

THE UMAYYADS

The First Muslim Dynasty

(The Marwanids)



Nabil Ben Aly



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MEDICINE FOR THE HEARTS AND SOULS

Islamic History

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الأمويون

بداية الخلافة الوراثية

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Introduction

The **Umayyads** are members of the Umayyad family - also known as the Banu Abd-Shams- and together with Prophet Muhammad, both descended from a common ancestor, Abd Manaf ibn Qusai. Both originally came from the city of Mecca. Muhammad [saw] descended from Abd Manāf via his son Hashim, while the Umayyads descended from Abd Manaf via a different son, Abd-Shams, whose son was Umayya. The two families are therefore considered to be different clans - those of Hashim and of Umayya, respectively- of the same tribe (Quraish). The **Umayyad Empire** or **Caliphate** was founded by Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan, who had long been the governor of Syria. In 656, the **First Fitna** (*fitna is used as term for any of the four heavy civil wars within the Islamic Caliphate from the 7th to the 9th century AD*) took place during the final years of Uthman's caliphate, when Uthman was accused of nepotism and eventually killed by rebels. After Uthman's assassination, Ali was elected the fourth caliph. Aisha, Talha, and Zubayr revolted against Ali to depose him. The two parties fought the **Battle of the Camel** in December 656, in which Ali emerged victorious. Afterwards, Mu'awiya, the incumbent governor of Syria, declared war on Ali ostensibly to avenge Uthman's death. The two parties fought the **Battle of Siffin** in July 657 which ended in stalemate and a call for arbitration, which was resented by the Kharijites. In the meantime,

Mu'awiya seized control of Egypt with the aid of Amr ibn al-As. In 661, Ali was assassinated by one of the Kharijite and following Ali's death, his heir, Hasan, was elected caliph and soon after attacked by Mu'awiya. The embattled Hasan concluded a peace treaty, acknowledging the rule of Mu'awiya. In 661, Muawiya officially founded the new caliphate, the Umayyad Caliphate and ruled as its first caliph. The Umayyad Caliphate was the second of four Islamic caliphates and was founded in Arabia after the Prophet Muhammad's death. The Umayyad Caliphate became one of the major political, cultural, and scientific centers of the early medieval world. Muawiya named his dynasty the "Sons of Umayya" after a common ancestor he shared with the Prophet Muhammad. The Umayyad family had been one of the major combatant clans in the **Battle of Badr** (624 AD), the decisive battle between Muhammad and his followers on the one hand, and the powerful clans of Mecca on the other. The Umayyads ruled the Islamic world for more than 90 years, from 661 to 750 AD. Their capital was in the city of Damascus. The shift in power to Damascus, the Umayyad capital city, was to have profound effects on the development of Islamic history. For one thing, it was a tacit recognition of the end of an era. The first four caliphs had been without exception Companions of the Prophet – pious, sincere men who had lived no differently from their neighbors and who preserved the simple habits of their ancestors despite the massive influx of wealth from the conquered territories. Even 'Uthman, whose policies had such a

divisive effect, was essentially dedicated more to the concerns of the next world than of this. With the shift to Damascus much was changed, and the Umayyads became the first Muslim dynasty — that is, they were the first rulers of the Islamic Empire to pass down power within their family. The Umayyads also began the process of spreading Islam throughout Asia, Africa, and Europe. They moved into Persia and Central Asia, converting the rulers of key Silk Road oasis cities such as Merv and Sistan. They also reached what is now Pakistan, beginning the process of conversion in that area that would continue for centuries. Umayyad troops also crossed Egypt and brought Islam to the Mediterranean coast of Africa, from whence it would disperse south across the Sahara along caravan routes until much of West Africa became Muslim. However, during these early days of Islam, the extension of Islamic rule had been based on an uncomplicated desire to spread the Word of God. Although the Muslims used force when they met resistance, they did not compel their enemies to accept Islam. On the contrary, the Muslims permitted Christians and Jews to practice their own faith and numerous conversions to Islam were the result of exposure to a faith that was simple and inspiring. With the advent of the Umayyads, however, secular concerns and the problems inherent in the administration of what, by then, was a large empire began to dominate the attention of the caliphs, often at the expense of religious concerns — a development that disturbed many devout Muslims.

