to retire and so draw his enemy from his base, but he disliked the appearance of a retreat. So he went forward and met the Syrian army under the command of Maslama, a brother of the Khalífa. For eight days the armies remained inactive in close proximity to each other. Then Yazíd planned a night attack, but found that the fickle men of ‘Iráq refused to move. They declared that they had scruples about employing force and that moral persuasion should be used. ‘Let’, they said, ‘Qur’áns be fixed to the heads of lances, and let the appeal be to the Book.’ It was exactly the same difficulty with which the Khalifa ‘Alí had had to contend at the battle of Siffin and which ruined his cause. In vain did Yazíd plead with them, but the fervour of the general was powerless against their fanatical superstition. At last on August 24 A.D. 720 Maslama led the attack which soon became successful. Yazíd refused to seek safety in flight to Egypt. He collected a

few faithful warriors, and sought the place where Maslama was stationed.' It was the last and fatal charge of a great warrior. A modern writer¹ has described it in graphic terms: 'Before him stretched a wide plain covered with the masses of the Syrian army. Far away beyond these the banner of Maslama floated in the breeze. That was the point to make for. If he could slay Maslama, the battle might yet be won; or, if not, he would at least find a soldier's death. There is nothing finer in the Arab's character than the calm, un-conquerable resolution with which he faced death. He always carried in his heart the noble sentiment of Virgil's hero, "One hope there is for vanquished men, to cherish hope no more." As he spoke Yazid gave his horse the rein. It was a beautiful white Arab. A band of chosen friends gathered round him, and, like the six hundred at Balaclava, they rode unfaltering into the valley of death. Detachments of the Syrian cavalry dashed at the little phalanx; bodies of infantry strove to bar their way; but the troop swept on, cutting their path through all obstacles. They neared the spot where Maslama stood surrounded by a picked cohort of Syrian cavalry. The officer in command of his bodyguard was Kahl, the son of Ayash the Kelbite. As the white charger of Yazid came sailing gallantly onward, he gave the signal to charge. "By God," he shouted to his followers, "stand by me, and I will kill Yazid this day!" The

¹ Osborn, vol. i, p. 332.

two troops met in mid career ; clouds of dust closed over the conflict ; and for the space of an hour from the thick pall of sand came the momentary flashes of steel, the trampling of steeds, and the shouts of the combatants. Nothing more was to be seen or heard.'

The revolt was now put down with great cruelty and so ended in failure for the time. In its consequences it was a success. Yazíd, the great commander, became a popular hero, commemorated in song by Yemenite bards, and thus the desire for revenge was kept alive. The Khalífa Yazíd, had he been wise, would have shown moderation ; but, on the contrary, he was harsh and cruel to all who had taken part in the rebellion. The feud between the two races of Arabs, now subdued for a time in blood, again burst forth when, a few years later, opportunity was found. Yazíd bin Muhallib perished, but he hastened the downfall of the Umayyads. When the Khalífa heard of the death of his enemy, he was greatly rejoiced and ordered the poets to celebrate the victory in song.¹

Yazíd II was a weak ruler. He was fond of pleasure and loved to listen to the songs of minstrels. One of these men so pleased him with his song that he asked him where he had learnt it. He replied : ' From my father who learnt it from his father.' ' If,' said the Khalífa, ' he had left you nothing else, he would have left you a considerable fortune.'

¹ Ma'súdí, vol. v, p. 455.

The minstrel replied, 'O Prince of believers, until his death Abú Lahab was an infidel and the enemy of the Prophet.' 'I know that' said Yazíd, 'but he was such a good musician that I have much sympathy with him.'¹

Hishám, another son of 'Abdu'l-Malik, succeeded his brother Yazíd II in A.D. 724. He wisely appointed Khálid bin 'Abdu'lláh, a Yemenite chief, as governor of 'Iráq, with the result that for fifteen years there was peace and quietness in that troubled region. With tribal dissensions near at home, and the incoming of wild hordes on the frontiers, Hishám found his position one of great difficulty. He was in some respects an able man, but suspicious in character and intolerant in his bigotry. He relied too much on espionage and intrigue. Thus he failed to remedy the evils which were now hurrying his dynasty to ruin, and his avarice led him into a crime. Feeling sure that, during the fifteen years of his rule in 'Iráq, Khálid must have amassed wealth, he condescended to low intrigues which led to the downfall of that illustrious man.² Hishám died in A.D. 743 and was succeeded by his nephew, Walíd II, who is thus described by Syútí:³ 'He was a libertine and a wine-drinker and a breaker of

¹ Ma'súdí, vol. v, p. 451.

² A full account, quoted from Ibn Khallikan, is given in Osborn's *Islám under the Arabs*, pp. 339-41. It is an excellent illustration of the way in which things were done in those days of injustice and misrule.

³ Syútí, pp. 254-5.

the divine commands. He wished to make the pilgrimage in order that he might drink upon the summit of the Ka'ba. The people abhorred him for his profligacy and rose up against him, and he was slain in A.D. 744.' By a lavish expenditure and abundant festivities he attracted a certain class of followers. During the parsimonious reign of Hishám the army and officials had suffered. They knew that there was in the treasury plenty of money, and, hoping that Walíd would spend it, they did not oppose his election. They were not disappointed. He satisfied the army by paying all arrears due, he pleased the people by the magnificent festivities he provided for them, by the horse-races carried out on a great scale,¹ and by his musical entertainments. Never had so much amusement been seen in Damascus.

Misled by a seeming popularity, he nominated his two infant sons, al-Ḥakam and 'Uthmán, as his successors, contrary to all precedent, for as minors they could not fulfil the religious duties of the office. This caused the sons of Hishám and of Walíd to conspire against him. The imprudence of the Khalífa, in the case of Khálid, aided their cause. Khálid, the deposed Governor of 'Iráq, during the last reign had been allowed to live in Damascus. He refused to support the nomination by the Khalífa of his sons. On the other hand, he refused to conspire against

¹ Ma'súdí gives a full account of them, vol vi, pp. 13-15.

him. Walíd, however, cast him into prison and then for a large bribe gave him up to his old enemy, Yúsuf ibn 'Umar, a Muḍarite, by whom he was conveyed back to 'Iráq and put to death thus: 'First he placed the feet of his prisoner between two pieces of wood which he then forced together until the feet were crushed to pieces: he next placed the pieces of wood on the legs which he broke in the same manner, then on the thighs, and lastly on the back: when the back was broken Khálid died'.¹ This justly roused the anger of the Yemenites who were now in accord with the conspirators in Damascus. The Khalífa was taken prisoner. He tried to win over the troops by offers of increase of pay, and the people by a promise of less taxation; but it was too late. He was assassinated and his head fixed to a lance was paraded through the streets of the capital. His own brother refused to say the funeral prayers over him.

Yazíd III who had headed the revolt succeeded to the throne in April, A.D. 744. He is said to have been a man more worthy of regard than most of his predecessors, but as he only reigned six months, his rule had very little effect on the course of events. He accepted the teaching of the Mu'tazilís, of whom more hereafter.

His brother Ibráhím succeeded him, but died within three months after Yazíd. This last reign

¹ Osborn, vol. i, p. 350.

is described by Ma'súdí as 'a curious period, full of incessant troubles, disorders, discords and the weakening of authority'.¹ He was not reckoned as one of the Khalífas.

So we come to Marwán II, the last of the Khalífas of the House of the Umayyads. He ascended the throne in November, A.D. 744. Marwán II was celebrated as a bold and skilful general. He was for some time Governor of Armenia and Azerbaijan, and had overcome with much valour and energy the stern opposition of the inhabitants of those regions. On hearing of the murder of Walíd II, he marched to Damascus at the head of a large army. At 'Ainu'l-Jar, a small town on the road to the capital, he was met by Ibráhím's army which, though much superior in numbers, was no match for the seasoned troops of Marwán, who after a severe struggle won a complete victory. Seventeen thousand men of the Khalífa's force were killed. Ibráhím then left Damascus, but, before doing so, gave orders that the two young sons of Walíd II should be beaten to death with clubs, lest being set free they should take revenge on the murderers of their father.

The friends and dependants of the murdered Walíd II rose up against all the partisans of Ibráhím, and Damascus was the scene of riot and bloodshed. Marwán then entered the city to the gratification of many of its inhabitants and was proclaimed Khalífa.

¹ Ma'súdí, vol. vi, p. 19. Ṭabarí, Series II, vol. iii, p. 1871.

In some respects Marwán, a man ascetic in life, active in habits was just the man to meet the difficulties caused by the confusion the country was now in. His enemies swarmed around him, but by rapidity of movement and skill in warfare, by determination and courage, he again and again repelled them. His great defect was that he could not free himself from the tribal bias which had so often worked evil in the empire. He was a Muḍaríte and looked on Yemenites as an enemy to be detested and overthrown; so instead of bringing the conflicting elements into harmony he embittered the racial strife. A man of larger views would have seen that the situation was such that only a tolerant spirit could create concord among the varied sections of the people. But Marwán was not a statesman. Violent in temper, harsh in his rule, to the ancient rivalry he added present wrongs. Soon the Yemenites in 'Umán, Baḥrain, and Persian 'Iráq rose in rebellion; the Khárijites invaded Mecca and Madína and occupied Kúfa. Emerssa, which only recently had received Marwán, rose in revolt. Marwán was equal to the occasion. With great energy he quelled the insurrection in Syria, and went against the Khárijites in Yemen and the Ḥijáz. In three great battles he drove them back and took possession of Kúfa. His able commander, 'Abdu'l-Malik, attacked another body of Khárijites in the Ḥijáz and Yemen. So far all had gone well and several provinces had been cleared of the enemy,

but the frontier provinces, denuded of troops, were in danger. Marwán under ordinary circumstances would have put down rebellions there, but he was now met by a serious rising in Khurásán, 'the great Persian revolt, long and skilfully matured, which bore in triumph the black banners of the 'Abbásids from Meru to Damascus.' This was so largely brought about by the clients, that it is necessary at this stage to describe them and their influence.

The historians frequently use the term clients¹ and ibn Khaldún says: 'Clients assimilate the sentiments, habits and pride of the family into which they enter. A Tradition says: "The client of a family is a member of that family; whether he be a client by enfranchisement, by adoption, or by some contract. All rights belong to him." His position is affected not by his old family, but by his new one. So Yahyá the Barmakide was great, not because of his Persian extraction, but because he was a client of Harúnu'r-Rashíd.'²

In order to understand the part the Persians played in the 'Abbásid rise to power, it is necessary to consider the position of these people under the Umayyads. Zaydan says: 'The Umayyads

¹ Ḥalíf plural Ahláf: also Mawlá plural Mawálf. For origin of the term, see Sell, *Life of Muḥammad*, p. 126, note. Many of the chief poets were clients, who often fell into disgrace and suffered punishment for being too satirical in their poetical remarks on persons in authority. See Clément Huarte, *Arabic Literature*, pp. 66, 68-9, 71, 73, 76-7, 82.

² Ibn Khaldún, vol. i, p. 286.

applied the term to all non-Arab Muslims, and called clients all Muslim Persians, etc., who having been Magians and members of a tolerated sect had embraced Islám. Under Islám the clients became a distinct order in the social system of considerable historical importance.¹ Many eminent men rose from among them, but they remained in a humbler position than the Arab. Under the Umayyads they were treated with contempt and often looked upon with suspicion. Indeed Mu'áwiya at one time took fright and bethought him of massacring them all. Language of the following sort was employed by the Arab chauvinists in reference to foreign Muslims: 'Had we no other claim to the gratitude of these clients beyond having rescued them from unbelief, and brought them out of the house of paganism to the house of faith, as in the Tradition, "There shall be men dragged to their fortunes with collars of iron," and "God marvels at men that are dragged to Paradise with chains," it would be sufficient: now we have yet further exposed ourselves to death for their sakes; and who can have conferred a greater favour upon you than one who let himself be slain in order that thou mightest live? Now, God commanded us to fight you, and made it a sacred duty to go to war with you, and after all we preferred to let you contract for your manumission.'² We can now understand the

¹ Zaydan, p. 52.

