Published: December 15, 1982
Last Updated: May 3, 2018

ʿABBASID CALIPHATE

ʿ**ABBASID CALIPHATE** in Iran. The aim of the present article is not to give a chronological history of Persia under ʿAbbasid rule but to examine some of the main trends affecting the political, religious, and cultural development of Persia during the period when ʿAbbasid rule was effective there—essentially from the middle of the 2nd/8th century to the opening decades of the 4th/10th century.

The establishment of the ʿAbbasid dynasty in 132/750 was, of course, en event especially closely linked with Persia; for the ʿAbbasid *daʿva* or propaganda made in the name of "a member of the House of the Prophet who shall be pleasing to everyone" (*al-reża men āl Moḥammad*) had its origins and first successes in eastern Persia. At least one of the principal agents of the revolution was a Persian, Abū Moslem Ḵorāsānī. (The ethnic origin of the other great leader of the *daʿva,* Abū Salama Ḵallāl, is obscure; but, since he was a freedman or *mawlā,* the possibility of a Persian origin for him too can not be excluded.) The town and oasis of Marv in northern Khorasan, far from the bases of Omayyad power in Syria and Iraq's garrison cities, was the epicenter of this ʿAbbasid propaganda; and it was from here that the victorious forces of Abū Moslem marched westward via Ray and Jebāl to the plains of Iraq and the defeat of Omayyad forces there.

Thus an older generation of scholars made an apparently obvious deduction, that the ʿAbbasid revolution was more than a mere change of dynasty, the replacement in the caliphate of one Meccan family, the Banū Omayya, by another related one from the common stock of ʿAbd Manāf, the Banū Hāšem,

but rather the outcome of a struggle for the whole future orientation of Islamic culture, religious policy, and intellectual development. The old Arab kingdom of the Rightly Guided caliphs and the Omayyads, with its domination of the conquered lands by a military aristocracy of free Arabs (the *moqātela*), its democratic caliph presiding over what has been called a "supertribe" of the Muslims like a Beduin *sayyed* in the Arabian desert, and its social subordination of the *mawālī* or clients from the conquered races (a good proportion of whom were Persians who had come over to the new faith), was now swept away. Under the ʿAbbasids, it was the Khorasanian guards of the caliphs who had the dominant place in the army; and Persian officials and secretaries, as well as military commanders, played an increased role in shaping and guiding the state apparatus. Prominent Persian families filled the vizierate and the chief secretarial posts for long periods. The caliphate lost its democratic character and assumed something of the nature of a despotic theocracy; access to the sovereign became more difficult, and the pomp and ceremony which we often consider a concomitant of oriental monarchy, and which the Persians had already known for over a millennium, increased. It is true that Arabic retained its prestige as the language of all Islamic literature and scholarship, while the New Persian disappeared underground, as it were, for literary purposes, until the late 3rd/9th century. But the spirit and form of certain genres of Arabic literature, above all that of *adab* (the literature of polite society), became clearly imbued with Persian influences. Subsequent writers of the ʿAbbasid period felt something of all this. Thus in the 4th/10th century it was remarked of the second ʿAbbasid caliph, Manṣūr (136-58/754-75): "He was the first caliph who utilized his freedmen and famuli (*mawālīyaho wa-ḡelmānaho*) for official posts, appointing them to important offices and preferring them over the Arabs. Other, later caliphs of his line followed the example; hence the Arabs lost the chief commands, their preeminence disappeared, and their previous dignities vanished" (Masʿūdī, *Morūǰ* VIII, pp. 292-93; idem, ed. Pellat, V, p. 3446).

It is not surprising that Julius Wellhausen, some seventy years ago, saw the superseding of the Omayyads as the "decline and fall of the Arab kingdom." This process Arnold Toynbee has more recently viewed as the ʿAbbasid caliphate reconstituting the ancient "Syriac society," one which embraced both the Semitic peoples of the Near East and the Iranian ones; while Gaston Wiet has spoken of "l'empire néo-byzantin des Omayyades et l'empire néo-sassanide des Abbasides." Indeed, in the 19th century the change of regime had even been viewed in more cosmic terms, as a victory of Aryan Iranians

over Semitic Arabs.

