The Social and Political Background of the `Abbasid Revolution: The Rise of the `Abbasid Caliphate

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Abstract

This paper aims at analyzing the social and political conflict between the different tribal groups within the Umayyad rule and to establish a link between the Islamic values adopted by some of the Umayyad Caliphs and the `Abbasid Revolution. One of the particular concerns of this paper is to see the changes following the `Abbasid Revolution's victory, mainly the complete assimilation of all members of the Muslim community, Arabs and non-Arabs into the empire. The transfer of the Islamic capital from Damascus to Baghdad had its significance namely the intersection of several trade routes which could give real prosperity to the `Abbasid empire, and subsequently led to the remarkable rapid spread of Islam among the non-Arabs in the east and the far-east including the Malay Archipelago. The remarks in this paper are intended to present a new picture of the conclusion reached in a more detailed study of the `Abbasid Revolution, conclusions which are based on evidence contained in the earliest Arabic sources available to us.

Keywords: Social, Politics, Abbasid, Khurasan, Revolution.

This paper analyses the social and political conflict between the different tribal groups within the Umayyad rule and establishes a link between the Islamic values adopted by some of the Umayyad caliphs and the Abbasid Revolution. The remarks in this paper are intended to present a new picture of conclusions reached in a more detailed study of the Abbasid Revolution, conclusions which are based on evidence contained in the earliest Arabic historical sources available to us, notably those of al-Tabari, al-Baladhuri and al-Ya`qubi.

One of the main and still current interpretation of the Abbasid Revolution put forward by Van Vloten and J. Wellhausen in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is that it was mainly a national struggle of the Iranians against the Arab ruling class. This conclusion is apparently based on a statement by al-Jahiz: "Abbasid state was Persian and Khurasanian that of the Marwanids, Umayyads and Arabs".[1]

However, the opinion that it was a renaissance of Iranian nationalism was mainly due to the influence of racialist ideas circulating by the turn of the 19th century.[2] Although racial antagonisms played their part, they were not the prime motivating forces of the revolution. Although some *mawali* (non-Arab Muslims) were involved in the movement and worked side by side with the Arabs for the Abbasids, they were not by any means exclusively Persians, but included Iraqis, Syrians, etc. The Persian *dahaqin* (local heads) had adopted themselves to the Umayyad regime and played an important role in its working. In return, they were given full power in the assessment of taxes in the different districts of Khurasan. It was left to the *dahaqin* to decide how the burden of the tribute would be divided. The Arabs had nothing to do with the allocation of taxes: they simply received the money.[3]

The clear feature of the Abbasid Revolution is that the change from the Umayyds to the Abbasids was brought about mainly by the Arab element in Khurasan, whose interpretation was broader than the relatively limited Umayyad view. Those Arabs were the settlers of Merv and its surrounding villages who lost their position as members of the Arab ruling classes and who were also grieved by their position as subjects of the non-Muslim Iranian aristocracy of Merv.[4] So, the reasons for the conflicts between the different tribal groups must be sought in their interests rather than in legendary animosities. Wellhausen was wrong when he said that "If the tribal-feud abated in Basra were transferred because its conquest was achieved from there".[5] Although these two provinces had a similar reason for revolting, mainly unwillingness to submit to the authority of the central government, their circumstances were different. Therefore, their risings took different forms and followed different political paths from the very beginning until the Abbasid Revolution.

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[1] Al-Jahiz, `Amr b. Bahr. (1968), *al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin*, Vol. III, Cairo, p. 336.

[2] B.Lewis. (1950), *The Arabs in History*, London: Hutchinson University Library, pp. 80-81.

[3] M.A. Shaban, *The `Abbasid Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p.21.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] J. Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom and Its Fall*, tr. M.G. Meir, Culcatta, 1927, p. 441.