² Zaydan, p. 70.

feeling of hostility which the clients had against their Umayyad masters and how ready they were to aid any party, 'Alids or 'Abbásids, who could overthrow them. There was thus a powerful section of non-Arab Muslims ready to support any aspirants to the Khalífate. 'Against Shí'ites and Khárijites the Umayyads might claim with some show of reason to represent the cause of law and order, if not of Islám; against the bitter cry of the oppressed Mawálí they had no argument save the sword.'¹

The Prophet wished to form a great and united religious and political society in the place of the separate jurisdictions of the old Arab clans. The Qur'án says: 'The noblest of you in the sight of God is he who feareth most' and 'The believers are but brethren'. [Súratu'l-Ḥujurát (xlix) 13, 10.] The ideal was good, but Muḥammad often fell short of it and raised jealousy amongst the Anṣár by his partiality for the Quraish². The clients were, however, few and it may be that he never thought they would so soon become so numerous. Anyhow it does seem as if he looked to faith rather than race as the bond of equality. If so, the chauvinism of the Arabs soon lead his followers to depart from this ideal.

'Abbás, an uncle of the Prophet, left four sons, the eldest of whom is known as Ibn 'Abbás, who at the battle of Siffín (*ante* p. 5) commanded the cavalry division of the army of 'Alí. A descendant of his,

¹ Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 248.

² Sell, *The Life of Muḥammad*, p. 198.

Muḥammad ibn 'Alí, an able and ambitious man, came into prominence and conceived the idea of wresting the Khalífate from the Umayyads. He deceived the people by a curious legend which showed that the Imámat did not proceed in a direct line from the martyred Ḥusain, but to another branch of the family of which he was now the representative.¹ The leaders of the movement lived in retirement at a small place near the Dead Sea, close to a pilgrim route and so favourable for winning men from other parts. His emissaries also worked silently. They were men of Persian extraction naturally attracted to religious leaders. They pointed to a day of deliverance when the rightful Khalifa should come to his own. They wisely looked upon Khurásán, the extended tract in the north and east of which Merv was the capital, as a most suitable field for their propaganda. The proud and haughty Arab rulers in Khurásán took little heed of what was going on, or were ignorant of the fact that strong parties of discontented men were being formed in many parts.

It had often happen in the past that a fruitful opportunity for an insurrection produced a man capable of guiding it, so such a leader was found in Abú Muslim the Khurásání, Muḥammad ibn 'Alí quickly discerned the merits of the man in whom

¹ Syed Amír 'Alí, p. 138 ; Osborn, *Islám under the Arabs*, pp. 386-7.

great confidence could be placed. Nöldeke says of him: 'He united with an agitator's adroitness and perfect unscrupulosity in the choice of means the energy and clear outlook of a general and statesman.'¹ Muḥammad sent him to Khurásán in order to further the 'Abbásid propaganda in which work he was most successful. Muḥammad died in A.H. 124 (A.D. 741). His son Ibráhím succeeded him as the head of the 'Abbásid faction. Abú Muslim entered into his service. Then came the murder of the Khalífa Walíd, the short reign of Yazíd III, and now Marwán was surrounded with tumults and dangers. The tribes so long oppressed by their Arab rulers called on Ibráhím to send a man to lead them. He sent Abú Muslim, saying: 'I have put him to the test and know his interior as well as exterior; he is the rock of the earth and will crush all before him'.²

This forecast was correct. A civil war in Khurásán gave Abú Muslim his opportunity. He raised the standard of revolt and proclaimed the right of the 'Men of the House', that is, the 'Abbásids against the House of Ummayya. The black standard of the 'Abbásids was unfurled (A.D. 747) and the vanquished Persian people rose against their Arab conquerors and oppressors. Khurásán secured, an army was sent to 'Iráq. Kúfa speedily fell to the invading force.

¹ *Sketches from Eastern History*, p. 111.

² Osborn, vol. i, p. 390.

We have now another instance of the proverbial fickleness of the men of Kúfa. A modern historian thus graphically describes the events of the day: 'On the next morning at break of day the streets of Kúfa appeared all shrouded in black; the people hastened to the mosque in prodigious crowds, in black turbans and vestures, and with black banners floating above them. In due time Aḥú Salama appeared, also clothed in black. After leading the prayers, he addressed the people, and asked of them if they were willing to acquiesce in the act he was about to propose to them. They demanded an explanation. He then proceeded to say that Abú Muslim, the representative of the family of the Prophet, had determined to deliver the world from the tyranny of the House of Umayya. With this purpose in view, he had sought for a new leader in Islám, but had discovered nowhere a person so eminent for piety and ability as 'Abdu'lláh,¹ the son of Muḥammad, the great grandson of the pious and learned 'Abbás, of the House of Ḥáshim, and of the family of the Prophet. Him, therefore, he had selected, and he now hoped that his choice would be confirmed by the approbation of the Faithful in Kúfa. The fickleness of the people of Kúfa had passed into a proverb. From the days of 'Alí to the present time they had wavered between two opinions—now espousing the cause of his family, and

¹ He was the brother of the Imám Ibráhím, the leader of the 'Abbásid party.

shedding their blood like so much water in its defence; then, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, abandoning them to slaughter, nay, even actively aiding in their destruction. Their loyalty to his descendants had invariably been the love of Dalilah which lures its victim to his death; and they were now to give the most memorable illustration of this fickle and uncertain temperament. The last word had hardly passed the lips of Abú Salama when the air was rent with the shouts of the applauding multitude; the assembly declared with one voice that the choice must have been the result of a divine inspiration; and the awful shout of "God is most powerful" was caught up and repeated again and again by the enthusiastic crowd'.¹

On hearing the news, Marwán was highly indignant and brought Ibráhím out of the prison in which he had confined him, and put him to a cruel death by ordering his head to be placed in a sack filled with quicklime. Whilst in prison and before his death, which he probably expected, Ibráhím appointed his brother 'Abdu'lláh to succeed him. Marwán then proceeded with a large army, 120,000 strong, towards Kúfa. A battle which lasted two days ended in his defeat. The battle cry of 'Abdu'lláh was, 'O men of Khurásán, revenge (the death of) Imám Ibráhím.' At first Marwán had the advantage, but at a critical moment his horse ran away without its rider. The soldiers seeing this concluded that

¹ Osborn, vol. i, p. 399-400.

Marwán was killed, and fled in all directions. Then 'Abdúlláh in a loud voice quoted the verse '(Remember) when we parted the sea for you and drowned the people of Pharoah, while ye were looking on.'¹ So now had He defeated the enemy.

The battle of the Záb, A.D. 750, is one of the decisive battles of early Muslim history. It was the final blow which led to the downfall of the Umayyad dynasty. Marwán was now a fugitive driven from place to place. At last he found refuge in Egypt; but even there his relentless foes pursued him. He was found in a small Christian chapel on the banks of the Nile. He rushed out sword in hand, but was speedily slain. So passed away the last and the bravest of the Umayyad Khalífas and with his death the House of Umayya came to an end A.D. in 750 which answers to A.H. 132 of the Muslim era. One hundred years had now passed away since the death of the Prophet, and before considering the causes of the decline and fall of the Umayyads we may take a brief glance at the extent of the empire at this date. It is a marvellous century of conquest.

Before the reign of Mu'áwiya, Egypt had become a part of the Empire. The region beyond was known as Afrikia, divided into three parts; Afrikia proper, the part between Algeria and Egypt; Maghribu'l-Adná, the lower West, being the country round Oran; Maghribu'l-Aqsá, the remote West,

¹ Súratu'l-Baqara (ii) 47.

being the country extending from the Atlantic shores towards the Ṣaḥará'. It was these regions into which the armies of Mu'áwiya advanced under the command of 'Uqaba, a very able general. In A.H. 50 (A.D. 670) he built the military city of Qayrawán¹ and in A.D. 683 regretfully found his further advance stopped by the waters of the Atlantic, and 'expressed his regret at not having more people to bring under the crescent of Muḥammad.'² The conquest was not an easy one for the Berbers were a fierce and warlike people.³ It is sufficient now to state that in A.D. 707 Músá bin Nusair was appointed Viceroy of Afrikia. Whilst taking vigorous measures against the Berbers, he was conciliatory towards their chiefs and won many to Islám. In A.H. 93 (A.D. 711) he sent Tárík to Spain and the commencement of Saracenic rule began there. Before the last of the Umayyad Khalífas passed away, practically the whole of Spain belonged to the Muslim empire. The story of the Arab conquest is too long to relate here.

Whilst 'Uqaba was making his way in Afrikia,

¹ 'Addressing his soldiers, he said: "When the Imám enters into Afrikia, the people secure themselves from danger by making a profession of Islám, but when he retires they relapse into infidelity. I have resolved, O Muslims, to find a city which shall serve as a camp and a defence to Islám for all time." Fournel, *Les Berbers*, vol. i, p. 152.

² *Ibid.* p. 773.

³ For a vivid account of their resistance, see Osborn, vol. i, p. 184-200.

Sind and part of Afghánistán were added to the empire in the East. There were five Viceroy's under the Khalífa, each with extensive powers in their respective provinces. Afrikia, Spain, Sicily and Sardinia formed one, with Qayrawán as the capital. This was the most important of all. Mesopotamia, Lower and Upper Egypt formed another. Armenia and a part of Asia Minor formed a third. Híjáz, Yemen and Central Arabia were comprised in the fourth. The fifth contained the two 'Iráqs, Omán, Khurásán, Sind and parts of the Panjáb. There were deputy governors under the Viceroy's.

Marwán the last Umayyad Khalífas died in A.D. 732, just a hundred years after the death of the Prophet. The growth of the empire had been rapid during that brief period and, in spite of all the bloodshed and tumults, it extended far and wide; but like Muslim conquests in after years it had no element of stability. Neither then nor after did it bring peace and prosperity to its peoples. Some of the Umayyad Khalífas were able men and some were good rulers; but the elements of degeneration and decay were latent and in due time brought about their downfall. Ma'súdí states that Minqarí, a leading man among the Umayyads, gave the following reasons for their ruin: 'We gave to pleasure the time we ought to have given to public duties; the heavy burdens we put on the people, the way we tyrannized over our subjects, made them despair

of obtaining justice, and so they prayed for deliverance. Our domains were left uncultivated and our treasury was empty. We trusted our officials; they looked after their own interests and not after ours, and conducted affairs without our participation or our knowledge. The pay of the army was in arrears, and so they sometimes went over to the enemy. Our ignorance of public affairs and of what was going on was one of the causes of our downfall.’¹

Zaydan considers that the mainstay of the dynasty were the strong Khalífas Mu‘áwiya (A.H. 41-60); ‘Abdu’l-Malik (A.H. 64-86); Hishám (A.H. 105-125) and the good ‘Umar. Had it not been for them the dynasty would have speedily terminated. The excessive reliance of the Umayyads on clan patriotism worked ill. Zaydan comments on it thus: ‘The Umayyad dynasty was an Arab dynasty, the basis of whose policy was the desire for conquest and arbitrary power. The monarchs compassed these ends by the aid of the patriotism of the Quraish, and by winning partisans. This clan patriotism led to the re-division of the Arabs into tribes, such as had existed in pagan days.’²

Ibn Khaldún speaks of their mode of life thus: Their children brought up in luxury came to power, and did nothing but satisfy their passions, enjoy their pleasures and transgress the divine law. They never dreamt that God prepares

¹ Ma’sudí, vol. vi, p. 35.

² Zaydan, p. 138.

gradually the downfall of the wicked and that His vengeance, skilfully directed, would one day fall upon them. They neglected the conservation of the Khalífate, they respected not the dignity of rulership, and soon they lost all power to govern. Then God deprived them of their power, covered them with ignominy and caused their prosperity to cease.' ¹

So passed away the Umayyad Khalífate and the unity of the empire was broken up, never to be re-united. We have already seen more than one rival Khalífa, but they were soon set aside. They founded no dynasty. Hereafter there are rival Khalífas, each possessing great power and large territories and able to establish a dynasty of his own. 'Abdu'r-Rahmán, a member of the Umayyad family, escaped to Spain, and founded there a new dynasty known as Amírs or Sultáns of Cordova. The Saracenic rule in that country is henceforth distinct from and independent of the Eastern Khalífate. Later on when the 'Abbásid Khalífate had reached a low state of decrepitude, 'Abdu'r-Rahmán III, in the year A.D. 912 took the title of Amíru'l-Mu'mínún, which is peculiar to a Khalífa, and so founded the distinct Khalífate of Cordova. These Sultáns and Khalífas for centuries (A.D. 756-1031) ruled in great glory in Spain. ² It must, however, be remembered that

¹ Ibn Khaldún, vol. i, p. 421.