This is not to say that religious values were ignored; on the contrary, they grew in strength for centuries. But they were not always at the forefront and from the time of Mu'awiyah the caliph's role as "Defender of the Faith" increasingly required him to devote attention to the purely secular concerns which dominate so much of every nation's history. Nevertheless, Mu'awiyah was never able to reconcile the opposition to his rule nor solve the conflict with the Shi'is, the partisans of the assassinated Caliph Ali. These problems were not unmanageable while Mu'awiyah was alive, but after he died in 680 the partisans of 'Ali resumed a complicated but persistent struggle that plagued the Umayyads at home for most of the next seventy years and in time spread into North Africa and Spain. There were numerous rebellions against the Umayyads, as well as splits within the Umayyad ranks, which notably included the rivalry between Yaman and Qays. Allegedly, The Sunnis killed Ali's son Hussein and his family at the **Battle of Karbala** in 680, solidifying the Shi'a-Sunni split. The Umayyads, however, did manage to achieve a degree of stability, particularly after 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan succeeded to the caliphate in 685. Between 685 and 705AD, the Umayyad Caliphate reached its apex of power and prestige. Its armies conquered areas from Spain the west to Sindh in what is now India. One after another, additional Central Asian cities fell to the Muslim armies - Bukhara, Samarkand, Khwarezm, Tashkent, and Fergana. This rapidly expanding empire had a postal system, a form of banking based on credit,

and some of the most beautiful architecture ever seen. The last great Umayyad caliph was Hisham, the fourth son of 'Abd al-Malik to succeed to the caliphate. His reign was long – from 724 to 743 – and during it the Arab empire reached its greatest extent. But neither he nor the four caliphs who succeeded him were the statesmen the times demanded when, in 747, Abbasid revolutionaries in Khorasan unfurled the black flag of rebellion that would bring the Umayyad Dynasty to an end. The Umayyads, during the ninety years of their leadership, rarely shook off their empire's reputation as a *mulk* – that is, a worldly kingdom – and in the last years of the dynasty, their opponents formed a secret organization devoted to pressing the claims to the caliphate put forward by a descendant of al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib, an uncle of the Prophet. By skillful preparation, this organization rallied to its cause many mutually hostile groups in Khorasan and Iraq and proclaimed Abu al-Abbas caliph. Marwan ibn Muhammad, the last Umayyad caliph (reigned 744–750), was defeated at the Battle of the **Great Zāb River** (750) and the Syrians, still loyal to the Umayyads, were put to rout. In 749, religious leaders proclaimed a new caliph, Abu al-Abbas al-Saffah, who became the founder of the Abbasid Caliphate. Subsequently, members of the Umayyad house were hunted down and killed, but one of the survivors, Abd al-Raḥmān, escaped and established himself as a Muslim ruler in Spain (756), founding the dynasty of the Umayyads in Córdoba. The decline that led to the fall of the Empire began with

the disastrous defeat of the Syrian army by the Byzantine emperor Leo III (the Isaurian; 717). Then the fiscal reforms of the pious ʿUmar II (reigned 717–720), intended to mollify and pacify the increasingly discontented *mawālī* (non-Arab Muslims) by placing all Muslims on the same footing without respect of nationality, led to the financial crisis, while the recrudescence of feuds between southern (Kalb) and northern (Qays) Arab tribes seriously reduced military power. Despite its success, the Umayyad dynasty was not universally supported within the Muslim community for a variety of reasons, including their hereditary election and suggestions of impious behavior. Some historians felt that the Umayyad Empire perpetuated a major division among the Muslims, and it failed to promote unity, which was critical to the attainment of political stability. Additionally, the empire was undemocratic because it segregated non-Umayyads from power. This led to its eventual collapse because of the rebellions from various factions within the empire.

On the other side, some other scholars and historians commented that these shortcomings should not underestimate the legacy of the Umayyads and their great contribution to the great territorial expansion of Islam as well as the Islamic civilisation. This book is an attempt to shed the light on several important events as well as the most serious issues in the history of the Umayyad Empire in order to portray a fair picture of such an important phase in the Islamic history.

Nabil Ben Aly

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Chapter I

The Phase of Regained Power

Phases of the Umayyad Empire (Caliphate)

There are four phases of the Umayyad caliphate during its 90 years of ruling the Muslim world, as a hereditary dynasty.