The Abbasid Revolution took place in Merv, Khurasan. It came about as a result of an extensive and successful secret revolutionary movement and organization representing the discontent of the Arab tribesmen in Khurasan with the Arab ruling classes and of the people of Khurasan, both Arabs and non-Arabs, with the local heads and central government. With the collapse of the central government of the Sasanians, the local heads in Khurasan of the Sasanian who formed the local nobility continued to enjoy their pre-Islamic privileges under Arab rule namely in respect to the allocation and collection of taxes. They as well as warriors, the priests and the civil servants, were exempted from the poll-tax. The burden of the taxes fell heavily on the peasantry and they also had to serve in the infantry in the army. In the cities the bourgeoisie were in a better situation for while they paid the poll-tax they did not have to serve in the army. Under Arab rule, this system was continued, and the tax-payer continued to pay his land tax or trade tax in addition to the poll-tax. The Arabs who were able to purchase certain land in some villages had to pay the tax imposed on this land to the local heads. If the Arabs were paying a land tax, they certainly were not paying a poll-tax and that was precisely where the new reform of Caliph `Umar bin `Abd al-`Aziz (`Umar II) declared equality between the Arab and non-Arab Muslims in Khurasan.

The conquest of Khurasan started during the reign of Caliph Uthman ibn Affan under the leadership of `Abdullah ibn `Amir (29-35A.H./649-655A.D.). Meanwhile the situation in Iraq was tense as a result of the influx of the new Arab tribesmen into the garrison towns of Kufa and Basra. the arrival of these newcomers caused severe social and economic problems in the province which had never occurred before. Caliph `Uthman's solution to these problems was to open new fronts in new territories to consume the energies of the newly-arrived tribesmen. In the year 31A.H./651A.D., `Abdullah ibn `Amir, after preparing his army, started towards Khurasan.[6] When he arrived at Tabasyn he immediately concluded a peace treaty with its people, and sent Ahnaf ibn Qays to Khurasan with an army of 4,000 Arabs and 1,000 Persians. He was opposed there by the Hayatilahm the Hephthalites,[7] who were assisting the people of Khurasan, but Ahnaf put them to flight and captured Khurasan[8].

When Mu`awiyah was recognized as the first Umayyad Caliph in 41A.H./661A.D., the Arab army was re-established and `Abdullah ib `Amir was restored as governor of Basra with Khurasan and Sistan in his governorship. In 45A.H./66A.D., Ziyad ibn Abi Sufyan was appointed to replace Abdullah ibn Amir as governor of Khurasan. In 50A.H./670A.D. when Kufa was added to Ziyad's governorship he divided it into four divisions. The head of each division was appointed by the central government from among the best men. He also revised the record of the *diwan*, the list of the Arab warriors entitle to stipends, `*ata*`, but removing all the names of the dead and the Khawarij from it and adding instead some of the names of the newcomers into it. Despite this revision many of them were still excluded from the *diwan*. As a solution to this problem, Ziyad sent as many as 50,000 Arab

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[6] Al-Baladhuri, *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan*, N.J. de Goeje (ed.), Leiden, 1886, p. 335.

[7] Hephthalite (*hayatilah*) were the nomadic tribes of Iranian origin fro Central Asia. They appeared for the first time in the 4th century among the armies of the later Kushans, helping them against the Aasanians. Soon they became the successors to Kushan.

[8] H.A.R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests of Central Asia*, London, 1923, p. 15

tribesmen and their families from Kufa dan Basra to Khurasan to settle permanently there,[9] securing the conquests already made and providing the forces needed for their further expansion. This was the first time that the Arab tribesmen from Kufa were employed in the conquest in Khurasan; and none of them withdrew from Khurasan after the time of Ziyad until the Abbasid Revolution. It is also worth noting that the settling of 50,000 Arab families in Khurasan was an aggressive step taken by the central government in this part of the empire; the *dahaqin* on the other hand, were controlling the local administration in different districts of the province.