Recent research on the origins of the ʿAbbasid *daʿva* has not supported such dichotomies but rather has supported a more graduated picture of the evolution of early Islamic political and cultural life. The development of a divinely buttressed theocratic caliphate certainly took place under the ʿAbbasids, and it owed much of its ethos and its trappings to Persian models. But this was perhaps a reaffirmation of the theocratic monarchy which had been common to nearly all the ancient Near East, from Egypt to Persia, with the exception of the Arabian peninsula. Moreover, these trends in the caliphate toward a more centralized state apparatus are already discernible in the later Omayyad period under such a forceful ruler as Hešām (105-25/724-43), and would probably have continued inexorably as tighter control over an overexpanded empire became necessary. The part of ethnic Persians in the actual revolution has also been subjected to close scrutiny by recent authorities such as M. A. Shaban. The origins of messianic Shiʿism among the Arabs of Kūfa and lower Iraq have long been recognized, and it seems too that the representatives or *noqabāʾ* (sing. *naqīb*) of the ʿAbbasid secret organization in Persia in the 740s were mainly Arabs. The revolution achieved its first successes in the Marv oasis, where many Arab tribesmen, especially those accounted Yemeni in genealogy, had settled and had intermarried with and become partly assimilated to the indigenous Persian population. (These seem to be the *Ahl-e Bayt al-taqādom*, "early settlers," of Ṭabarī; 2,200 of them joined Abū Moslem in 129/747 when first he unfurled the ʿAbbasid black banners in a village of the oasis settled by Arabs of Ḵozāʿa.) Their dissatisfaction with the Omayyad regime arose from the fact of their increased identification with the economic and agrarian interests of local Khorasanian society, their reluctance to rally to the colors for arduous campaigns in places like Central Asia and Afghanistan, and their new, unfavorable fiscal position, since they were subject to the local Persian landowners, the *dehqān*s, who collected the taxation for the area as a whole. Against this discrimination (as the proud Arabs saw it), Abū Moslem, whose own early background and ethnic origins remain very obscure, emphasized the common bond of Khorasanian Muslim identity among all who supported the ʿAbbasid cause, whether partly assimilated Arabs or Persian *mavālī*. When he began assembling his forces, he registered on his *dīvān* all participants in the *daʿva* by locality and not by tribe.

The movement which brought the ʿAbbasids to power may be regarded as a

general, Khorasanian one, in which adherence to Islam and to the claims of the house of ʿAbbās were the criteria for membership. (The views of those who held a differing view of Hāšemī rights, as properly centering on the house of ʿAlī, were soon set aside by the victorious partisans of the ʿAbbasids.) For some eighty years, the Khorasanian guards or *ǰond* of the caliphs were to be the military support of the regime from their bases in the heartland of the caliphate, Iraq, while the old Arab tribal levies fell into disuse. These forces from eastern Persia were ethnically mixed, and "Khorasanian" referred to place of origin rather than to race. Their identification with the interests of the new state was fully recognized by the ʿAbbasids, under whom they rejoiced in the designation of *abnāʾ al-dawla*, "Sons of the Dynasty." In the *Resāla fi'l-ṣaḥāba* of Ebn al-Moqaffaʿ, we find explicit recognition of their mixed nature, comprising imperious leaders and turbulent soldiery, accompanied by a paean to their military qualities: "These soldiers [sc. the *ǰond* of the men from Khorasan] are an army whose like has never been known in Islam, and who possess such qualities that God, if he wills, can bring their usefulness to the pitch of perfection. They possess discipline and obedience, are well regarded by the populace at large, are honest and chaste, avoid evildoing and show themselves submissive to their leaders" (C. Pellat, *Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, mort vers 140/757, "conseilleur" du calife*, Paris, 1976, p. 23, sec. 10). Their services contributed much to the victory of Maʾmūn, who commanded the human and material resources of Persia from his governorate in Marv, over his brother Amīn in 198/813, the latter's cause being identified with that of the Arabs of Iraq and Syria. Only when Moʿtaṣem (218-27/833-42) expanded the recruitment of professional soldiers and slaves from the Turkish steppes and from North Africa were the Khorasanian guards eclipsed.