² See De Boer, *Philosophy in Islám*, pp. 173-4.

the usual estimate of the Umayyads is given by writers hostile to them. Many of them were strong and capable rulers, and though they dealt ruthlessly with opponents, were not more cruel or crafty than the 'Abbásids. Indeed, morally they stood as high, if not higher than their successors, though in intellectual culture they must take a lower place. They killed believers who resisted the government of the day and so 'the so-called verdict of history is seen to be the verdict of religion, the judgment of theocratic Islám on Arabian imperialism.'¹

The rule of the Umayyads was a military despotism, maintained in the interests of the Arabs. The 'Abbásid dynasty which succeeded sought a wider basis—a Muslim empire as opposed to an Arab one. It brought the clients of Persia and Khurásán alongside the Arab, and for a time under powerful rulers and wise Viziers this worked fairly well; but after the fall of the Barmakides the two fell apart and took opposite sides in the civil wars which became so frequent.

¹ Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 197.

THE 'ABBÁSID KHALIFATE

AFTER the death of Ḥusain (*ante* p. 15) the 'Alids, as the followers of the family of 'Alí are called, were in very distressed circumstances under the Umayyad rule. Muḥammad ibn 'Alí, a grandson of Ibn 'Abbás and father of the first two 'Abbásid Khalífas, conceived the idea of forming a party with a view to obtaining the Khalífate. His father, at the order of the Khalífa Walíd, had been flogged and paraded through the streets of Damascus, seated on a camel with his face toward the tail, so he had just cause for revenge. An extensive propaganda¹ was secretly carried on, chiefly by Persian missionaries. The 'Abbásids nominally supported the claims of the 'Alids and deceived them by saying they were working in the interests of the 'Family of the Prophet'. This ambiguous term included both 'Alids and 'Abbásids, and led many of the former to join the movement, thinking that the claims of their own Imáms were being asserted. When it was evident that the Umayyad dynasty was losing power, the Ḥáshimites, 'Alids and 'Abbásids, met at Mecca to consider the situation. An oath of allegiance was taken to Muḥammad ibn 'Abdu'lláh, the most eminent 'Alid

¹ Mírkhúnd, vol. iii, p. 112.

of the age. Al-Manşūr took the oath which he afterwards repudiated. Zaydan considers that the oath was taken in order to gain time for the further propaganda of the 'Abbásid emissaries.¹ When Manşūr became Khalífa he tried to get possession of the person of Muḥammad, who had openly laid claim to the sovereignty, asserting that Manşūr had sworn fealty to him. Muḥammad also called upon the people of Madína to do the same, but they objected on the ground that they had already sworn allegiance to Manşūr. The jurisconsult Málik ibn Anas decided that the oath, having been taken under compulsion, was not binding and Abú Ḥanífa also supported this view. When Manşūr got Muḥammad into his power in A.D. 762, both these lawyers were severely punished.

Kúfa was the centre of great political agitation and of many religious controversies. Abú Ḥanífa probably sympathized with the 'Abbásid movement. It is said that al-Manşūr wished to make him a judge, but he refused to accept the office, and so declined to serve under the 'Abbásids, but it led to his persecution. Still it was well that in those days of despotic rulers there were men of mark who had the courage of their convictions. Here again it may be that he disapproved of the treatment of the 'Alids.

Having thus misled the 'Alids, using them for a time and then casting them aside, the 'Abbásids

¹ Zaydan, p. 148.

came into power. The 'Alids, when too late, saw how badly they had been treated and began to regret the Umayyad days.

The first Khalífa of the 'Abbásids was 'Abdu'l-'Abbás (A.D. 750), who on account of the severity with which he punished his enemies and all suspected persons, has been named as-Saffáh—the shedder of blood. We have seen that Spain was now lost to the empire, but this was not altogether a bad thing, for it enabled the 'Abbásids to strengthen what remained, to consolidate their power and to develop the resources of all that was left. It is so in modern days with the Turkish empire, whose rulers can now, if they have true political insight, develop their Asiatic provinces and make them as relatively prosperous as their predecessors, the 'Abbásids, did in their days. There were the usual rebellions put down with more or less severity, but otherwise as-Saffáh's reign is not remarkable. He died in A.D. 754.

Before his death, he nominated his brother Abú Ja'far as his successor, who under the title of al-Manşúr, the victorious, assumed the reins of government in A.D. 754. He was a strong man, but avaricious,¹ suspicious and cruel. If he was not led on to deeds of blood in fits of maddened-frenzy like as-Saffáh, he was equally as bad in-a cool calculating

¹ Al-Fakhrí, Manşour était avaricieux, et son avarice était proverbiale, p. 256.

way. 'Execution on suspicion'¹ says Zaydan, was the principle on which the administration was now conducted, and he quotes from *Athír* (v. 165) the following instructions given to Abú Muslim regarding suspected persons: 'Muḍar is the enemy in the neighbourhood; kill any one of them about whom you are in doubt, and if you can manage to leave no one in *Khurásán* who speaks Arabic, do so. Kill any lad five spans long of whom you have suspicions.'²

Manṣúr broke his most solemn promises and, vindictive to those whom he feared, was absolutely faithless to his public servants. Passing by his persecution and ill-treatment of the 'Alids, by whose aid the 'Abbásids had risen to power, his cruel treatment of Abú Muslim will for ever be a blot on his character and conduct. He had long disliked him and had advised as-Saffáh to put him to death, but he replied that he could not act thus to a man who had so devotedly served their dynasty.³ Now fearing his great influence in *Khurásán* Manṣúr began to plot for his downfall. He was offered the vice-royalty of Egypt, but Abú Muslim saw that it was only an attempt to detach him from his faithful followers in *Khurásán*. He declined the appointment and the *Khalífa* knew his scheme had been detected. He was now in great fear, for if Abú Muslim found himself in *Khurásán* with his faithful

¹ Zaydan, p. 152.

² *Ibid*, p. 153.

³ *Al-Fakhrí*, p. 276.

friends and loyal soldiers the 'Abbásid rule would be in the greatest danger. Abú Muslim was a king-maker and could easily secure the throne for an 'Alid Khalífa. No effort then must be spared to keep Abú Muslim away from Khurásán. He was invited to court and assured that it was a grievous wrong to suppose that the 'Abbásids could be guilty of treasonable conduct to so faithful a servant. Abú Muslim hesitated. 'He had commenced his career as a devout and sincere believer in the Imámate of the House of 'Abbás. He was one of those who had embraced this doctrine in its extremest form, regarding the Imám as an incarnation of the divinity, and explaining away all the positive precepts of the Qur'án into allegorical injunctions of complete, unquestioning devotion to him. But whether through the ingratitude of the Khalífa, or some other cause unknown, he had, in these latter days, been brought to believe that the House of 'Alí, and not that of 'Abbás, were the real inheritors of the Imámate. The discovery that all the mourning and desolation and woe which he had brought upon the earth had been wrought for an impostor, *against* and not *for* the will of God, seems to have altogether unhinged him.'¹ Ma'súdí relates how he studied his horoscope and ancient books and learnt that he would be killed in Rúm after destroying one dynasty and setting up another.'² His friends warned him

¹ Osborn, vol. ii, p. 159.

² Ma'súdí, vol. yi, p. 180.

that he was going to certain death but since he believed that he would die in Rúm, that is in fighting against the Byzantines, or for some other reason, he accepted the Khalífa's invitation. At first he was highly honoured, but one day in open court Manşúr began to reproach him, 'Why', said Abú Muslim, 'speak you so to me, after all my efforts and services for the 'Abbasids.'¹ All was of no avail. Assassination was intended from the first. A signal was given and men rushed forward from the places where they had been concealed and put to death the greatest man of the time. Before the final blow was struck Abú Muslim cried out, 'Leader of the Faithful, spare me to combat thy enemies.' 'Who is a greater enemy than thee?' was the quick reply.²

When the news reached Khurásán a revolt took place.³ It was speedily put down, but it made Manşúr see clearly that he must not alienate his Persian subjects. Zaydan relates how he first cleared the empire from 'Alid competitors. He then turned to 'Abbásid competitors, getting by an act of treachery his uncle 'Abdu'lláh ibn 'Alí and his two sons into his power. Manşúr placed 'Abdu'lláh in

¹ Al-Fakhrí, p. 280.

² Al-Fakhrí, p. 281.

³ A curious result followed. Two sects then arose: one, the Khuramís, said that Abú Muslim was not dead, and would not die until he had made known justice in all the earth; the other, the Muslimiyya, held that he was the true Imám, and said that he was dead, and that the Imámate passed on to his daughter Fátima. These sectaries gave much trouble in the reigns of al-Ma'rún, and of al-Mu'taşím. Ma'súdí, vol. vi, pp. 186-7; Browne, vol. 1, p. 246.

a building erected on salt, and when rain fell the house collapsed and killed its prisoner. Zaydan concludes such narratives with the words: 'There are many other examples of the cunning and unscrupulousness to which Manşúr resorted in order to consolidate his empire.'¹

Notwithstanding the terror caused by Manşúr's cruelty, there were men bold enough to openly rebuke the tyrant. Ibn Khallikán says: 'It is related that the Khalífa al-Manşúr sent for Malik ibn Anas and 'Abdu'lláh, the son of Tawús. When they entered into his presence, he reflected for a short time and then asked 'Abdu'lláh, to relate to him some of the Traditions which he had learned from his father. On this, 'Abdu'lláh spoke as follows: "My father taught me this Tradition—He shall be punished the most severely of all men on the day of resurrection, to whom God has confided a portion of His authority, and who allows injustice to enter into his judgments." Al-Manşúr remained silent for a considerable time, and Malik, in relating the fact, afterwards observed, "I tucked up my clothes lest some of his blood might fall on them;" but al-Manşúr then said, "Hand me that inkhorn." He repeated the order three times; but 'Abdu'lláh did not obey. "Why do you not give it me?" asked the Khalífa. "Because I fear that you may use it in writing something contrary to God's law, and I should then be your accomplice." "Up both of you and leave me!"

¹ Zaydan, p. 159.

exclaimed al-Manşúr. "That is just what we desire to do" replied 'Abdu'lláh. "From that day," said Malik, "I have never ceased to acknowledge the eminent merit of the son of Tawús.""¹

One day the Khalífa said to 'Abdu'lláh ibn 'Ayyás: 'What is the name of the tyrant whose name commences with the letter ain (') who killed three persons whose names commenced with the same letter'. 'Yes Sire', replied "Abdu'lláh, it is 'Abdu'l-Malik who killed 'Amr bin Sa'íd, 'Abdu'lláh bin Zubair and 'Abdu'r-Raḥmán.' Then Manşúr said: 'Do you know the Khalífa whose name does not begin with ain who killed three whose names do so begin.' The answer came: 'O Prince of the Believers, it is yourself for you have killed 'Abdu'r-Raḥmán, 'Abdu'l-Jabbár, and thy uncle 'Abdu'lláh bin 'Ali.'²

A certain devotee once said to him: 'The Lord hath given unto thee the whole earth, redeem then thy soul with a portion of it. Remember the night which thou shalt pass in the grave: a night that thou hast never before so passed, and remember the night which shall bring forth the day that hath no night after it.'³

'It is related that Manşúr wished to convert a Christian, named ibn Jebril to Islám, who said, "In the faith of my fathers, I will die; where they are I wish to be whether in heaven or in hell."

¹ Ibn Khallikán, vol. i, p. 643. ² Ma'súdí, vol. vi, p. 217.

³ Syúfí, p. 271.