After the death of Mu`awiyah and his son, Yazid, tribal feud between Mudarites and Qaysites occurred in Khurasan.  This was ended with the victory of Mudarites, the majority of Arab tribesmen in Khurasan.  This troubled province alarmed `Abd al-Malik, a new Caliph, and compelled him to change his policy to one which could bring the tribesmen in line. He saw that al-Hajjaj, a newly appointed governor of Iraq and eastern provinces, including Khurasan, was the only man who could apply such a new policy and restore order in the province. Abd al-Malik must have realised the needs and interests of the people of Khurasan, and believed in the ability of al-Hajjaj to deal with any problems regarding the military and administrative affairs. Thus, al-Hajjaj was given more than half of the empire, including Khurasan to control. From the very beginning, al-Hajjaj realized that the tribe of Mudar was predominant in Khurasan and he saw that if matters were left in their hands, the situation would be dangerous. So, he decided to balance it with another Qaysite which could perhaps change the situation. One of the strongest Qaisites was al-Muhallab, whom al-Hajjaj hoped could handle the increasingly complex in the province. In fact, during the governorship of al-Muhallab, a very small income was received by the central government as only one-fifth of the booty was sent; and there is no indication that al-Muhallab had attempted to settle the Arab tribesmen in Khurasan.

When Qutayba, another Qaysite was appointed to replace al-Muhallab, a new policy was introduced in Khurasan. He applied the policy of using the local population to support his army. During Qutayba's governorship in Khurasan, a number of Iranians had converted to Islam and were enlisted in the *diwan* and received the regular stipends of the *muqatilah*, warriors, and this policy was applied to all of Khurasan. We are told that in the siege of Samarqand (96A.H./715A.D.) the levies of Bukhara and Khwarizm were called `abid by Qutayba. When the prince of Samarqand protested, Qutayba had to prove to him that he also had some `Arab in his army. However, the situation had demoralised the army of the conquered land thus discouraging it from joining Qutayba. Thus, Qutayba had to ask al-Hajjaj to supply him with fresh troops to assist him in his campaigns. From now on the situation in Khurasan became hazardous and revolts broke out against Qutayba. When Qutayba went to Khurasan he was not accompanied by any `Arab troops but merely used `Arab tribesmen in Khurasan and conquered peoples in his expeditions. This policy would have succeeded in the long run if it had been helped by an effort to consider their interests and assimilate them with the Arab community. But Qutayba did not do this, he instead followed the opposite policy, making use of these people and neglecting their interests, segregating them in a special division of his arm instead of leaving them to join the Arab tribesmen. For the Arab tribesmen they also had their reasons for

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[9] Al-Baladhuri, *op. cit*., p.410; al-Tabari, *Tarikh,* vol.II, p.18; Gibb, *op. cit*.p.17.

revolting against Qutayba. The increasing power of the central government lessened their tribal chiefs authority. For example, in the case of Waqi` ibn Sud of Tamim, he was recognized by the Arab tribesmen in Khurasan as the provisional successor of Quytayba. Instead, he was driven from his position by Qutayba who appointed a certain man of Bani Darar al-Dabbi.[10] At the same time, they had been long on the battlefield and felt that the time had come to live in peace and settlement.

When Qutayba tried to support Caliph al-Walid's attempt to abandon the terms of his father, `Abd al-Malik's `*ahd*, oath, and nominated his son, `Abd al-`Aziz as his successor he was strenuously opposed by `Umar II and the Arab tribesmen in Khurasan.[11] This analysis implies that the Arab tribesmen in Khurasan had already hoped that another caliph, that is Sulayman ibn `Abd al-Malik, would change the policy of the empire. And it may also be noted that `Umar II himself knew that Sulayman ibn `Abd al-Malik favoured a change of policy so that immediately after al-Walid died he secured the succession to Sulayman. During the short reign of Sulayman (96-99A.H./715-717A.D.), some important actions were taken, including that of releasing the prisoners in the jail of Basra, and bringing back those who had been on campaign.

The success of the caliph Sulayman and his political achievements deserve some attention. Although information about him in our sources is scanty and unclear, there is sufficient ground to believe that his policy was directed by his adviser, Raja` ibn Haiwah al-Kindi, a *mawla* (non-Arab) of the aristocratic South Arabian tribe of Kinda already influential under `Abd al-Malik and playing the role as the Umayyad's court theologian.[12] During Sulayman's reign, Raja` was one of the most influential personages and had a special relationship and high place of honor with Sulayman which no one else enjoyed. The Caliph placed complete trust in him and relied upon him.[13]