The migration westward of Khorasanian soldiers, both Arab and Persian, as the military supporters of the ʿAbbasid regime, was paralleled by an increase in the numbers of Persians within the ranks of the administration of the caliphate. Now that the Islamic empire had in general reached the limits of its geographical expansion, a complex bureaucracy became necessary for directing the *dīvān*s or government departments of the central government and for keeping up links with local governors in the provinces; thus Manṣūr developed and expanded the *barīd* or postal and intelligence system to a new pitch of efficiency. In Iraq and Persia, the role of Persian *mavālī* was notable in this service. Through the expanding class of secretaries (*kottāb*), many of whom were imbued with the lore of the older Sasanian *dabīrān* or secretaries, certain Persian concepts in administration (*tadbīr*) and in polite society and

literature (*adab*) gradually became part of the common fabric of Islamic culture. One illustration of this assimilation is the subsequently developing literary genre of "mirrors for princes," with its antecedents in the Persian *andarznāma*s, books of counsel.

The men whom the first ʿAbbasids took as their chief executives naturally tended to come from the ranks of the adherents to their cause in the revolutionary period, such as the Barmakī family, or else from socially obscure personal freedmen of the caliphs, such as Manṣūr's *mawlā* Rabīʿ b. Yūnos. It is now that the specific office of the vizierate develops under the explicit name of *vezāra*. Though formerly it was surmised that the institution and its name were direct borrowings from Sasanian Persian practice, under which it was believed that a chief justiciar (cf. Mid. Pers. *wizīr* "decision") had existed, it now appears that the office has its roots in early Arabic practice; already in Qurʾān, Hārūn or Aaron is described as the *vazīr* "helper" of Mūsā or Moses. More relevant to our present purpose is the subsequent history of the institution and its development to such a position that, when the caliph personally was a weak character, as happened frequently in the late 3rd/8th and 4th/10th centuries, the vizier might well become the real wielder of power in the state.

Of the many Persian holders of the office, the Barmakids spring to mind first of all. Influential during the first ʿAbbasid reigns, for seventeen years of Hārūn al-Rašīd's reign (170-87/786-803) they held the substance of power. They left behind, after their sudden fall, a semilegendary reputation as Maecenases and as furtherers of Persian domination within the state. The rise of the family well illustrates how participation in the events of the ʿAbbasid revolution could give an impetus which might take a family to the highest echelons of power. From an origin in the Buddhism of Bactria or northern Afghanistan, where the family had been hereditary custodians of the Buddhist shrine and monastery at Balḵ, they became clients or *mavālī* of the Arab tribe of Azd. Ḵāled b. Barmak distinguished himself as a lieutenant of Abū Moslem and then filled various high offices in the central government and in the provinces under the first four ʿAbbasid caliphs, thus launching his sons into commanding positions during the first part of Hārūn al-Rašīd's reign. After the dismissal of the Barmakids, their protégé, Faẓl b. Sahl b. Zādānfarroḵ (q.v.; d. 202/818), briefly achieved a comparable role in the counsels of Maʾmūn; of clearly Persian origin, as his grandfather's name shows, he had an Iraqi *mawlā* background, but made himself so valuable to Maʾmūn after the resolution of

the fratricidal war with Amīn in Maʾmūn's favor that he was awarded the title *ḏu'l-rīāsatayn*, that is, supreme command in both the civil and military spheres, as vizier and amir. Such recognition was perhaps not surprising; it was a time of civil warfare when the Arabic poets of Baghdad represented Maʾmūn and Fażl as enemies of the Arabs and, by inference, of Islam itself, within which the Arabs were the nation supremely favored by God.

This Persian influence exercised at the center of ʿAbbasid power, above all in Iraq, did not mean that Persia itself was quiescent and submissive to ʿAbbasid rule during these early centuries. In their ruthless rise to power, the ʿAbbasids made many enemies, elbowing people aside or else using and then discarding them. There were, inevitably, ʿAlid claimants who refused to accept the permanent exclusion of their family from the fruits of victory over the unrighteous Omayyads and from the imamate which they conceived as their own possession by a divine award. They burst out periodically into rebellions, in both the Arab and the Persian lands, which the ʿAbbasid forces usually suppressed without much difficulty. Nevertheless, the existence of this irreconcilable core of Shiʿite adherents, their numbers now including various millenarian and messianic elements which also felt cheated by the removal of Abū Moslem and by the ʿAbbasids' failure to establish a reign of justice on earth, posed a continued threat to the political and religious stability of the state. The ʿAbbasids' inability to establish a *modus vivendi* with the Shiʿa (despite the conciliatory policies of various individual caliphs) must have contributed to the ultimate disintegration of their secular power. Within Persia itself, the survival of a Shiʿi nucleus helped the formation in certain towns, such as Qom, Ray, Qazvīn, Nīšāpūr, of Shiʿi and Sayyed communities; these were to keep Shiʿism moderately prosperous and alive in Persia until the triumphant Safavids, several centuries later, imposed Shiʿism on the Sunnite majority as the official creed of the whole land.