Whereupon the Khalífa laughed and dismissed him with a rich present.' ¹

Manşúr claimed the character of an orthodox Muslim, yet some of his officials were notorious free-thinkers. The leading spirit of this party was 'Abdu'lláh ibn al-Mukaffá, and the principal teaching was that of universal scepticism. Abú Hudail, a leader among these rationalists, seeing Şáliḥ ibn 'Abdu'l-Quddús in grief for his son said: 'Why do you grieve for him, since, according to you, man is the grass of the field.' 'I grieve', replied Şáliḥ, 'because he had not read my Book of Doubts.' 'What is that'? Şáliḥ, 'It is a work composed by me and whoever reads it is led to doubt of everything that exists, so as to imagine it cannot exist, and to doubt of everything that does not exist, so as to imagine that it exists.' These men often denied the existence of God and the prophetic mission. Ibn al-Mukaffá's influence was very great and when he met an awful death the orthodox looked upon it as a judgment of a just God. It came about thus: 'Sulaiman and 'Isá, the uncles of the Khalífa came to Başra to have a pardon written out for their brother 'Abdu'lláh now confined in prison. Manşúr had promised to forgive his uncle, but the ease with which he broke promises was well known, and so it was determined to make the terms of the document very strict. Al-Mukaffá was commissioned to draw up the deed. He inserted in it this clause: 'If

¹ De Boer, *Philosophy in Islám*, p. 19.

at any time the Commander of the Faithful act perfidiously towards his uncle 'Abdu'lláh bin 'Alí, his wives shall be divorced from him, his horses be confiscated, his slaves set free and Muslims released from their allegiance.' Mañşúr was furious and, when he knew the name of the writer, ordered his death. Sufyán, the governor of Başra, who had been contemptuously spoken of by Ibn al-Mukaffá, was only too ready to comply with the order. The limbs of the unfortunate man were cut off, one at a time and cast into an oven before his eyes ; then his bleeding body was cast into the furnace.¹

As a rule each new Muslim dynasty founded a new capital. Muḥammad went from Mecca to Madína which became the centre of Islám. 'Alí, acting on bad advice, went to Kúfa in Mesopotamia amongst a people most unreliable and suffered thereby. The Umayyads made Damascus their capital, a city situated in a fruitful land and near enough to the Arabian desert to render when needed assistance easy from the nomad Arab tribes. In those days the carrying trade was done by caravans and the absence of a river was not felt.

As we have seen one cause of the decay of the Umayyad power was reliance on the Arab tribal system too long, and their misrule of the clients now increasing in numbers and importance. These men largely aided the 'Abbásids in their rise, and it was obviously desirable that the capital of the

¹ See Osborn, vol. ii, p. 166.

new dynasty should be near them and away from Syria where the dependents of the Umayyads were still numerous. Manşúr spent some time in looking for a site and at length settled on one of the banks of the Tigris, where about A.D. 762 he founded the city of Baghdad. The history of the city from now until its capture by Húlágú in A.D. 1258 is the history of the 'Abbásid Khalífate. The name is supposed to mean the garden of Dád, or Bagh is the name of an idol and dád a gift, meaning then the gift of the idol Bagh.¹ It may be for this reason that Manşúr, called it Madínatu's-Salám, the 'city of peace'. Manşúr died in the year A.D. 775. Sayútfi says that he was the first to appoint freedmen and clients to office and preferred them to Arabs, that he was the first to sow dissensions between the 'Abbásids and the 'Alids, that he was the first Khalífa to listen to the teaching of astrologers and the first for whom Persian and Syrian books were translated into Arabic.² He was, however, a ruler of great administrative ability. He chose competent officials, but kept them in strict subjection. He actively superintended the various departments of the State and his government was, as far as possible, a personal one. Hard and ruthless though it sometimes was it proved, for the time and the circumstances, good for the empire. Then this man, whom

¹ For a discussion as to the origin of the name, see Le Strange, p. 10. A full account of the topography of the city is also given in his work. See also *The Encyclopædia of Islám*, pp. 563-9.

² See Syútfi, pp. 267-76.

all men feared was in his home a kind master and an affectionate father. Nöldeke sums up his character by saying that hardly an Eastern Sovereign was 'endowed with such commanding intellect, or had so strong an influence for good on the development of the empire.'¹

The period commencing with Manşúr and extended to the death of al-Wáthiq, nearly a century, was one of brilliant prosperity: the period commencing with the Khalífa Mutawakkil (A.D. 847) to the fall of Baghdad (A.D. 1258) was one of rapid decline and decay.

Muhammad, surnamed al-Mahdí, the next Khalífa, ascended the throne in A.D. 775. He was of a much brighter disposition and a more humane character than his father Manşúr. He opened the prison doors and thousands of hapless captives were restored to liberty. He gave back to Mecca and Madína their ancient privileges. His father had given orders that no supplies should come to them from Egypt. He removed the restriction. Manşúr had confiscated the property of many of the 'Alids; al-Mahdí restored them. By these and other acts of generosity he gladdened the heart of the people. Baghdad instead of being a gloomy city became a joyous one. After one of his acts of munificent generosity, Shubba bin 'Uqál, in the presence of the Khalífa, praised him in these terms: 'He resembles the brilliant moon in beauty, the spring-time by his perfumes and suavity,

¹ *Sketches from Eastern History*, p. 145.

the lion by his boldness, and the sea with its resounding waves is the emblem of his liberality.'¹

With all his generosity like the other Khalífas he was easily led astray by scheming partisans. This is shown by his treatment of his Vizier Ya'qúb. In one of the 'Alid revolts in the preceding reign Ya'qúb bin Dá'úd who had taken part in them had been imprisoned. He was amongst those whom al-Mahdi released. He was a Persian by birth and a well-educated man, with a genial, and pleasing manner. He soon attracted the Khalifa's attention and rapidly rose in his favour. Soon the whole administration passed into Ya'qúb's hands, and he appears to have ruled well, paying great attention to works of public utility.

Either out of sympathy with them or from carelessness he took no steps to keep the free-thinkers in order. They laughed and jeered at religious practices. The orthodox grew alarmed. The chauvinism of the Arabs also led them to look upon the Persian ascendancy with intense dislike, and they began to plot against Ya'qúb. He unfortunately met with an accident which confined him to his bed. His Arab enemies were thus able to gain access to the Khalifa and to charge Ya'qúb with treachery. The Khalifa, now that Ya'qúb was not there to declare his fidelity and to charm his master with his gay and lively conversation, determined to put his obedience to the test. He withdrew to a richly

¹ Ma'súdí, vol. vi, p. 234.

furnished apartment in which were an 'Alid recently arrested, and a handsome slave girl beautifully attired.

Ya'qúb was ushered in and received with the words: 'Tell me Ya'qúb what think you of this saloon of ours?' 'It is the perfection of beauty; May God permit the Commander of the Faithful to enjoy it long.' 'Well,' said the Khalífa, 'all is yours if you will do what I ask.' Having made Ya'qúb confirm his consent by a threefold oath, he said that he wished the young 'Alid put out of the way. Ya'qúb, the girl and the 'Alid were then left together. Ya'qúb's heart failed him and instead of killing the 'Alid, he gave him money and sent him away. The girl was a spy and reported the matter to the Khalífa, who at a subsequent interview enquired of Ya'qúb whether he had obeyed his orders. He signified that he had done so. Then the 'Alid who had been re-captured was brought in and Ya'qúb's disobedience was clearly proved.¹ He was confined in the Maṭbaq, the principal prison of the city. He remained there for fifteen years, apparently forgotten, until the Khalífa Hárún heard of it and released him. Ya'qúb ended his days in peace at Mecca A.D. 803.

In this reign Hášim bin Hákím gathered many followers into a sect and for several years held the armies of the Khalífa in check. He wore a golden mask and was known as the Mukanna, or the 1Ma'súdí, vol. vi, p. 333; Zaydan, pp. 189-90; al-Fakhri, pp. 312-4.

veiled prophet.¹ Another sect taught Manichean dogmas with the nihilistic communism of Mazdak, a Persian teacher of the fourth century. It was a strange medley of fantastic theories. These men were called Zindiqs.² Al-Mahdí tried to suppress them and appointed an officer, Şáhibu'l-Zandiqa, to hunt them down.

The Khalífa now gave a willing ear to the complaints of the orthodox party and, alarmed at the spread of nihilistic teaching, established a tribunal for the punishment of heretics. Some genuine cases were punished, but many innocent persons suffered, for false witnesses were numerous, and private jealousies found an easy method of taking revenge. The Persian ascendancy was checked, and it was not till the reign of Hárúnu'r-Rashíd that it again came into power.

Al-Mahdí died in the year A.D. 785. He had bequeathed the throne to Hádí and on his death to his other son Hárún. Hádí reigned only about one year, but during that time conspired against his brother Hárún, whose succession he wished to set aside in favour of his infant son. In this he was opposed by Yaḥyá, the son of Khálid ibn Barmak, the great minister of the Khalífa Manşúr. Al-Mahdí imprisoned Yaḥyá, whereupon Hárún sought safety in flight. Hádí then vented his wrath on his

¹ For an account of his teaching and life, see al-Fakhrí, p. 300.

² For the derivation of the word, see Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 375, note 2.

mother Khaizurán, a woman of great ability and strength of character. She ruled over her husband al-Mahdí and wished to do so over her son. This he resented and behaved very rudely to her.¹ Displeased with his conduct, she 'ordered some of her slave girls to kill him by covering his face with a blanket and sitting on it.'² This was done. When her son Hárún became Khalifa she amassed great wealth, which in due time he squandered away. She was one of several women who in those wild days exercised great influence at Court.³

With the accession of Hárúnu'r-Rashíd (A.D. 786) we approach the golden age of the 'Abbásid dynasty, brought about by the ability of the Persian Viziers, especially the Barmakides,⁴ about which remarkable family I now give some account. Khálid ibn Barmak worked with Abú Muslim for the overthrow of the Umayyads. He occupied a position of influence under the Khalífas as-Saffáh and al-Manşúr, under both of whom he served as Vizier. He was also entrusted with the work of building Baghdad. Ma'súdí speaks of his profound wisdom, prudence and generosity.⁵ He was skilful not only

¹ Al-Fakhrí, p. 324.

² Zaydan, p. 230.

³ Zaydan gives a list of these women, pp. 230-1. Khaizurán settled down in Mecca, in the house of al-Arkám, where the Prophet had for a time resided, Manşúr compelled the descendants of al-Arkám to sell the property to him. It was a place held in much reverence. It has been rebuilt several times and pilgrims visit it.

⁴ See *The Encyclopædia of Islám*, pp. 663-6 for an account of this remarkable family.

⁵ Ma'súdí, vol. vi, p. 360.

in all the diplomacy required in the intrigues of an oriental court, but also in directing the affairs of a military campaign. His son Yaḥyá was the tutor of Hárún when a lad, and in due course, became his able and accomplished Vizier. When granted almost absolute power,¹ he ruled wisely and well. Yaḥyá had four sons: Faḍl, who became governor in succession of Khurásán and of Egypt, was distinguished for his military skill and his generosity; Ja'far, Músá and Muḥammad all attained to positions of honour. Hárún was greatly attached to his old tutor Yaḥyá and placed unbounded confidence in him. All correspondence passed through his hands and all petitions came to him. His knowledge of Muḥammadan law and his acute intellect enabled him to dispose of all such matters rapidly and well. His son Ja'far succeeded him as Vizier. For seventeen years the family of the Barmakides² practically ruled the empire as it had never been ruled before.

Hárún exacted much money from the provinces, which was most lavishly spent in the amusements in Baghdad. Large gifts were made to poets and divines, who in return sang the praises of their

¹ Múkhúnd says that 'he attained to a high position and exalted rank and that poets sang his praises'.

منصبی بلند و مرتبه ارجمند یافت و شعرا در وصف فضل قمیدها گفتند.

Raudatu'ş-Şafá, vol. iii, p. 148.

² For anecdotes concerning this family, see Ma'súdí, vol. vi, pp. 406-13.

master and extolled his virtues. Such were the splendour, the richness and prosperity of that reign that it was 'called "the bridal season," a fête continual and without end.'¹ In all this gaiety and life Yaḥyá and his accomplished sons took a prominent part. Their beautiful palace was thronged with courtiers, always welcome to share their hospitality. The fact, however, that the Barmakides were Persians and enjoyed a monopoly of power brought on them the hatred of the Arabs and their final downfall.