Suyuti, several centuries later, though he was careful to excuse himself from being flagrantly anachronistic by saying that the term "vizier" was not yet used at that time, nevertheless in his usage of it indicates how later ages viewed Raja` ibn Haiwa's position *vis-a-vis* the Umayyads.[14] M.A.Shaban has given due weight to Raja`'s role, pointing out that, despite Raja` services to `Abd al-Malik and al-Walid, his special position of power under Sulayman indicates that he was basically out of sympathy with the `Arab expansionist policies of the Qaysite party in the state, of which al-Hajjaj and Qutaybah were supreme examples. He also sees Raja` as a reformer, preparing the way for the more radical changes of policy in `Umar II's caliphate. Where Sulayman's policies had been ambiguous, Umar II's were clear and radical.[15] It is certain that the sudden death of Sulayman in 99A.H./717A.D. prevented him from drawing up his policy, but this was achieved under `Umar II with an element of experience

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[10] J.Wellhausen, *op. cit*., p.444 (quoting from Baladhuri, *op. cit*., p.436).
[11] Tabari, *Tarikh*, vol. II, p. 1274.
[12] C.E. Bosworth, "Raja` ibn Haywa al-Kindi and the Umayyad Caliphs", *The Islamic Quaterly*.   Islamic Culture Centre, London, no. 19, p.37.
[13] Ibn `Abd al-Hakam, *Sirah `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz*, Ahmad `Ubayd (ed.), Cairo, 1927, p.143.
[14] Bosworth, *op. cit*., p.44.
[15] M.A.Shaban, *op. cit*., pp.125-26, 130-31.

and continuity. Above all, Raja` was called the advisor of the caliph and such phrases as *khassa bihi*, in preference to others, or *hua al-ghalib `ala* (he is dominant) are mentioned in the Tarikh al-Ya`qubi.[16]

`Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz was in fact a capable caliph and a real Muslim statesman. Some modification had already been introduced during the reign of `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, who took religious duties seriously in that he was frequently accompanied by theologians. But the first Umayyad caliph really to think in theocratic terms was caliph `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz.  This caliph was inclined to draw logical inferences from his standpoints towards problems that had been taking shape over many years but had been left in abeyance.[17] Probably, his religious and political attitude was much affected by Raja` ibn Haiwah, his personal secretary, to whom he owed his succession. Raja` once said to him "If you desire to achieve salvation from the punishment of God, He is magnified and exalted then make desirable for the Muslims that which you have made desirable for yourself".[18]

Caliph `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz's financial and administrative changes, including the famous proclamation of fiscal policy circulated to provincial governors and the redressing of abuses in the local taxation systems, are stated in Sirah `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz by Ibn `Abd al-Hakam which has been penetratingly studied by H.A.R. Gibb "The Fiscal Rescript of `Umar II" (Arabica, ii, 1955). As noticed by Gibb, the Rescript avoids the term clients (*mawali*). It is understood that `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz was trying to establish a Muslim community without any discrimination .

According to the rescript, "wherefore, whoever accept Islam, whether Christian or Jew or Magian, of those who are now subject to the *jizyah*, and who forsakes his abode wherein he was before, he shall enjoy all the privileges of the Muslims and shall be subject to all the duties laid upon them; and they must associate with him and to treat his as one of themselves[19]." Muslims apparently had still to pay the land-tax, because otherwise the tax revenue would have been to seriously impaired.[20]

`Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz was succeeded by Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik in 101A.H./720A.D., in accordance witj Abd al-Malik's wasiat. But Yazid did not follow Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz's path, but preferred to maintain the old system of Arab domination.The old Sasanian system was still continued and practised in Khurasan during that time according to which there was a tax imposed on the land as well as on trade and other occupations.

There was also a *jizyah* imposed on every person, peasant or city dweller, between the ages of twenty and fifty, graded according to income. The nobility, the warriors, the priests and the civil servants were exempted from the *jizyah*. (poll-tax).[21] From the very beginning a land owner, either Arab or non-Arab, Muslim dan non-Muslim was supposed to pay *al-kharaj*, they certainly were not

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[16] Al-Ya`qubi, *Tarikh,* Beirut, 1960, vol.II, pp. 359, 369.