Also of great historical significance was the power base established by the ʿAlids in the Caspian provinces, both in the coastal lowlands and in the Alborz mountains. In the wake of a local revolt (250/864) in Ṭabarestān against the fiscal exactions of the ʿAbbasids' Taherid governors in eastern Persia, a Ḥasanī ʿAlid from Ray, Ḥasan b. Zayd, was invited to the Caspian region. There was thus founded a redoubt of Zaydī Shiʿism which managed to hold its own against local Sunni opposition and to channel regional feeling against Arab and ʿAbbasid domination from an earlier adherence to the older faiths like Zoroastrianism into a fervent espousal of the cause of the Ahl-e Bayt.

Furthermore, this Shiʿism was carried to the peoples of Daylam, who had not been yet converted to Islam. And when, in the 4th/10th century, the mountaineers of Daylam and Kurdistan erupted into Persia and Iraq, a historical process still not satisfactorily explained, such Daylamī ruling families as the Buyids and Kakuyids, among others, brought with them their Shiʿism as an official creed.

In Omayyad times, the extremist egalitarian Kharejite schismatics among the Arabs settled in Iraq and Persia had frequently broken out into rebellion against a state which they regarded as unrighteous. The back of Kharejism, as a major threat to the security of the caliphate, had been broken by the great Omayyad generals of ʿAbd-al-Malek (65-86/685-705). But the continued existence of smaller Kharejite bands had contributed to the insecurity of Omayyad control in Iraq and Persia and had indirectly favored the progress of ʿAbbasid propaganda there. Whatever may have been the doctrinal connections between Kharejism of the Omayyad period and its post-750 manifestations, Kharejite activity in the eastern Persian countryside continued to present a periodic problem for the ʿAbbasid caliphs. In 179/795-96 there began in Khorasan and Sīstān the great Kharejite rebellion of Ḥamza b. Āḏarak or ʿAbdallāh, who defied Hārūn al-Rašīd and his successors for thirty years until his death in 213/828, himself claiming the title of “Commander of the Faithful.” Ḥamza’s revolt meant that a large part of eastern Persia for some decades ceased to forward revenue to Baghdad, and for certain outlying districts this stoppage had permanent results. Thus, although after Ḥamza’s death the *ḵoṭba* (Friday sermon) was restored to the name of the ʿAbbasids in Zarang, the capital of Sīstān, no taxation was henceforth sent to Iraq from there. (For a consideration of this rebellion and of the struggles for authority in Sīstān at this time between pro- and anti-ʿAbbasid forces, see C. E. Bosworth, *Sīstān under the Arabs, from the Islamic Conquest to the Rise of the Ṣaffārids [30-250/651-864]*, Rome, 1968.

Finally, the Persian countryside continued to be disturbed by various sectarian movements, some of a heterodox Islamic nature, but others harking back to the Iranian past and its faiths and beliefs; these outbreaks have been described in a classic study by Gh. H. Sadighi, *Les mouvements religieux iraniens au II^e et au III^e siècle de l’hégire*, Paris, 1938, to be supplemented now by B. S. Amoretti’s “Sects and Heresies” (*Camb. Hist. Iran* IV, pp. 481-519). Although the landowning classes or *dehqān*s had largely come over to orthodox, Sunni Islam (with the main exception of the Caspian provinces) and

had thereby achieved a solidarity of interest with the ʿAbbasid caliphate, the same degree of religious and political conformity did not apply to the masses of small-town and rural population. The old Sasanian state religion of Zoroastrianism remained strong in the more inaccessible, mountainous regions of Persia, such as Fārs, Azarbaijan, and Khorasan, where the geographers of the 4th/10th century mention fire temples as still in existence; and it was in the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries that the Zoroastrian communities showed a last burst of intellectual activity, copying their sacred books and composing polemics and apologies. Other currents of belief and thought, such as Mazdakism in northwest Persia and Manichean dualism among certain Persian-influenced circles of Iraq, remained vital and were liable to come to the surface as contributory strands in rebellions. Clearly, all these anti-ʿAbbasid outbreaks expressed a continued, nationalistic (if we may anticipate the modern usage of the term) Persian resentment of Arab-ʿAbbasid social and economic dominance, in which vaguely expressed messianic religious feelings might be combined with concrete grievances against new tax surveys or the state's appropriation of previously unalloted land, or against the Persian *dehqān* class and its estates.