1. First Period- Phase of Power [41-64 H]

It starts with the rule of Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan in the 41st year of Hijrah, followed by his controversial son Yazid. The early phase was the foundation of the caliphate under the strong leadership of Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan. However, that period was followed by the very controversial leadership of his son, Yazid. This period was called the "Sufyanid period", which collapsed with the death of Mu'awiya II in 64 H, whose authority was restricted to Damascus and Syria's southern districts.

2. Second Period- Phase of Conflicts and Tribulations (Fitna) [64-84H]

It starts with Mu'awiyah bin till Abdul-Malik bin Marawan, founder of the Marawnid lineage. Abdul-Malik managed to end the **Second Fitna** and the reunification of the Caliphate under his rule, with the help of the Umayyad commander al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf who besieged Mecca and killed Ibn al-Zubayr in 692. Al-Hajjaj also was crucial to the domestic consolidation and centralization of the caliphate (including combining Kufa and Basra in a

single province under his governorship) as he oversaw the suppression of the **Kharijite revolts** in Iraq and Iran by 698.

3. **Third Period- Phase of Regained Power** [85-125H]

It includes the reign of Al-Walid, Sulyman and ends with Hisham. Under successor al-Walid I (from 705 to 715), the Umayyad Caliphate reached its greatest territorial extent because of the renewal of conquests. Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (from 717–720) is the only Umayyad ruler to have been recognized by subsequent Islamic tradition as a genuine caliph (*khalifa*) and not merely as a worldly king (*malik*).

4. **Fourth Phase- Phase of Decline and Collapse** [125-132H]

It was the final chapter of the Umayyad Empire. Hisham (from 724 to 743), the final son of Abd al-Malik, had long and eventful reign which was above all marked by the curtailment of military expansion. Following his death, the Third Fitna started with another civil wars till Marwan II (from 744 to 750), the grandson of Marwan I, Damascus in December 744, and immediately moved the capital north to Harran (Turkey). However, a rebellion soon broke out in Syria, mainly due to resentment over the relocation of the capital, and in January 750 the the Umayyads were defeated in the Battle of the Zab; Damascus fell to the Abbasids in April,

and in August, Marwan was killed in Egypt. Thus, the Umayyad caliphate collapsed, and its reign ended by the **Abbasid Revolution**.

Al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik (Al-Walīd I)

Al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik, commonly known as al-Walid-I, was the sixth caliph of the Umayyad Dynasty, the first hereditary dynasty of Islam. He ruled from October 705 until his death, following the death of his father Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (reigned from 685–705AD). Al-Walid was the eldest son of his predecessor Caliph Abd al-Malik. He became the heir apparent after the death of Abd al-Malik's brother and designated successor, Abd al-Aziz ibn Marwan, in 704. Walid's father Abd al-Malik had taken the oath of allegiance for Walid I during his lifetime. As a crown prince, he led annual raids against the Byzantines from 695 to 698AD and built or restored fortifications along the Syrian Desert route to Mecca. Al-Walid succeeded his father Abd al-Malik on 8th October 705. Al-Walid-I largely continued his father's policies of centralization and expansion, and heavily depended on al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, his father's powerful viceroy over the eastern half of the Caliphate. The period of his reign is known as one of expansion given a series of decisive victories made by the empire's armies on both the western frontier in Andalusia, where Roderick the Visigoth king was defeated at the **Battle of Guadalete** (*Wadi Lakku* in Arabic) in 711AD, and on the eastern frontier in Transoxiana, or modern-day Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, where the important Central Asian cities of Bukhara, Samarkand, and

Ferghana surrendered to Muslim generals. War spoils from the conquests allowed al-Walid to finance impressive public works, and al-Walid I is known as a patron of monumental buildings, and the works he commissioned include the Great Mosque of Damascus, the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and the Mosque of the Prophet at Medina. Under him, the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus was built as the largest Islamic sacred building (707–715) and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina was expanded (707). The completion of the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem between 706 and 717 probably falls during his reign. This extensive construction work was a heavy burden for the population. The construction of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus is said to have devoured 5.6 million gold dirhams. He was the first caliph to institute programs for social welfare, aiding the poor and handicapped in Al-Sham (Syria). In the opinion of the Syrians, al-Walid I was the worthiest of their caliphs. He built mosques - the Mosque of Damascus and the Mosque of Medina - set up pulpits, gave out to the people, and gave to those afflicted with elephantiasis, telling them not to beg from the people. He gave every cripple a servant and every blind person a guide. Al-Walid I is mentioned in the national anthem of Syria: *'From us is al-Walīd, and from us is al-Rashīd; so why then shall we not lead, why then shall we not rise?'*. During his reign, the rule of the Umayyads was further consolidated, relying on the proven governors of his father, including al-Hajjaj. The caliphate reached its greatest extent under al-Walid I.