[17] B. Spuler, "The Age of the Caliph", *The Muslim World*, pt. I, tr. Bagley F.R.C., 1960, p. 47.

[18] Bosworth, *op. cit.*, p.75.

[19] H.A.R. Gibb, "The Fiscal Rescript of `Umar II", *Arabica*, vol.ii, 1955, p. 3.

[20] D.C. Dennet, *Conversion and the Poll-Tax in Early Islam*, Cambridge, 1950, p. 114.

[21] *Ibid.*, p.116.

paying al-Jizyah and that was precisely where the new reform of `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz declared the equality between the Arab and non-Arab Muslim in Khurasan. As a result, a series of revolts broke out in Iraq and also in Khurasan. One of the revolts was led by Yazid ibn al-Muhallab. This Yazid had been imprisoned for debt by `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz, because he was unable to pay off the statutory fifth of the booty of his last campaign in Gurgan and Tabaristan, but, at the end of `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz's reign he was able to escape from his imprisonment in Aleppo and came to Basra. From there he summoned South Arabian kinsmen, and many men from different tribes rallied around him. Tribesmen from Bakr, Tamim and Qays were among Yazid's spporters. Some of the Syrian troops in Iraq also sided with him. Yazid's movement gained more momentum when he was able to defeat `Adiyy ibn Art, the governor of Basra, who personally fell into Yazid's hand.[22]

Yazid announced *jihad* against the Umayyads as the enemies of religion; Yazid's revolt was against the expansionist policies which undertaken by al-Hajjaj and Qutaybah, and the use of Syrian troops in Iraq. However, there is no clear-cut evidence in our sources to indicate that Yazid's revolt was an attempt to supplant Umayyad rule by any other member of Bani Hashim, since he did not withdraw his allegiance from Yazid ibn Abd al-Malik (Yazid II).[23] Support was given neither by the tribesmen of Khurasan nor even Yazid's own kinsmen, Azd, to Yazid's revolt. It is reported that Azdites co-operated with the Tamimites to drive him from Khurasan.[24] Yazid II sent his best general, Maslamah ibn `Abd al-Malik to battle which took place on August 25, 720A.H./102A.D. near the village of al-Aqr between Wasit and Kufa. The rebels were routed and Yazid ibn al-Muhallab himself killed. A new governor was appointed to be in charge of Khurasan, Sa'id ibn abd al-`Aziz, who is said to be a weak and easy-going man. A strong and far sighted governor was needed to rule over Khurasan, especially at this crucial stage so that the arrival of Sa`id alarmed the Umayyad Government. As already mentioned, the Umayyad policy in Khurasan did not envisage the possibility of their settling down; Merve was used only as a winter camp and the rest of the year was spent active on the battlefield .

Marw as a part of the Sasanian empire, the social structure there was the Sasanian class system, under which the local nobility, *dahaqin*, enjoyed a very privileged position. The prosess of assimilation could hardly be achieved in these circumstances. Although some of the Iranians were converted, their social status does not seem to have changed because they were not integrated into the Arab community. The controlling class, *dahaqin*, still had their own privileges, and the assessment of taxation was in their hands. The need for settlement for the Arab warriors, *muqatilah*, on the other hand, and the loss of status for the local Iranian population on the other, created a menace of internal tension in Khurasan. `Umar II's policy was aimed at integration of the two communities into one Muslim community, encouraging settlement and stopping expeditions.  Since this policy would have led to the accelerated assimilation of the `Arab tribesmen in the Iranian population, and ultimately the power of *dahaqin*, they adopted a negative step by encouraging the central government to direct the tribesmen towards the battlefield.

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[22] M.A.Shaban, *op. cit*., p. 93.

[23] Kitab *al-`Uyun wa al-Hada`iq fi Akhbar al-Hawa`iq*, anon, J. de Goeje (ed.), Leiden, 1869, p. 16.

[24] Tabari, *Tarikh*, vol.II, p. 1390.