Within a few years of the establishment of the ʿAbbasid caliphate, we hear of outbreaks in the Persian countryside, especially in the east. They begin with that of Sonbāḏ the Magian in 138/755-56, who preached a reformed Zoroastrianism but also gathered up discontented former adherents of Abū Moslem in Khorasan and the region of Ray before he was defeated. A decade or so later, Ostāḏsīs whipped up a revolt on the eastern fringes of Khorasan, the regions of Bādḡīs and Sīstān, before he was captured and killed. The rising in Transoxania, apparently with both urban and rural support, of Moqannaʿ, the "Veiled Prophet of Khorasan," attracted many elements of discontent, including the Abū Moslemīya, believers in metempsychosis, and above all, Mazdakite sympathizers, into the ranks of his followers (the so-called Wearers of White, *mobayyeża* or *espīd-ǰāmegān*), before his downfall in 162/778 or the following year. These and similar outbreaks, although suppressed, left behind sympathizers and former adherents who could be roused into action by a new messianic leader. Most prolonged and serious as a threat to the stability of the caliphate, because it affected western Persia and the regions bordering on the heartland of Iraq itself, was the rebellion of Bābak Ḵorramī and his Wearers of Red (*moḥammera*) or Those with Red Banners (*sorḵ-ʿalamān*). From 201/816-17 onward, Bābak stirred up existing socioreligious discontent and heterodoxy in Arrān and Azarbaijan, regions already mentioned in the sources as infested

with *moḥammera* sectaries, into a full-scale rising against the ʿAbbasid control in northwest Persia. The constituent elements of these Ḵorramīya or Ḵorram-dīnān seem to have been similar to those of earlier movements, with Mazdakite adherents and a certain emphasis on the part of women in activities clearly identifiable; socially, it seems to have set peasants and small landowners against the owners of large estates. It was certainly an anti-Islamic movement, and it engaged the attention of a succession of caliphal armies until it was put down in 222/837 and Bābak executed. Even thereafter, followers of Bābak kept alive expectations of his return until the 5th/11th century. The historical chronicles regularly mention local risings under pretended prophets or sectarian leaders, and peasant jacqueries, until the period of the Saljuqs. These must have served as a safety valve for rural and artisan discontent until the land of Persia was completely islamized and sectarianism largely channeled into messianic Shiʿism and Ismaʿilism, with their clear socioreligious content, or else into participation in Sufi orders and their activities.

Administratively, Persia remained for the first seventy years or so of the ʿAbbasid period under governors sent out from the capital, over whom the caliphs were able to exert a reasonably firm degree of control. Some of these governors achieved a favorable contemporary renown for their good administration, such as Faẓl b. Yaḥyā Barmakī in Jebāl, Armenia, and the Caspian area (176/792) and in Khorasan (178/794), where he was followed two years later by his brother Jaʿfar. Others, however, used their positions away from the center of power in the caliphate to exploit their provinces unmercifully, as did the Persian ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā b. Māhān in Khorasan (180-91/796-807); his maladministration there contributed, first, to the rebellion in Khorasan and Transoxania of the Arab Rāfeʿ b. Layṯ, and second, to the strength of Maʾmūn's support in the east at the time of the fratricidal war.