The leader of the opposition was al-Faḍl ibn Rabi', whose hopes of attaining to the vizierate had been destroyed by the rise of his rivals. A number of charges were brought against the Barmakides, of which the general tenor was that they were aiming at supreme power.² Hárún was orthodox, the Barmakides were not. Outwardly they conformed but they were in sympathy with the more liberal-minded section of the community. In their palace men of all creeds and opinions met, and free discussions were held. Ma'súdí gives an account of one such meeting. He tells us how Yaḥyá ibn Khálid addressing the company said: 'You have discoursed at length on pre-existence and creation; on duration and stability; on movement and repose; the unity of the divine substance; on traditional authorities; on the existence or non-existence of attributes in the Deity; whether the Imám rules

¹ Ma'súdí, vol. vi, p. 387.

² Al-Fakhrí, p. 258.

by divine appointment, or by popular election; now occupy yourselves to-day with a description of love.' ¹

Their free-thinking tendencies were made the basis of a charge against them and though it was rejected at the time, it was, when their fall was complete, assigned as a reason for it. The immediate cause, however, of the Khalífa's resentment is thus given by some historians. ² Hárún had a favourite sister, called 'Abbása, and as he spent his hours of conviviality with his friend Ja'far, he missed her companionship. In order that he might have the company of both, and as a royal maiden could not appear unveiled before a stranger he married his sister to Ja'far, first taking from them an oath that they should only meet in his presence and that the union should be merely nominal. To this Ja'far agreed, and Hárún thus enjoyed in his moments of pleasure the society of both. But the Khalífa did not reckon with the passion of a youthful maiden for a handsome man, in whose company she often sat and who was her lawful husband. She reproached Ja'far, but he paid no heed. She knew that an appeal to her brother would be useless. She then approached 'Utába, the mother of Ja'far, and won her over. They then

¹ Ma'súdí, vol. vi, p. 368.

² The account which follows is abbreviated from Mírkhúnd, vol. iii, pp. 149-50. Al-Fakhrí mentions the fact of the marriage and the birth of the child, but says nothing about the intrigue of 'Abbása'. p. 257.

made the following plan.¹ His mother told Ja'far that she had procured for him Iáriya, a slave girl of great beauty and attractive manners. Ja'far was delighted and anxiously awaited the time when she would arrive. The appointed night came and Ja'far, his head confused with the fumes of wine, awaited the entrance of Járiya. A visitor came and passed the night with him and in the morning said: 'What thinkest thou of the company of princesses?' 'Of what princesses' said Ja'far, 'do you speak?' 'Of myself thy sovereign mistress 'Abbása the daughter of Mahdi.'² Ja'far was now alarmed and said to his mother: 'You have brought me to ruin.' The child which was born was sent away secretly to Mecca and, as the news was still hidden from the Khalífa, Ja'far retained his high position. At length, Zubaida, the favourite wife of Hárún revealed to him the whole story of 'Abbása. The Khalífa was enraged but concealed his anger, until he could revenge himself on the whole family of the Barmakides. Ja'far saw that there was an estrangement and said, 'Our fortune has passed away.'

¹ Another version of the story is given, in which 'Abbása rejected this plan and persuaded Hárún to send a slave girl to Ja'far, and then herself went in disguise. The whole story is given in full by Muḥammad 'Abdu'r-Razzáq, *Al-Barámikah* (Lahore edition), vol. i, part 1, pp. 254-66.

² عباسه گفت صحبت بنات ملوک چون یافتی جعفر گفت کدام بنات ملوک و این چه سخن است که میگوئی عباسه گفت منم فلانده کس جنت مهدی

The account of Ja'far's death, as given by Ma'súdí and Mírkhúnd, is briefly as follows: 'When the day was fixed Hárún called for his page Yásir and told him to go and bring the head of Ja'far. Yásir was confounded and said, 'It is a terrible business, would that I had died before this hour.' 'Execute my orders,' said the enraged Khalífa and Yásir went on his mission. He informed Ja'far of the Khalífa's order. Ja'far asked for a respite in order to go to the palace. They went there and Yásir told the Khalífa that Ja'far had come. The Khalífa flew into a passion and threatened Yásir with death unless he instantly obeyed orders. He then retired, put Ja'far to death and returned with his head and placed it before the Khalífa.¹ Then Hárún looked at it and said, 'Strike off Yásir's head, for I cannot bear the sight of Ja'far's murderer.' The poets now sang the praises of Ja'far. Many of their songs have been recorded by Ma'súdí.²

The story of 'Abbása and its result is given in full detail by Ma'súdí (vol. vi, pp. 385-98), and in shorter form by al-Fakhri (p. 257) and Ṭabarí (Series III, vol. ii, pp. 671-2). Zaydan (p. 202) says Hárún was informed that Ja'far had in his (Hárún's) palace misbehaved with 'Abbása. All of these historians consider it to have been one of the causes of Ja'far's

¹ The head was placed on the middle bridge of Baghdad and the two halves of his body were impaled on the two other bridges. *The Encyclopædia of Islám*, p. 665.

² Ma'súdí, vol. vi, pp. 400-5. See Mírkhúnd, vol. iii, p. 157.

fall; but the historian Ibn Khaldún (*Prolégomènes*, vol. i, pp. 26-7) does not take this view. Speaking of 'Abbása's alleged part in the affair, he says it is incredible that such a noble princess could have done such a thing. She was an Arab of the Arabs descended from a noble family, a daughter of one Khalífa and sister of another. Where would modesty and chastity be found if not with 'Abbása? How could she consent to the alleged sequel to such an alliance with a client of a strange race? Would Hárún ever have consented to her marriage with a client.' So Ibn Khaldún concludes a long argument with the words: 'I reject the story and do not hesitate to treat it as an illusion.'

The Khalífa had some feeling of affection for his old friend Yahyá and allowed him to live in the city of Raqqa, but he preferred to go to prison with his son Faḍl. Yahyá died in prison in A.D. 805. A paper was found on him with these words: 'The accuser has gone forward to the tribunal, and the accused will soon follow. The Qáḍí will be that equitable Judge who is never unjust.' The Khalífa was much troubled when he read it. Faḍl, Músá and Muḥammad¹ died a few years after. The fallen fortunes of this great family are shown in a story preserved by Ma'súdí:² 'Muḥammad ibn 'Abdu'r-

¹ Some say Muḥammad died of grief in Mecca; others that he was poisoned. Ma'mún mourned for him (Muḥammad 'Abdu'r-Razzáq, *al-Barámikah*, p. 392): al-Fakhrí says that Músá was put to death by the order of Hárún, p. 331.

² Ma'súdí, vol. vi, pp. 406-7.

Raḥmán, chief of the prayer at Kúfa, relates: "On a certain day, which was the Festival of Sacrifices, I went into my mother's house, and found with her a woman of respectable mien, but dressed in shabby clothes. 'Do you know who this is?' said my mother. 'No', I replied. 'This,' said she, 'is the mother of Ja'far the Barmakide.' On this, I turned towards her, and saluted her with respect; we then conversed together for some time, after which I said, 'Madam what is the strangest thing you have seen?' To which she answered; 'There was a time when this anniversary found me with four hundred female slaves standing behind me to await my orders, and yet I thought my son did not provide for me in a manner adequate to my rank; but now my only wish is to have two sheepskins—one to serve me for a bed, and the other for a covering.' I gave her five hundred dirhems, and she nearly died from excess of joy. She afterwards continued to visit us till death placed a separation between us."

For seventeen years the Barmakides ruled with great ability. But they became rich and their magnificent mode of living and their lavish expenditure, combined with the complete control over the administration, raised up a host of enemies to them. They were accused of friendliness to the 'Alids and of intrigues against the Khalífa. All this was probably wrong, but we have seen how easily Khalífas were influenced by suspicion, and how ready they were to cast away even most faithful servants.

Ibn Khaldún (*Prolégomènes*, vol. i, p. 27) says the true cause of their fall was 'the manner in which they seized all authority and disposed of the public revenue as they desired, so that the Khalífa often had to ask for small sums of money. They chose the officials from their own family and friends. Applicants and candidates looked to them for favour. Their praises were everywhere sung, and they were more popular than the Khalífa himself.' Power so unlimited and influence so great naturally raised up many enemies, and so 'the scorpions of calumny came to wound them on the bed of repose on which they rested under the shadow of the imperial throne.'

Under the 'Abbásids the old rivalry between the Muḍarites and the Yemenites gave place to the rivalry between the Arabs and the Persians. With the fall of the Barmakides the Arab party came into power, leaving the Persian faction sullen and discontented. Hárún could destroy his able ministers and soldiers, but it was not easy to replace them. The affairs of the State fell into hopeless confusion. To meet this difficulty he resolved on leaving part of his dominions, 'Iráq, Syria, Arabia, Egypt and Northern Africa with Baghdad as the capital, to his son Amín; and the Eastern Provinces, where the Persian element was strong, to his son Ma'mún. Thus these two men represented generally the Arab and the Persian factions. The survivor was to inherit the whole. All this was duly recorded in a document

ratified in the Ka'ba at Mecca. Later on Amín repudiated the compact and tore the paper to pieces.

Hárún's last days were troubled by rebellions. One of his opponents was captured, and the Khalífa, then sick unto death, had him executed in a barbarous manner. A butcher was called for and the body of the victim was hacked to pieces in the presence of the Khalífa. Such was the last act of Hárúnu'r-Rashíd.

Hárún was, for his time, a great ruler; but subject, as all the despots of that age were, to outbursts of fury and a readiness to listen to the voice of intriguers. Nine times he made the Hajj to Mecca. Learned men flocked to his court which was the most brilliant yet seen in the Muslim world. The Hanafí school of law was elaborated in his reign into a more perfect system under Abú Yusúf, the chief Qadí. Hárún died in A.D. 809.

Hárún's arrangement concerning the division of the empire worked badly, and civil war soon broke out. Amín brought it on by naming his own son Músá as the heir-apparent. Ma'mún could not consent to be thus set aside. Amín also removed Ma'mún's name from the public prayers. It would be tedious to enter into details and to describe the fighting, the treachery, and the assassinations on both sides. It is sufficient to say that with the fall of Baghdad, after a siege of fourteen months, Amín's rule came to an end.¹ Amín surrendered to Harthuma,

¹ Ma'súdí, vol. vi, p. 477.

the commander of the opposing forces, who promised him his life ; but Ṭáhir, another general, subsequently founder of the Ṭáhiride dynasty, treacherously obtained possession of the prisoner,¹ and had him assassinated. His head was sent to Ma'mún to show that the war was ended.² This was in the year A.D. 813.³

Ma'mún, much relieved by the murder of his brother, was now, in name at least, sole ruler ; but the crime raised up a fierce opposition which was strengthened by the ill-advised conduct of his Vizier, Faḍl ibn Sahl, in whose hands the Khalífa was a mere tool. The Persians were now in the ascendancy and Faḍl, who wielded almost absolute power, speedily filled all positions of importance with Persians of his own choosing. Many of these men were only recent converts to Islám or were, in the eyes of the Faithful, utterly unorthodox. Syria, 'Iráq and Arabia now rose in rebellion, and the 'Alids also revolted again in very great force and with excellent hopes of success. They remembered how the 'Abbásids had used them to gain power and then had cast them aside, and they longed for revenge. The hatred of the Arabs to the Persians also brought over to the Arabian side many who had formerly fought against them. The whole country was in a ferment. But the leaders of the rebellion behaved with great cruelty

¹ Shibli, *al-Ma'mún*, pp. 43-4.

² Le Strange, p. 310.