Thus, in the west, the direction of the Maghreb was completed and the conquest of the Visigothic empire was initiated under Musa ibn Nusayr and Tariq ibn Ziyad in 711AD. In the east of the empire Sindh and the Indus valley were subjugated under Muhammad ibn al-Qasim (711) and Transoxania under Qutaiba ibn Muslim (since 712). In addition to securing the Caucasus regions against the incursions of the Khazars (711–713), successes against Byzantium were also achieved. The campaign against Constantinople prepared by al-Walid I was only carried out under his successor Sulayman (715-717). For pilgrims and travelers Walid I promoted the construction of roads, especially to Mecca, the construction of wells, hostels, and hospices. Al-Walid died on 23rd February 715. Walid I was succeeded by his brother Sulayman and was buried in Bab al-Saghir cemetery in Damascus. His grave is still present to this date. Al-Walid I's attempt to void his father's succession arrangements by replacing Sulayman with his son Abd al-Aziz failed and Sulayman acceded in 715AD. Although it is difficult to ascertain al-Walid's direct role in the affairs of his caliphate, his reign was marked by domestic peace and prosperity and likely represented the Zenith of the Marwanid House, and the peak of Umayyad power.

Early life

Al-Walid was born in 674AD to Abdul Malik ibn Marwan and his wife Wallada bint al-Abbas ibn al-Jaz who was

from the central Arabian region Najd, a descendant of Zuhayr ibn Jadhima, the prominent 6th century chief of the Banu Abs trib. He was born in Medina during the rule of Mu'awiya I (reigned 661–680), the founder and first caliph of the Umayyad Caliphate and the 1st caliph form to the Sufyanid branch of the Umayyad clan. However, his family was relocated to Syria in 684, following the expulsion of the Umayyads from Hejaz during the Second Muslim Civil War, where al-Walid's, grandfather, the elder statesman Marwan I, was recognized as caliph by pro-Umayyad Arab tribes in the province, including the powerful Banu Kalb. Abd al-Malik succeeded his father Marwan I and conquered the rest of the Caliphate, namely Iraq, with its eastern dependencies, and Arabia. With the key assistance of his viceroy of Iraq, al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, Abd al-Malik instituted several centralization measures, which consolidated Umayyad territorial gains. Walid was known for his own personal piety, and many stories tell of his continual reciting of the Qur'an and the large feasts he hosted for those fasting during Ramadan. The 9th century historian al-Ya'qubi describes al-Walid's physical appearance as "tall and swarthy", "snub-nosed" and that he "spoke ungrammatically". To his father's chagrin, al-Walid abandoned speaking the classical Arabic in which the Qur'an was written, yet he insisted that everyone in his company have knowledge of the Qur'an. He was also known to have embraced the formal trappings of monarchy, in a manner

unprecedented among earlier caliphs. He was married to Umm Banin bint Abdul Aziz ibn Marwan ibn Hakam.

Pre-Caliphate works

During his father's caliphate, al-Walid led the Annual campaigns against the Byzantine Empire in 695, 696, 697 and 698AD. Annual campaigns were launched by the Umayyads in the Arab–Byzantine frontier zone since the Muslim conquest of Syria in the 630s. In his summer 696AD campaign, he raided the area between Malatya (Melitene) and al-Massisa (Mopsuestia), while in the following year, he targeted a place known in Arabic sources as "Atmar", located at some point north of Malatya. Al-Walid also led the annual Hajj pilgrim caravan to Mecca in 698. In 700AD (or could be 701), al-Walid patronized the construction or expansion of *Qasr Burqu*, a fortified Syrian Desert outpost connecting Palmyra in the north with the Azraq oasis and Wadi Sirhan basin in the south, ultimately leading to Mecca and Medina. His patronage is attested by an inscription describing him as "*the emir al-Walid, son of the commander of the faithful*". According to the historians, al-Walid built the nearby site of *Jabal Says*, likely as a Bedouin summer encampment between his base of operations in *al-Qaryatayn* and *Qasr Burqu*. It was thought that al-Walid used the sites, located in the territory of Arab tribes, such as the Banu Kalb, to reaffirm their loyalty, which had been critical to the Umayyads during the Second Muslim Civil War.