With the appointment in 205/821 of Ṭāher b. Ḥosayn Ḏu'l-yamīnayn as governor in all the caliphal lands east of Iraq, that is, of the whole Iranian world and its far eastern fringes, we enter a period in which certain families were able to establish hereditary lines of governors. The rise of Ṭāher's family was typical of the advance of the Khorasanian *mavālī* class in the service of the early ʿAbbasids. Although the family later attempted to connect itself, through an early bond of patronage (*velāya*), with the Arab tribe of Ḵozāʿa, it stemmed in reality from the region of Herat and eastern Khorasan. The ʿAbbasids were

content, after Ṭāher's early death, to appoint his sons and other members of the family to the governorship of Khorasan; and the Taherids were equally firmly entrenched in offices and sources of wealth in the capital, Baghdad, and other parts of Iraq. They held on to these positions long after the loss of Khorasan to the Saffarids in 259/873. The Taherids have often been viewed as protagonists of Persian self-assertiveness against the constraints of a caliphate beginning to lose control over the peripheries of its empire, the first provincial dynasty to assert its autonomy; but this attitude seems based on a misunderstanding of the constitutional position of the Taherids. The ʿAbbasids certainly found it convenient to appoint successive Taherids to Persia, relying on their proved experience and loyalty. This practice gave good government to much of Persia at a time when, toward the middle of the 3rd/9th century, the political and military position within Baghdad itself tended to become unstable. The Taherids, for their part, paid meticulous respect to the constitutional rights of the caliphate, fully acknowledging the caliphs' overlordship on their coinage and in the *ḵoṭba* and regularly sending tribute to Baghdad. They thus represent very clearly the Persian aristocratic landowning class, fully assimilated to Islamic ways and society and seeing their fortunes as bound up with the continued flourishing of the ʿAbbasids.

It was not until the second half of the 3rd/9th century that clear signs of disintegration within the caliphate and a relaxation of its control over the outlying provinces became readily apparent. About 279/892 the caliph Moʿtamed appointed one of his commanders, Moḥammad b. Abu'l-Sāǰ Dīvdād, from a *dehqān* family of Ošrūsana in Transoxania, to be governor of Azarbaijan and Armenia. For nearly forty years these provinces remained under the control of Sajid governors, but with the rights of the caliphate frequently flouted (e.g., tribute was withheld). After the ending of the Sajid line in 317/929, northwest Persia fell under the control of local Persian potentates, including Kurds and Daylamites, who had no loyally to such *fainéants* in Baghdad as Moqtader and his successors.

However, a much greater cataclysm for the future of caliphal control had taken place over half a century before, in southern and eastern Persia, with the meteoric rise of the Saffarid brothers. From their home base in Sīstān, they erected a vast, if transient, military empire. In the late decades of the 3rd/9th century, it embraced Sīstān, much of Khorasan, Kermān, and Fārs, and even threatened Iraq for a while, before the outstretched empire collapsed with the defeat of ʿAmr b. Layṯ and the contraction of Saffarid rule to Sīstān itself.

Yaʿqūb b. Layṯ overthrew the Taherids in Nīšāpūr in 359/873; for some time, until the Saffarids came out on top there, Khorasan became the prey of various military adventurers who might, for their immediate interests, claim to be acting as representatives of the caliphate but who in reality aimed only at their own aggrandizement. After the Saffarid interim, Khorasan was to pass in the early 4th/10th century to the Persian family of the Samanids of Bokhara; they were to respect in form what by now was becoming the "caliphal fiction" of subordination to Baghdad and to the caliph as delegator of all power, while in practice behaving as a largely independent power on these far northeast fringes of the Islamic world. Moqtader, for his part, did not give up hope of retaining southern Persia, for the shrinkage of direct ʿAbbasid control over territory and the caliphs' increasing inability to extract tribute from provincial governors were necessarily having a disastrous effect on the income and financing of the caliphate. As late as 318/930 Moqtader appointed his son Hārūn governor of Fārs, Kermān, Sīstān, and Makrān; but we have no records, historical or numismatic, that the ʿAbbasid authority was ever enforced again in these regions or any revenue collected. Indeed, from the time of the first eruption of the Saffarids outside Sīstān at some date before 252/866, all the caliphs had been able to do in the disaffected provinces had been to sow discord between rival claimants to power in Persia by the dispatch of investiture patents for the governorship of the provinces concerned.