³ For a graphic description of all the events of Amín's reign, see Osborn, vol. ii, pp. 209-34.

and in some cases with shameless profligacy, which so disgusted many of their 'Alid allies that their zeal slackened, and Harthuma, Ma'mún's general, soon suppressed the revolt. He saw that the main cause of it was the misrule of the Persian officials. He determined to go and lay this fact before Ma'mún. Faḍl suspecting his design made the Khalífa order him to remain away. Harthuma, trusting to the great services he had rendered, disobeyed this order, and, at the head of his troops, entered Merv, where the Khalífa resided and requested an audience. Faḍl lost no time in denouncing him as a disobedient traitor. Ma'mún foolishly accepted this view, and cast Harthuma into prison, where Faḍl had him put to death. Thus was a brave general lost. Another revolt broke out when Faḍl's infamous conduct was known, but he was an astute man, and in order to prevent Ma'mún looking upon the real cause of these troubles—the Persian ascendancy—he declared that it was due to the restlessness of the 'Alids. He persuaded Ma'mún that his true policy was to select a member of the House of 'Alí as his successor to the Khalífate.¹ Ma'mún consented, and, though the other members of the 'Abbásid family condemned the choice,² selected 'Alí ibn Músá, a man highly venerated by the 'Alids as his successor. He was a learned, devout man, well worthy of the office. He was surnamed ar-Riḍá, the acceptable. Ma'mún

¹ Ṭabarí, Series III, vol. ii, p. 1012.

² Ibn Khaldún, vol. i, p. 329.

invited him to come to Merv and gave him his own daughter in marriage. Then in order to please the 'Alids, he adopted their green¹ robes instead of the black dress of the 'Abbásids.

The governors of the provinces were also ordered to take the oath of allegiance to ar-Riḍá. But the Vizier's plan came too late to make for peace. The 'Alids had loyally supported the 'Abbásids in their conflicts with the Umayyads, and had been bitterly deceived. They had been ill-treated, imprisoned and put to death by their victorious allies, and quite recently they had fiercely retaliated. This the 'Abbásids knew. They were now supreme and had no intention of giving up their position at the mere whim of the Khalífa, or at the device of his Vizier, Faḍl ibn Sahl. In Baghdad itself the people refused to obey the order to accept ar-Riḍá. Instead of doing so, they cursed Ma'mún, and declared that another Khalífa must be elected in his place, and then proceeded to choose Ibráhím, the son of the late Khalífa al-Mahdí (A.H. 817).² A terrible period of anarchy and distress followed.

When ar-Riḍá put the whole state of affairs clearly before him, Ma'mún, at last, realized the treachery of his Vizier in his betrayal of the gallant Harthuma, and in his plea that the 'Alid opposition was not against the Persians, but only made in order

¹ This is said to be the colour of the dress of the elect in Paradise. Al-Fakhrí, p. 373.

² Ibn Khaldún, vol. i, p. 429; al-Fakhrí, p. 375.

to get their Imám nominated as his successor. It became clear to him that Faḍl must be removed. As this had to be done secretly by the Khalífa's orders, four assassins slew him when he was leaving his bath. Then under a pretence of grief the Khalífa put the assassins to death.¹

Meanwhile ar-Riḍá died, it is supposed, of poison given by the Khalífa's orders, though Ma'súdí says it was from indigestion caused by eating grapes, and that the poison theory was a pretence.² Ma'mún mourned for the death of ar-Riḍá in a manner quite inconsistent with the theory that he was his murderer. He followed his bier, and said the funeral prayers over him. In later years many superstitious notions gathered round the memory of ar-Riḍá.³

After ar-Riḍá's death Ma'mún marched on Baghdad and entered the city in triumph. He now gave orders that the black dress of the 'Abbásids should be resumed, thus showing that he was no longer inclined to the 'Alid faction. He bestowed many gifts on the chief men of the city; and assured them of a complete amnesty for the past. They were won over.

¹ Zaydan, p. 207; al-Fakhrí, p. 376.

² There is much difference of opinion about this. The Shí'ah historians accuse Ma'mún: al-Fakhrí (p. 376) says the same. Others think this extremely improbable. Shiblí (*al-Ma'mún*, pp. 60-2) give various views and seems to incline to the opinion that it was not done at the instigation of Ma'mún, but at that of some members of the 'Abbásid family. This is probably correct.

³ *The Encyclopædia of Islám*, p. 297.

Ibráhím, their elected Khalífa, was deserted. He escaped in the disguise of a woman but was arrested and brought into the presence of the Khalífa. He sued for pardon. 'Pardon, is it, you want?' said Ma'mún. Then he gave it and turned away to pray. Before letting his prisoner go, he gave orders that he should be exposed in a public place wearing the dress in which he had fled, and after a few days confinement freely pardoned him.¹ Ibráhím thus passes out of the history of the time.

Ma'mún after a career of indecision and lethargy, of duplicity and cruelty, at last settled down in Baghdad as sole ruler of the eastern lands of Islám. When he roused himself to action he was strong. 'A king,' he used to say, 'may pardon everything, except an attack upon his orthodoxy, the revealing of his secrets and an outrage on his harem.' Now that his position was secured he again turned to his Persian supporters, whom to appease the Arabs of 'Iráq he had feigned to disown. He also cast off the cloak of orthodoxy which he had assumed but never really felt.

Still with all these doubtful characteristics Ma'mún was a great Khalífa, and Baghdad under his rule became a famous centre of culture and religious freedom.² Of this there is ample evidence. 'Ma'mún's

¹ Ma'súdí, vol. vii, pp. 63-4.

² The pagans of Harran persuaded Ma'mún that they were the Šábians mentioned in the Qur'án, and so were, on payment of the jizya, allowed the position of a tolerated sect. *The Encyclopædia of Islám*, p. 184.

Khalífate,' says a modern Muslim writer, 'constitutes the most glorious epoch in Saracenic history and has been justly called the Augustan age of Islam.'¹ The same writer goes on to describe how Ma'mún, seeing the rigidity which Muslim dogmas were acquiring and their consequences on society, determined to secularize the State and to encourage amongst the people a greater freedom of thought, and a wider intellectual life. He himself was no mean scholar and took a broad view of religion and philosophy. It is said that he came into possession of an old Persian book, *The Eternal Reason*, in which the foundations of a religious creed were laid on human reason and conscience. 'There', said the Khalifa, 'is the true wisdom.'² To develop this idea was henceforth his great object. He held conferences in which Muslims of all sects, Jews, Magians and Christians took part. Arguments were to be based on reason as the one common ground for all. The leader in these matters was the Qáđí Aḥmad ibn Abi Dá'úd, a disciple of Wáṣil bin 'Atá, one of the founders of the Mu'tazila sect.³ The Qáđí was at once a learned theologian and metaphysician, an orator and a poet, and a man of pleasing manners, in whose company Ma'mún had great delight. Under his guidance Ma'mún espoused the

¹ Syed Amír 'Alí, p. 274.

² Osborn, vol. ii, p. 249.

³ For a good account of the controversy between the Mu'tazilis and the Asha'rians, see *Sharh-i-'Aqá'id-i-Jámi*, pp. 87-115.

Mu'tazila doctrines.¹ These taught mainly that the Qur'án was not eternal in its nature and so was rightly subject to criticism; that the will of man was free; and some other dogmas, all contrary to the accepted orthodox views.² Until now these views had been looked upon as speculative theories held by certain scholars, but in A. H. 212 (A. D. 827) Ma'mún issued a decree³ that those who maintained the dogma of the eternity of the Qur'án were heretics. It is hard to say, if such a decree had been set forth by a Khalífa whose orthodoxy was unquestioned, whether it would have been accepted; but Ma'mún was known as one who honoured Jews, Christians and Magians, who studied profane literature, held unorthodox views,⁴ and was lax in morals as regards wine and pleasure. Some, indeed, of his courtiers led an openly profane life. The result was that the question of the eternity of the Qur'án was now elevated into a positive dogma, on the support of which the whole creed of Islám must stand. Men were now prepared to die for their belief. In vain did Ma'mún and his friends declare

¹ See Sell, *The Faith of Islám*, p. 196.

² Ibid. pp. 194-8.

³ Ṭabarí, Series III, vol. ii, p. 1099.

⁴ It is not easy to define Ma'mún's exact religious position. Shiblí (*al-Ma'mún*, p. 160) says that the Sunnis said he was a Shí'ah: the Shí'ahs said his Shí'ahism was a pretence by means of which he secured the help of ar-Riḍá, whom, they say, he afterwards poisoned; and that, as there are no Mu'tázila historians, we do not know their opinion of him, though it is clear that he supported their views.

that, if the Qur'án was eternal, there were two eternals, and the doctrine of the Unity would be lost. It was no good, the whole body of the Traditions was searched to find reasons against this new and novel teaching.

But the Khalífa was firm. He established a Court of Inquisition, with Aḥmad ibn Dá'úd as President, and blows and imprisonment were the lot of those who were condemned by it. As we shall see later on, this attempt to bring reason to bear on religion failed, but it was part of a great intellectual movement.¹ Learned men from all parts flocked to Baghdad; eminent scholars from the Byzantine Empire came, and studied and taught philosophy, medicine, physics and astronomy. Religious toleration prevailed. Men of other creeds shared with Muslims of various sects the emoluments and responsibilities of office. Greek, Syriac and Chaldee books were collected and translated by able men set apart for that purpose.² A curious story is told of the way in which books were obtained. It is said

¹ See *The Faith of Islám*, pp. 199-201; Syúṭí, pp. 322-6; Field, in *Mystics and Saints of Islám*, p. 2, says: 'The Mu'tazilites at a time when Europe lay in the profoundest intellectual and moral bewilderment, fought for one of those ideas which, though they are quickly submerged again in the stormy current of the times, continue to work in silence and finally emerge victorious. On that day when the Muslim no longer beholds in God simply omnipotence, but also righteousness, he will simultaneously re-enter the circle of the great civilized nations amongst whom he once before, though only for a short time, had won the first place.'

² Shibli, *al-Ma'mún*, p. 125, gives a list of names.

that when Ma'mún asked the Byzantine emperor to send him some philosophical works, none were to be obtained. At last, a monk was found who said that in the time of Constantine all such books were withdrawn from circulation and hidden in a house in Greece, lest they should cause injury to religion. The house was opened and a large stock of books was found. The Emperor hesitated to send them, for they might prove hurtful to the Muslim religion, but his courtiers said that would not matter, so five camel loads of books were sent.¹ The study of the Persian language and literature was revived. It is considered one of the most notable events in Ma'mún's reign that Persian poetry then began and Persian literature received a new birth. In this Ma'mún took much interest. His mother and his wife² were both Persians. His great ministers of State were Persians. Persian fashions were followed and Persian fête days were observed. Persian raiment was the official court dress.

Praise is often given to the learning of the Saracens, and it is sometimes described as growing out of the spirit of Islám: but where did these Arabs get it? Not from Mecca and Madína, but from Byzantium and Greece. Arabs studied Aristotle and

¹ Shibli, *al-Ma'mún*, p. 123.

² Buran, daughter of his Vizier, Ḥasan ibn Sahl. For a description of the magnificence of the celebration of this marriage, see Syed Amír 'Alí, p. 271; Osborn, vol. ii. p. 248; Syúfí, p. 321. The cost of it was a sum equal to £1,200,000.

taught him to the men of Spain, but it was from Eastern Christendom that they first learnt him. The knowledge they gained was very partial. They do not seem to have translated or known the great Greek master-pieces of prose or poetry, or to have been able to read them in the original. Freeman¹ sums up the position thus: 'First, that whatever the Arabs learned, they learned from translations of Greek books; second, that they confined themselves to an infinitesimal portion of Greek literature; third, that many of the most famous literary men at the court of the Caliphs were not Muḥammadans at all but Jews or Christians.'

Each Tuesday learned men of various religions, and scholars in all departments of science were entertained in the palace as guests of the Khalífa, who presided at the meetings² which followed. A pleasant time was then spent in friendly discourses on a great variety of subjects. 'Thus did the civilization of 'Abbásid Baghdad become the inheritor of the ancient wisdom of Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, India and Greece, and for this it was chiefly indebted to heathens like Thábit bin Quna, Christians like Hunain and Qusṭa, or Mu'tazila heretics like 'Amr bin Baḥr al-Jāhidh, beside sundry Jews and Nabatheans. To this splendid synthesis the Arabs, though as it has been said, "one of the acutest

¹ *History and Conquests of the Saracens*, p. 157.