Sa`id's policy does not deviate much from the policy of `Umar II for he stayed on the defensive. It is reported that although he crossed the oxus twice, he did not advance beyond Samarqand.[25] This, of cause was against the Umayyad policy and *dahaqin*'s plans. Sa`id was replaced by other new governors, and eventually Nasr ibn Sayyar was appointed as a general governor of Khurasan during the time of Caliph Hisham. Although he belonged to the small tribe of Khurasan, he had a considerable following in Khurasan, and had the position of chief of Mudar in Khurasan.

The situation in Khurasan was affected by the factional tribal policy of the Umayyad Caliphs. By appointing Nasr ibn Sayyar as governor of Khurasan caliph Hisham was hoping to find a remedy for the serious situation there. Nasr's first action was to creat sub-governors all over Khurasan. The different sub-governors were accompanied by their own clans. Naturally, this plan was strongly opposed by the people of Khurasan who considered it an attempt to establish Arab rule rather than to settle their problems. A new fiscal reform was also introduced by Nasr in order to correct the abuses existing in the old system. Nasr noticed that the *dahaqin* were using their authority in the assessment and collection of taxes against the Muslims whose burdens of taxation were unjustly increased. He reclassified the *kharaj* (land tax) and put it in order, and then he assessed the tribute (*jizyah*) stipulated in the treaty of capitulation.

However, it was too late to reconcile the people to Umayyad rule. After the various experiments of the successive governors, the Arab settlers in Khurasan saw no hope in a complete change in the whole empire. Yusuf ibn `Umar, who was commissioned by Nasr ibn Sayyar to assess the system of taxation was aware of what was going on in the empire and tried to persuade the Caliph Hisham to dismiss Nasr ibn Sayyar. But the caliph continued to keep him in his governorship.

The situation in Khurasan changed after the death of caliph Hisham in 125/743. An apposition group appeared under the leadership of Ali al-Kirmani stationed at Masarjasan. Although Nasr ibn Sayyar won many Yamanites over and appointed them in administrative posts, `Ali al-Kirmani was able to defy his authority. A man of considerable prestige, Ali al-Kirmani is described by our sources as *shaykh al-Arab*. He commanded a considerable number of followers, mainly Yamanites. When he arrived at Masarjasan, he was joined by other tribesmen from the newcomers of Rabi`ah, Kindah and Mudar.[26]  In 126A.H./744A.D. Nasr ibn Sayyar succeeded in imprisoning Ali al-Kirmani and appointed Harb ibn `Amr al-Washiji leader of the Azd, but the latter was not able to cope with the task, and was replaced by Jamil ibn Mu`wan.  Meanwhile `Ali al-Kirmani had escaped from prison through a canal with the help of one of his slaves.

It seems that the dismissal of `Ali al-Kirmani by Nasr had gravely alarmed the Arab tribesmen in Khurasan. The Yamanites and their allies the Rabi`aites as well as certain Mudarites joined `Ali al-Kirmani.  `Ali al-Kirmani was subsequently recognized as governor of Khurasan by his followers and

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[25] *Ibid*., p. 1340.
[26] *Ibid*., p. 1927.

on this occasion he naturally got rid of his rival al-Harith ibn Surayj whom he killed in 128A.H./746 A.D., under Marwan II, the last of the Umayyad caliph.In 129A.H./747A.D., Nasr ibn Sayyar tried to enter Merv by sendirng successive expeditions from Nishapur, but all were defeated by `Ali al-Kirmani. Suddenly, Abu Muslim al-Khurasani appeared and openly sided with `Ali al-Kirmani, regarding the latter in opposition to the Umayyads.

Abu Muslim, `Abd al-Rahman ibn Muslim al-Khurasani, was one of the loyal Abbasid army commander who belonged to one of the extremist wings of the Shi`a.[27] After proclaiming the revolt in 129A.H./747A.D. in the name of the *al-rida min Al Muhammad*, the Prophet's family who would be acceptable to all, and to establish the Holy Qur`an and the sunnah of the Prophet, Abu Muslim entrenched himself in the Khuzaite village of Safidhanj and sent *da`is*, propagandists, to the surrounding villages and cities to announce the battle cry of the revolt, and to rally the Abbasid partisans.[28] Significantly, after a month or so he was joined by about 7000 men from Khurasan whose names and their villages were registered in the *diwan*.[29] This is one of the very obvious examples of Abbasid plan to eliminate tribal antagonism among their followers. On Thursday of Jumada II 130A.H./14 February 748A.D., Abu Muslim entered Merv and summoned his followers to pay allegiance in public to the Abbasids.