From the social and cultural point of view, the rise of the plebeian Saffarids marks for all of Persia (with the exception of Khorasan under the Samanids and Transoxania) a great inroad into the tacit alliance which had prevailed for over a century between the ʿAbbasid caliphate and the Persian landed aristocracy as the representatives of the caliphs' moral authority and the enforcers of Sunnite orthodoxy against sectarianism and outbreaks of socioreligious discontent. The identification of interest accounts for the very favorable picture which we derive from the historical and *adab* literary sources of such lines as the Taherids and the Samanids, eventual heirs of the Taherids in Khorasan, as God-fearing governors and rulers, exercising a just and benevolent rule over their *raʿīya* or subjects. The Saffarids, on the other hand, are denigrated as ignorant graspers after naked power, hostile to true religion, or influenced by sectarian beliefs such as Kharejism and even Ismaʿilism. It is true that the early Saffarids did not conciel their contempt for the caliphs: "He [Yaʿqūb b. Layṯ] used often to say that the ʿAbbasids had based their rule on wrongdoing and trickery: ʿHave you not seen what they did to Abū Salama, Abū Moslem, the Barmakīs, and Fażl b. Sahl, despite everything

which these men had done on the dynasty's behalf? Let no one ever trust them!'" (*Tārīḵ-e Sīstān*, pp. 267-68). The first Buyids, admittedly from the impoverished and culturally backward Caspian highlands of Daylam and supporters of Zaydī and then Twelver Shiʿism, tended also to be regarded with suspicion by the chroniclers, though they had to admit the virtues of such rulers as ʿEmād-al-dawla and ʿAżod-al-dawla; the latter, in particular, very much approximated the beau ideal of an Islamic ruler.

With the domination in Baghdad of a series of Turkish commanders bearing the title of *amīr-al-omarāʾ*, from the latter part of Moqtader's caliphate onward, and the installation of the Buids in west and central Persia, then in Iraq, the ʿAbbasids' direct political power was restricted to the Savād, the agricultural region around Baghdad; they possessed no authority over Persia itself. As in pre-Islamic imperial Persian times, Iraq was now an appendage of a power based essentially in western Persia and no longer the center of the universal Islamic empire. Yet the moral authority of the ʿAbbasids survived intact, despite their political eclipse during the "Daylami intermezzo" (as Minorsky called this period), as imams or leaders of the community of Sunni faithful. The Shiʿite Buyids, perhaps recognizing that Shiʿism was as yet the creed of only a small minority in Persia and Iraq, found it expedient to leave the ʿAbbasids in Baghdad as spiritual heads of the Islamic world, and even protected their claims against the ʿAbbasids' rivals in Egypt and southern Syria, the Ismaʿili Shiʿite Fatimids. Persian dynasties, e.g., the Buyids, Ziarids, and Samanids, and then Turkish ones within the Iranian world, e.g., the Ghaznavids, Qarakhanids, and Saljuqs, sought the external marks of caliphal approval for their power by grants of honorific titles (*alqāb*) and investiture charters for their lands. It was ostensibly in the interests of the ʿAbbasids and for their rescue from Buyid tutelage that Ṭoḡrel Beg's Saljuq forces entered Baghdad in 447/1055. The control exercised by the Saljuq sultans proved in practice to be as onerous for the caliphs as the yoke of the Buyids. Sultan Malekšāh, shortly before his death in 485/1092, even contemplated deposing the caliph Moqtadī and setting his own nominee on the throne in Baghdad.

Despite all these ups and downs, the ʿAbbasids continued to reign, surviving the cyclical rising and falling of secular rulers in various degree inimical to the caliphal interests. As the Great Saljuqs became involved in internecine succession warfare during the 6th/12th century and their empire became subject to the rival pressures of semi-independent atabeg dynasties in Persia, Armenia, and Syria, the effective political power of the ʿAbbasids revived *pari*

passu with Saljuq decline. The process began with the capable Mostaršed (512-29/1118-35) and became especially marked during the long and successful reign of Nāṣer (576-622/1180-1225). Nāṣer's politics embraced the whole of the Islamic estate, being aimed at checking the ambitions of the expansionist Ḵʷārazmšāhs through encouragement first of the Ghuris of Afghanistan and then of the Qara Ḵeṭāy in Transoxania. He tried to restore the caliphate to something like its old primacy in the comity of Islamic powers; both Sunni and Shiʿi rulers were conciliated. Several of these (including the Ghuris and even, after Nāṣer's own death, the Ḵʷārazmšāhs) were enrolled in the chivalric order of the *fotovva* (q.v.) under his supreme egis. The ultimate failure, a few decades later, of the ʿAbbasids in Iraq and western Persia, arouse not from any failure of nerve or decline in personal qualities on the part of the caliphs, but from the injection into Middle Eastern politics of an entirely new and unforeseeable factor, the Mongol invasions.

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