² For an account of these meetings and of the discussions which took place, see Shiblī, *al-Ma'mūn*, pp. 139-41.

people that have ever existed", lent little save their wonderful and admirable language; but the functions of assimilation, elucidation and transmission they performed in a manner which has made mankind and especially Europe their debtors.'¹ Baghdad shone with a reflected glory. It was a time when strange forms of belief arose and many heresies were rife, but limitation of space prevents fuller consideration of them.²

Ma'mún died in A.D. 833 and was succeeded by his brother al-Mu'tašim bi'lláh. Ma'mún had to hold the balance between his Persian and his Arab subjects. If one party was in power, the other was always ready for revolt, so he enrolled Turkish officers in the imperial service. Mu'tašim went still further and organized a body-guard of four thousand Turkish troops. This enraged the Arabs who formed a conspiracy to set a son of Ma'mún on the throne. It was suppressed in time, but it very much increased the power of the Turkish mercenary troops, who now began to treat the people of Baghdad in a most insolent manner.³ This created a new danger and so the Khalífa removed his headquarters to Sámarra, a place eighty miles higher up the Tigris. Here Mu'tašim and six Khalífas in succession dwelt and built palaces. Baghdad for a

¹ Browne, vol. i, p. 306.

² See Browne, vol. i, chapter ix; Field, *Mystics and Saints in Islám*, pp. 5-6,

³ Al-Fakhri, p. 402.

period of about seventy-eight years was under governors until the return of the Khalífa al-Musta'in in A.D. 865. The removal to Sámarra was a fatal step, as it left Mu'tasim and his six successors entirely in the hands of the Turkish body-guard, who henceforth made and deposed Khalífas at their will. Mu'tasim died in January A.D. 843. The period then closed 'was the most brilliant epoch in Moslem history: the Caliphs were then great warriors and sovereigns, and the fact is significant that with the sole exception of Amín, no Caliph during this period died in Baghdad.'¹

The next Khalífa, Wáthiq, persecuted the orthodox with much rigour. It was in his reign that al-Buwaiti, a famous disciple of Ash-Sháfi'í, suffered punishment.² Wáthiq failed to diffuse among the people the rationalistic doctrines of his immediate predecessors, and after his death in A.D. 847 a strong reaction set in, and with it the decay of learning. 'His premature death was an irreparable calamity, for with him ended the glory of the 'Abbásids. For the next two centuries their history presents a confused picture of sovereigns coming to the throne without power, and descending to the grave without regret.'³

The ruin of the 'Abbásid Khalífate now began. Freeman names four things which lead to it: '(1) The claims of rival Khalífas. (2) The rise of

¹ Le Strange, p. 302.

² See *The Faith of Islám*, p. 216.

³ Syed Amír 'Alí, p. 287.

anarchical and destructive sects. The ninth century was fertile in heresies. The Khalífate was a theocracy and so a religious difference implied a political movement. (3) The gradual separation of the remote provinces from the central power. Separate dynasties gradually arose in the outlying districts. (4) The insolence of foreign mercenaries at home. These Turkish guards gradually obtained supreme power over the Khalífas.¹ 'It was an evil day for the Khalífas when, ceasing to trust their own people, they surrounded themselves with these savage and self-seeking men of violence.' Stanley Lane-Poole² says of these Turkish slaves, then so highly praised in Muslim households and who afterwards attained to great power, that 'their physical strength and beauty, their courage and fidelity had won the hearts of the Khalífas, who believed they could rely more safely upon the devotion of their purchased foreigners than upon their own jealous Arabs or the Persians.' 'So they were led into the error of alienating the most powerful of their own subjects, and of giving all their confidence to these foreign slaves, who thus acquired the entire control of the interior of the palace.' When made freedmen they were appointed to the governorships of the most important provinces of the empire with the most disastrous effect on the stability of the 'Abbásid dynasty.

¹ *History and Conquests of the Saracens*, pp. 104-5.

² Browne, vol. i, p. 342. ³ *A History of Egypt*, pp. 59-61.

With the advent of the next Khalífa, al-Mutawakkil (A.D. 847), times changed, and men who held to Mu'tazila views were put to death. The following story will illustrate the fact. The Imám ash-Sháfi'í held a public disputation in Baghdad with Ḥafṣ, a Mu'tazila preacher, on the question of the creation of the Qur'án. Sháfi'í quoted the verse, 'God said "Be," and it is,' and asked, 'Did not God create all things by the word "Be"?' Ḥafṣ assented, for he considered it quite possible. 'If then the Qur'án was created, must not the word "Be" have been created with it?' Ḥafṣ could not deny so plain a proposition. Then said Sháfi'í, 'All things, according to you, were created by a created being, which is a gross inconsistency and manifest impiety.' Thus he proved to his own satisfaction that the Qur'án was not created. Ḥafṣ, who had asserted that it was created, was reduced to silence, and such an effect had Sháfi'í's logic on the audience that they put Ḥafṣ to death as a pestilent heretic. In this way did the Ash'arían opinions of the subject of the divine attributes again gain the mastery.¹

¹ In *Muslim India* for December, 1913, p. 406, Lord Headley, a recent convert to Islám, is reported as saying that 'Muḥammadanism is an united church, save only for some minor disputes as to the descendants of Muḥammad.' This shows how much he has yet to learn, and how inadequate has been his study of the political and ecclesiastical history of the Muslim world of the past. What Shi'ah or Khárijite would call the question of succession to the Khalífate a minor dispute? The whole dogma of the Imamate

Mutawakkil ill-treated the 'Alids and razed to the ground the mausoleum of Ḥusain, the son of 'Alī. This mausoleum is said to have been built over the place where the head of Ḥusain was buried. Marvelous stories are told about this head which was cut off after his death at Karbala (*ante* p. 14).¹ He excluded the non-Muslims from the service of the State. The Dhimmis were persecuted, and an edict was passed that Jews and Christians should wear yellow garments, and that their stirrups should be made of wood. All this was to let it be seen that they were not Muslims and to point to their degradation. Their synagogues and churches were destroyed, and they were excluded from the public baths.² In his private life Mutawakkil was a scandal to all right thinking men. His Court was a most profligate one, but extreme orthodox men overlooked his evil ways and praised him for all he did in reviving the true orthodox belief, so strongly challenged by men of intellect in the preceding reigns. He was killed by his Turkish bodyguard, instigated by his son, Mustanşir.³

is fundamental. As we have seen in the preceding pages it then caused disunion in the Muslim world, which exists even to this day. Again, the theological disputes we have been considering show that they were grave enough for men to incur the loss of life in connexion with them. Even Muslims do not die for minor disputes.

¹ See Ockley, *History of the Saracens* (Bohn's edition, London, 1857), pp. 412-3 ; 415-6.

² Mīrkhúnd, vol. iii, p. 162.

³ Mīrkhúnd, vol. vii, pp. 272-3 ; al-Fakhrī, p. 412.

It would be tedious to follow out in detail the history of the twenty-seven Khalífas from Mustanşir bi'lláh A.D. 861 to Musta'shim bi'lláh A.D. 1258 when Baghdad was sacked by Húlágú. The old tribal feuds so strong under the Umayyads had apparently been modified, but bitter theological discussions still divided the Muslim community. The period referred to was one of insurrections and tumults during which the governors of the provinces gradually became nominal feudatories, and in reality independent rulers,¹ whilst the power of the Khalífas passed into the hands of mercenaries, and their supremacy became a mere nominal suzerainty.² Such were the causes or the symptoms of the downfall of the 'Abbásid dynasty.

We shall, therefore, select only a few periods, and then pass on to the closing days of the Khalí-fate at Baghdad. The Khalífa Mustakfí bi'lláh (A.D. 944 to 974), in order to win the favour and support of the Dailemite chiefs, gave titles of honour to the three sons of Abú Shújá, also called Buyah, the founder of the Buyid dynasty.³ Aḥmad the eldest

¹ 'It is at the courts of these petty dynasties that the poets and scholars of the tenth and eleventh centuries A.D. are to be found. For a short time Aleppo and for a longer time Cairo have a better claim to be regarded as the home of intellectual endeavour than even Baghdad itself.' De Boer, *Philosophy in Islám*, p. 5.

² 'The Caliphs now having much spare time and considerable revenues employed their energies in palace building.' Le Strange, p. 327.

³ Al-Fakhrí, p. 498.

received the title of Mu'izzu'd-Daulah; his brother 'Alí became Imádu'd-Daulah; his brother Ḥasan Ruknu'd-Daulah. Aḥmad soon obtained the further title of Amíru'l-Umará. The three brothers became absolute masters of the empire. They were Persians and restored the prestige of the Shí'ahs and weakened the power of the Turks. 'In order to pacify opponents by grants of money Mu'izzu'd-Daulah often had to oppress people. To his officers, courtiers and Turks he made grants of land belonging to the State. This led to the ruin of many districts.' ¹ In A.D. 946 Mu'izzu'd-Daulah deposed and blinded the Khalífa al-Mustakfí and proclaimed his successor. Henceforth the 'Abbásid Khalífas of Baghdad ceased to have any temporal power. According to Zaydan (p. 241) the reign of the Buyid family was from A.H. 320 to 447 (A.D. 932 to 1055). They erected many fine buildings in Baghdad.

The rulers of the Umayyads in Spain were called Amírs or Sultáns but not Khalífas, for they respected the holders of that title; but when the Eastern Khalífate had reached a low stage of decrepitude and the 'Abbásid Khalífa was the Commander of the Faithful in name only, then 'Abdu'r-Raḥmán III, in Spain in A.D. 929, assumed the title and insignia of the Khalífate.² A few years previous the Fátimid Khalífate, a Shí'ah one, had been established in Egypt. This period is thus important in Muslim

¹ *Tajáribu'l-Uman*, quoted in RASJ, October, 1913, p. 823.

² The Umayyad Khalífate of Cordova lasted until A.D. 1027.

history, for in it independent Khalífates came into existence.

The next important epoch is connected with the rise of the Seljúks and the restoration of Sunní influence. 'Seljúk bin Yakák was a Turkish Emir in the service of the Kháns of Turkístán. He heard of the break up of the 'Abbásid empire and aspired to be its master. Knowing that he could never attain to that, unless he became a Muslim, he embraced that religion, being followed therein by his tribe, his army and all his partisans.'¹ His grandson Toghrul Beg was elected king. The Khalífa Qá'im bi'lláh (A.D. 1031 to 1075) suffering much from the tyranny of the Buyids invited Toghrul Beg to his assistance.² The Turks were Sunnís and faction fights with the Shí'ahs were common, but in the end the Turks gained the upper hand, and became masters of Baghdad. In A.D. 1050 the name of Toghrul Beg was inserted in the public prayers, and he was invested with the supreme temporal power.³ Zaydan⁴ gives an amusing account of the Khalífa's consternation when Toghrul Beg demanded his daughter in marriage. Khalífas had married daughters of their ministers, but no minister had ever had the audacity to marry a royal princess. The Khalífa was very angry, but his power had gone and he had to submit to the will of his Turkish master.

¹ Zaydan, p. 243.

² Al-Fakhrí, p. 503.

³ For an account of his reception at court, see Osborn, vol. ii, pp. 224-6.

⁴ Zaydan, p. 264.

The successors of Toghrul Beg gained many victories, sullied with much cruelty. They reunited the empire which they had found in a state of disintegration, and once more the 'Abbásid rule seemed firm, but the controlling power was no longer Arabian nor Persian but Turkish. 'These rude nomads, unspoilt by town life and civilized indifference to religion, embraced Islám with all the fervour of their uncouth souls. They came to the rescue of a dying State and revived it.'¹

There was much uncouth splendour in the courts of the Seljukian rulers, but they were barbarians, the leaders of a horde of robbers. Under Malik Sháh, there was some kind of orderly government, for his minister, Nizámu'l-Mulk, was a wise and strong minister, but he was assassinated in A.D. 1093 by a fanatic of the sect of the Assassins.² Then followed a general break up of the empire. At this time another peril arose. The Crusades began. The Assassins also captured many fortresses and Ḥasan ibn Šabbāḥ, Grand Master of the Order, extended his power far and wide. The empire of the Seljúks vanished and was broken up in many parts.

¹ S. Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, p. 10.

² Húlágú in A.D. 1254 to 1256 did good work in breaking up the powers of this terrible society. He captured Alamút and other strongholds. The final blow was given the Sultán Baibars in A.D. 1272. The political power of the Assassins has passed away, but the sect survives amongst the Nosairis. See *The Cult of 'Ali* (C.L.S.) pp. 19-40.