It was at this time that the Abbasid movement suffered a heavy blow through the death of its leader, Ibrahim al-Imam. The question arises as to whether Ibrahim al-Imam had in fact nominated his brother, Abu al-Abbas as his successor. According to a tradition in al-Tabari, the name of Bani al-Abbas was proclaimed when *da`is* unfurled the banners at the very beginning of the revolts; but the name of Imam was not mentioned. It is also reported in the same source that Ibrahim al-Imam had appointed Abu al-Abbas, Abdullah ibn Muhammad, as his successor shortly before his death.[30] However, Abu Muslim is said to have paid homage to the sons of al-Abbas.

It is worth noting that Shi`ite concept is that the office of the Caliphate must be occupied by an imam, who by then had both secular and religious powers. The *Khurasaniyyah*, the Abbasid supporters in Khurasan, envisaged a caliph with very limited religious and secular powers. Finally, the *Khurasaniyyah* took matters in their own hands and forced the selection of the Abbasid, Abu al-Abbas al-Saffah as the new Caliph. The latter soon appointed Abu Salamah al-Khallal, the Shi`ite leader, as his *wazir*, chief minister, but with great anxiety, because it could only mean restrictions on his secular power.  It is very easy to understand how the Abbasids were deviating from the Shi`ite perception of caliph.

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[27] Abu Muslim, `Abd al-Rahman ibn Muslim al-Khurasani was the disciple of the Shi`ite leader, al-Mughira ibn Sa`id. In the year 124/741 he joined the `Abbasid revolutionary movement led by Ibrahim al-Imam and became the most prominent `Abbasid military leader.

For detail of the nature of the `Abbasid movement, especially the formative stages of this movement, see *Akhbar al-Dawlah al-`Abbasiyyah* or *Akhbar al-`Abbas wa waladihi*, anon, Beirut, 1971; B.Lewis, art.  "`Abbasids". *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, Leiden, 1954; M.A.Shaban, *op. cit*., pp. 138-68.

[29] Tabari, *Tarikh*, vol.II, p. 1969.

[30] *Ibid*., p. 42.

The title "al-Saffah", variously taken to mean "the blood thirsty" or "the generous" was used as regional title by Abu al-`Abbas himself - "It was assigned to him by later historians, whose sense of order and propriety that the first Abbasid, like all his successors, should have a regional title of some sort".[31] Abu al-Abbas's power was very limited and such an assumed title would have added an undesirable shade to his power. The principle of the division of power between the caliph and *wazir* was certainly an innovation of the Revolution.[32] When Abu al-`Abbas ordered Abu Muslim to be killed in 132A.H./750A.D., allegedly for attempting to bring about the replacement of the Abbasids by the Alids, it made clear the trends of the Abbasid and their betrayal of the principle. Abu Muslim, after the death of Abu Salamah was still considered an influential personage in the Abbasid house.

The battle of the banks of the Zab in 132A.H./750A.D. in which Marwan II was defeated sealed the fate of the Umayyad Caliphate. He fled to Syria where he tried to organize further resistance, but in vain. The Abbasid army led by `Abdullah ibn `Ali pursued Marwan II into Egypt where he was killed. The authority of the new Abbasid Caliphate was now established all over the Middle East.

Conclusion

In summing up, the social and political justice of Islam applied by the Caliph `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz throughout his reign was exploited by the Abbasids to gain support from the people of Khurasan who were oppressed by the Umayyad rule and revolted. As a result, they succeeded in defying the Umayyads through revolution. The significance of the Abbasid Revolution can be seen clearly in the changes following its victory, mainly the complete assimilation of all members of the Muslim community, Arabs and non-Arabs into the empire. The transfer of the capital from Damascus to Baghdad had its significance namely the intersection of several trade-routes which could give real prosperity to the Abbasid Empire, and subsequently led to the remarkably rapid spread of Islam in the East, including the Malay Archipelago.