Crown Princeship and Accession

Abd al-Malik followed his fathers' steps in the appointment of the crown prince. He decided to release his brother, Abd al-'Aziz ibn Marwan from crown prince and asked people to take an oath of allegiance to his sons al-Walid and Sulayman ibn 'Abd al-Malik as the crown princes. However, Abd al-Aziz refused and a conflict between the two brothers was Imminent, but Abd al-Aziz died shortly after the start of this dispute. After his brother and the designated successor Abd al-Aziz's death, Abd al-Malik designated his eldest son, al-Walid I, his successor, to be followed by his second eldest, Sulayman. Al-Walid acceded in 705. As such the succession of Al-Walid I was not contested. He kept Sulayman as governor of Palestine, while appointing his sons to the other *junds* of Syria, with Abd al-Aziz over Damascus, al-Abbas over Homs and Umar over Jordan, as well as giving them command roles in the frontier wars against the Byzantines in Anatolia. Al-Walid-I retired his uncle Muhammad ibn Marwan from the Jazira, installing his half-brother Maslama there instead. Like his father, al-Walid continued to rely on Al-Hajjaj bin Yousef to govern the caliphate, and his trust in Al-Hajjaj paid off with the successful conquests of Transoxiana and Sindh. However, unlike his father, al-Walid I was heavily dependent on al-Hajjaj and allowed him free rein over the eastern half of the Caliphate. Moreover, al-Hajjaj strongly influenced al-Walid's internal decision-making, with officials often being installed and dismissed

upon the viceroy's direction. Al-Hajjaj was responsible for picking the generals who led the successful eastern campaigns and was well known from his own successful campaign against Ibn Zubayr during the reign of Al-Walid's father. Al-Hajjaj's prominence was such that he is discussed more frequently in the medieval Muslim sources than al-Walid or Abd al-Malik, and his time in office (694–714) is a hallmark of the continuity between the two reigns.

Achievements of al-Walid's reign

I. Renewal of conquests

Al-Walid-I continued the expansion of the Islamic empire that was sparked by his father and was an effective ruler. He ruled during the second wave of Muslim expansion. Al-Walid paid great attention to the expansion of an organized military, building the strongest navy in Ummayyad era, it was this tactic that supported the ultimate expansion to Iberia. His reign is considered as the apex of Islamic power. According to several historians, the armies of the Caliphate under al-Walid received a fresh impulse and a period of great conquests began. During his reign, massive conquests were affected, and Umayyad armies conquered the Maghreb, Hispania, Sind and Transoxiana, expanding the Caliphate to its greatest territorial extent. His brief but remarkable ten-year reign (705–715AD) was marked by endless successions of conquests east and west. In

some sense it represents the high point of the Umayyad Caliphate, for it never again attained the level of success that it had under al-Walid I. During the second half of his reign, the Umayyads reached their furthest territorial extent. Under him Muslims achieved the final elimination of the Byzantines from North Africa and the pacification of the Berbers there, as well as the conquest of the Visigoth kingdom of Spain, many small Persian (Iranian) states between the Oxus and the Jaxartes, and the substantial Brahmin kingdom of Sind in present-day Pakistan. The massive war spoils netted by the conquests of Transoxiana, Sind and Hispania were comparable to the amounts accrued in the early Muslim conquests during the reign of the great Caliph Umar (reigned 634–644AD). Al-Hajjaj bin Yousef played a crucial role in the organization and selection of military commanders. Al-Walid himself did not participate in the campaigns and is reported to have left Syria only once as caliph when he led the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca in 710AD.