The next important stage is the great Tartar or Mongol invasion. In the year A.D. 1218 the Muslim ruler of a frontier city caused some peaceful Mongol traders¹ to be put to death on the charge that they were spies. Chingiz Khán at once took revenge for this mean act, and the great Tartar invasion of the regions of the Khalífate commenced. This strong leader, born in A.H. 1155 was at the age of thirty-four proclaimed Khákán, or the overlord of the Tartars. He conquered China and the whole of Tartary, and then, as we have seen, turned to the south and west. The Muslim empire was now broken up into many States, owing only a nominal allegiance to the Khalífas, so that the Tartar generals had little difficulty in beating them in detail. The Grand Master of the Assassins ruled in his fortress at Alamút, and the Khalífa still had some semblance of power in Baghdad, and it was not until the reign of Mangu Khán, the third in succession after Chingiz Khán, that destruction overtook them. The following order was given to Húlágú Khán, brother of Mangu Khán, and the commander of the Tartar army: 'Assemble round thee the obedient and submissive; but tread into the dust of contempt and misery the refractory and mutinous, with their wives and children. When thou hast done with the Assassins, begin the conquest of 'Iráq. If the Khalífa of Baghdad comes forward willingly to serve

¹ Syútfí says they were envoys, p. 495.

thee, then shalt thou do him no harm, but if he refuse, let him share the fate of the rest.’¹

Ruknu’d-Dín, the last Grand Master of the Assassins, a weak and cowardly man, though with many fortresses well provided for in his possession, surrendered himself a prisoner. Then a fearful carnage ensued and the dynasty, which for nearly two hundred years had been a cause of terror and dismay, came to an end.

There was now nothing to prevent the march on Baghdad. Meanwhile an earthquake in Madína² and floods in ‘Irâq and Baghdad made men fear and tremble, for even Nature itself seemed arrayed against these unhappy people. ‘It was in truth a time of terror and perplexity; men’s hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things that were coming upon the earth. More than six hundred years had gone by since the first Arabian Khalífas had led their warriors into Syria. As the Jews of old times, the believers in the One God had overthrown fenced cities and destroyed mighty armies. Like them, they had enjoyed their period of probation, their time of earthly splendour; and like them, they had at length been weighed in the balance and found wanting. They had wrought no deliverance upon the earth; and the decree had gone forth that there was for them no longer either the time or the place for repentance.’³

¹ Osborn, vol. ii, p. 389.

² Syútí, p. 492.

³ Osborn, vol. ii, pp. 392-3.

At this time the Khalífa was Musta'sim bi'lláh, a weak dissolute man, utterly unable to control the factions in the capital. Al-Fakhrí (p. 571) says: 'He lacked in judgment, had no energy, knew nothing about the affairs of the empire and could never see things from the true point of view.' The Shí'ahs headed by the Vizier Ibnu'l-Alqámí, quarrelled with the Sunnís;¹ the followers of the jurist Ibn Ḥanbal contended against those of Abú Ḥanífa. Anarchy ruled in the city and the Khalífa in the seclusion of his harem took little heed of all that was going on. With absolute power over all around him, getting his information from obsequious slaves, caring little except for the gratification of his wishes, for a time, he did nothing. At last, he wrote a letter in favour of the secretary Mujáhidu'd-Dín, head of the Sunnís, which so enraged the Vizier Muḥiyyu'd-Dín Ibnu'l-Qámí, who was a Shí'ah, that he opened communications with Húlágú.² To the minds of these leaders of factions it seemed better to let Baghdad go to ruin than to allow a rival even a temporary supremacy. Húlágú sent word to the Khalífa that he was marching on Baghdad, and suggested that he should surrender. He received a disdainful answer, and in reply he again sent word that he

¹ Zaydan gives this as a reason for the fall of the city, p. 291.

² The Sunni historians agree as to this act of treachery. The Shí'ah historians deny it. After the fall of Baghdad, Húlágú placed confidence in the Vizier and this has led al-Fakhrí (p. 582) to deny that he was a traitor. This argument does not seem conclusive.

was marching on Baghdad. The Khalífa without an army, with rival factions quarrelling in the city, and with divided counsellors could offer no effective resistance. A blockade which lasted forty days now commenced. The siege was pressed with vigour, the city was set on fire in various places, and all roads from it were guarded so that none could escape. In vain did the Khalífa now ask for clemency. A chance arrow wounded Húlágú who, maddened with rage, determined on still more active measures. By means of a renegade Muslim he let it be known that the inhabitants who came out and surrendered would be pardoned. Thousands came but were all massacred by the Tartar soldiers. The Khalífa, now in despair, turned to his Vizier for counsel and assistance. Syúfí narrates what happened: 'The Vizier—may God confound him—counselled al-Musta'sim to conciliate them and said, "I will go forth to them myself to arrange the terms of peace;" and he set forth and secured from them the safety of his own person and returned to the Khalífa, and said, "The monarch desires to marry his daughter to thy son the Amír Abú Bakr, and he will confirm thee in the office of Khalífa, as he has suffered the lord of ar-Rúm to retain his sovereignty, and he seeketh nothing but thy submission to him as thy ancestors submitted to the Seljúk princes, and he will then depart with his army. Let then, my lord, consent to this, for verily thus will the blood of the Muslims be spared, and afterwards thou canst do

what thou wilt, but it is advisable that thou go forth to him." Then the Khalifa set out at the head of all the nobles, and he was made to alight at a tent. The Vizier entered the city and summoned the jurists and principal men to witness the negotiation, and they all came forth from Baghdad, and their heads were struck off,¹ and thus company after company came out, and were decapitated, until all the learned and the nobles, the chamberlains and principal men were put to death. Then a bridge was thrown across and the sword was let loose in Baghdad, and the massacre continued for about forty days till the number of the slain was more than a million souls, and none escaped but those who hid themselves in wells and subterraneous canals.'²

The Mongols poured into the city, the inhabitants were slain by the sword, the streets ran with blood and the city was consumed by fire. Devastation was universal. Delicately nurtured ladies and helpless children were dragged into the streets and treated with utter brutality. The artistic and literary treasures collected by the more learned Khalifas were destroyed. Palaces and mosques were razed to the ground. Húlágú took up his abode in the palace of the Khalifa. He made a great feast for his lords and ordered the Khalifa to be present. He then made him disclose his hidden treasures—numerous ingots of gold. 'Húlágú had plates filled with this gold and placed before Muta'şim instead of

¹ See also Zaydan, p. 292.

² Syútf, p. 497.

food; and on the Khalífá's observing that gold was not food, the Mongol replied, "Because it is not food, and cannot preserve life, why didst thou not give it to thine army to defend thee, or to mine to pacify them?"¹ Húlágú returned to his camp and the work of destruction recommenced. 'Dome and minaret, palace and tower came crashing down as the advancing flames licked up supporting beam and rafter. The mosque and palace of the Khalífas, the musjid of Músá Jewad, the tombs wherein reposed the mortal remains of the heads of Islám—in a word, all the great buildings of the city, were utterly consumed. The streets became a shapeless wilderness of ruins; nothing escaped except a few sheds belonging to some cowherds. The work of slaughter kept pace with that of conflagration; the river, according to the expression of the Persian historian, flowed as red as the Nile when Moses, by a miracle, changed its waters into blood. The stench of the dead bodies became so frightful that even the callous sensibilities of Húlágú Khán were unable to endure it.'² A little while after, on the fourteenth of the month Safar A.H. 656 (A.D. 1258) the Khalífa, his sons and five faithful eunuchs were put to death.

Even this did not satisfy the ruthless conqueror, for 'on the morrow all those who had accompanied the Khalífa when he left the city also received the crown of martyrdom. They slaughtered without pity all they could find of the House of 'Abbás:

¹ Osborn, vol. ii, p. 400.

² Osborn, vol. ii, p. 401.

there escaped only a few who were of no account.'¹

Freeman shows how striking the contrast was between the rulers in the fall of Baghdad and in the fall of Constantinople. 'The last and weakest of the Caliphs, without an effort of arms or policy to stay his fall, sinks from senseless pride to craven terror, and expires amidst the tortures of a faithless victor. The last and noblest of the Caesars, after doing all that mortal man could do for the deliverance of his city, himself dies in the breach, the foremost among its defenders. Not Darius in the hands of the traitor, not Agastulus resigning his useless purple, not the Ætheling Edgar spared by the contempt of the Norman conqueror, ever showed fallen greatness so dishonoured and unpitied, as did al-Musta'şim bi'lláh, the last Commander of the Faithful; not Leonidas in the pass of Thermopylae, not Decius in the battle below Vesuvius, not our own Harold upon the hill of Senlac, died a more glorious death than Constantine Palaeologus, the last Emperor of the Romans.'²

Of those who escaped from the destruction of Baghdad, Abú'l-Kásim was one. Some time after he was invited to Cairo and under the name of Mustanşir bi'lláh revived there the 'Abbásid Khalí-fate but in name only.³ As a ruling power it had ceased for ever. It had had its periods of greatness, but its fall was ignominious and complete.

¹ Rashídu'd-Dín, quoted by Osborn, vol. ii, p. 401.

² Freeman, *History and Conquest of the Saracens*, pp. 1312.

³ See *Outlines of Islám* (C.L.S.), p. 67.

INDEX

A

- 'Abbása, 76, 77, 78, 79
Abú Muslim, 48, 49, 50, 61, 62, 63
Abú Salama, 50, 51
'Abdu'lláh bin Muḥammad, 50, 51
'Abdu'l-Malik, 18, 19, 20, 22, 33, 55
'Abdu'lláh bin Zubair, 16, 18, 19, 20
'Amr binu'l-'Āṣ, 6, 10
Amín, 81, 82
Assassins, 107

B

- Barmakides, 57, 73, 75, 80
Baní 'Abd Manáf, 5
Baní 'Aus, 2
Baní Hāshim, 5
Baní Khazraj, 2
Berbers, 25, 57
Buyid, 98, 99

C

- Client, 21, 45, 46

D

- Dhimmís, 31, 32, 97

F

Faḍl the Barmakide, 74, 79

Faḍl bin Rabí', 75

Faḍl bin Sahl, 83, 84, 85

H

Ḥajjáj, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27

Ḥasan bin 'Alí, 7, 10, 13, 15, 36, 48

Ḥasan the Baṣrite, 36

Ḥasan ibn Ṣabbáḥ, 101

Harṭhuma, 84, 85

Hárúnu'r-Rashíd, 45, 71, 73, 75, 76, 82, 83

Hishám, 40, 41, 43, 55

Húlágú, 98, 102, 105, 106, 107

I

Ibráhím brother of Yazíd, 42, 43, 111

Ibráhím binu'l-Mahdí, 85

Ibráhím binu'l-Muḥammad ibn 'Alí, 49, 51

J

Ja'far the Barmakide, 74, 76, 77, 78, 87

K

Khálid bin 'Abdu'lláh, 40, 41, 42

Khálid ibn Barmak, 71, 72, 73

Khárijites, 9, 33, 42, 47

M

Ma'mún, 82, 83, 84, 89, 91, 93

Manṣúr, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68

Marwán 11, 43, 44, 45, 51, 52, 54
Marwán ibn Ḥákim, 17, 18
Maslama, 33, 37, 38
Mongols, 102, 107
Mu'áwiya, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 52, 53, 55
Muḍarites, 2, 3, 4, 81
Muḥammad ibn 'Alí, 48, 49, 58
Mukáaffa, 66, 67
Músá the Barmakide, 74, 79
Musta'in, 94
Mustakfí bi'lláh, 98
Mustanşir, 97, 98
Musta'şim bi'lláh, 98, 105, 106
Mutawakkil, 69, 96, 97

Q

Qayrawán, 11, 51, 54
Qutaiba, 26

R

Riḍá, 85, 86

S

Saffáh, 60, 61, 73
Sámarra, 93, 94
Seljuks, 100, 101
Siffin, 9, 37, 47
Sulaimán, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28

T

Ṭáhir, 83
Toghrul Beg, 100, 101



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