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[31] B.Lewis, "The Regnal Title of the First `Abbasid Caliph", in *Dr. Zahir Hussain Presentation Volume*, New Delhi, 1968, p. 15.
[32] M.A. Shaban, *op., cit*., p. 167.

Notes

[1]   Al-Jahiz, (1958),*al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin*, Cairo, vol.III, p. 336.

[2]   B. Lewis, (1950), *The Arabs in History*, Hutchinson University Library, London, pp. 80-81.

[3]   M.A. Shaban, *The `Abbasid Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p.21.

[4]   *Ibid.*

[5]   J. Wellhausen, (1927), *The Arab Kingdom and Its Fall*, tr. M.G. Meir, Calcutta, p. 441.

[6]   Al-Baladhuri, (1886), *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan*, N.J. de Goeje (ed.), Leiden, p. 335.

[7]   Hephthalite (*hayatilah*) were the nomadic tribes of Iranian origin from Central Asia. They appeared for the first time in the 4th century among the armies of the later Kushans, helping them against the Aasanians. Soon they became the successors to Kushan.

[8]   H.A.R. Gibb, (1923), *The Arab Conquests of Central Asia*, London, p. 15

[9]   Al-Baladhuri, *op. cit*., p.410; al-Tabari, *Tarikh,* vol.II, p.18; Gibb, *op. cit*.p.17.

[10]   J.Wellhausen, *op. cit*., p.444 (quoting from Baladhuri*, op. cit*., p.436).

[11]   Tabari, *Tarikh*, vol. II, p. 1274.

[12]   C.E. Bosworth, "Raja` ibn Haywa al-Kindi and the Umayyad Caliphs", *The Islamic Quarterly*. Islamic Culture Centre, London, no. 19, p.37.

[13]   Ibn `Abd al-Hakam, (1927), *Sirah `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz*, Ahmad `Ubayd (ed.), Cairo, p.143.

[14]   Bosworth, *op. cit*., p.44.

[15]   M.A.Shaban, *op. cit*., pp.125-26, 130-31.

[16]   Al-Ya`qubi, 1960), *Tarikh,* Beirut, vol.II, pp. 359, 369.

[17]   B. Spuler, (1960), "The Age of the Caliph", *The Muslim World*, pt. I, tr. Bagley F.R.C., p. 47.

[18]   Bosworth, *op. cit*., p.75.

[19]   H.A.R. Gibb, (1955), "The Fiscal Rescript of `Umar II", *Arabica*, vol.ii, p. 3.

[20]   D.C. Dennet, *Conversion and the Poll-Tax in Early Islam*, Cambridge, 1950, p. 114.

[21]   *Ibid*., p.116.

[22]   M.A.Shaban*, op. cit*., p. 93.

[23]   Kitab *al-`Uyun wa al-Hada`iq fi Akhbar al-Hawa`iq*, anon, J. de Goeje (ed.), Leiden, 1869, p..

[24]   Tabari, *Tarikh*, vol.II, p. 1390.

[25]   *Ibid*., p. 1340.

[26]   *Ibid*., p. 1927.

[27]   Abu Muslim, `Abd al-Rahman ibn Muslim al-Khurasani was the disciple of the Shi`ite leader, al-   Mughira ibn Sa`id. In the year 124/741 he joined the `Abbasid revolutionary movement led by Ibrahim al-Imam and became the most prominent `Abbasid military leader.

[28]   For detail on the nature of the `Abbasid movement, especially the formative stages of this movement, see *Akhbar al-Dawlah al-`Abbasiyyah* or *Akhbar al-`Abbas wa waladihi*, anon, Beirut, 1971; B.Lewis, "`Abbasids". *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, Leiden, 1954; M.A.Shaban, *op. cit*., pp. 138-68.

[29]   Tabari, *Tarikh*, vol.II, p. 1969.

[30]   *Ibid*., p. 42.

[31]   B. Lewis,(1968), "The Regnal Title of the First `Abbasid Caliph", in *Dr. Zahir Hussain Presentation Volume*, New Delhi, p. 15.

[32]   M.A. Shaban, *op., cit*., p. 167

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