- **The eastern frontiers**

Expansion from the eastern frontiers was overseen by al-Hajjaj from Iraq. His lieutenant governor of Khurasan, Qutayba ibn Muslim, launched numerous campaigns against Transoxiana (Central Asia), which had been a largely impenetrable region for earlier Muslim armies, between 705 and 715AD. Despite the distance from the Arab garrison towns of Khurasan, the unfavorable

terrain and climate and his enemy's numerical superiority, Qutayba, through his persistent raids, gained the surrender of Bukhara in 706–709, Khwarazm and Samarkand in 711–712 and Farghana in 713AD. In contrast to most other Muslim conquests, he did not settle Arab Muslims in Transoxiana; instead, he secured Umayyad suzerainty through tributary alliances with local rulers, whose power remained intact. The exceptions to this policy were the cities of Samarkand, and Bukhara, which were each assigned Arab garrisons and tax administrators, had their Zoroastrian houses of worship (Zoroastrian fire temples) razed and in the case of Samarkand, fitted with a mosque. As a long-term result, both cities developed as future centers of Islamic and Arabic learning. Umayyad suzerainty was secured over the rest of conquered Transoxiana through tributary alliances with local rulers, whose power remained intact. From 708 or 709AD, al-Hajjaj's nephew Muhammad ibn Qasim conquered Sind, northwestern South Asia. The massive war spoils netted by the conquests of Transoxiana, Sind and Hispania were comparable to the amounts accrued in the early Muslim conquests during the reign of Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab. Thus, in the east, Islamic armies made it as far as the Indus River in 712AD—under Al-Walid, the caliphate empire stretched from the Iberian Peninsula to India.

- **Ifriqiya and Maghreb**

Al-Walid I relaunched the Islamic conquests and took the early Islamic empire to its farthest extents. He reconquered parts of Egypt from the Byzantine Empire and moved on into Carthage and across to the west of North Africa. Earlier in 698AD, Carthage was captured and destroyed by Hassan ibn al-Nu'man al-Ghassani signalling the final, irretrievable end of Roman power in Africa. Kairouan was firmly secured as a launchpad for later conquests, while the port town of Tunis was founded and equipped with an arsenal on Walid's father Abd al-Malik's orders to establish a strong Arab fleet. Al-Nu'man continued the campaign against the Berbers, defeating them and killing their leader, the warrior queen al-Kahina, between 698 and 703AD. In the west, al-Walid's governor in Ifriqiya (central North Africa), Musa ibn Nusayr (Al-Nu'man's successor), a holdover from Abd al-Malik's reign, had subjugated the Berbers of the Hawwara, Zenata and Kutama confederations and advanced into the Maghreb (western North Africa), conquering Tangier and Sus in 708/09AD, in the far north and south of modern-day Morocco. Musa's Berber *mawla* (freedman), Tariq ibn Ziyad, invaded the Visigothic Kingdom of Hispania (the Iberian Peninsula) in 711AD, and was reinforced by an army led by Musa in the following year. By 716AD, a year after al-Walid's death, Hispania had been largely conquered.

- **Byzantium and Levant**

The war with the Byzantines had resumed under Walid's father Abd al-Malik after the second civil war, with the Umayyads defeating the Byzantines at the **Battle of Sebastopolis** in 692. The Umayyads launched constant raids against Byzantine Anatolia and Armenia in the following years. Closer to the Umayyad seat of power in Syria, al-Walid appointed his half-brother Maslama, governor of the *Jazira* (Upper Mesopotamia) and charged him with raiding the frontier zone with Byzantium. In the Levant, Though Maslama established a strong power base in his province, he achieved few territorial gains. After a lengthy siege, the Byzantine fortress of Tyana was captured in 708AD. Al-Walid entrusted most of Syria's military districts to his sons; al-Abbas was assigned to Homs and fought reputably in the campaigns against Byzantium alongside Maslama, while Abd al-Aziz, who also took part in the anti-Byzantine war effort, and Umar were appointed to Damascus and Jordan, respectively. By 705AD, Armenia was annexed by the Umayyad Caliphate along with the principalities of Caucasian Albania and Iberia, which collectively became the province of Arminiya.

- **Al- Andalus (Iberian Peninsula)**

Al-Walid paid great attention to the expansion of an organized military, building the strongest navy in Ummayad era; it was this tactic that supported the

ultimate expansion to Iberia. Musa's Berber *mawla*, Tariq ibn Ziyad, invaded the Visigothic Kingdom of Hispania (the Iberian Peninsula) in 711AD. The Moorish commander Tariq ibn-Ziyad led a small force- of North African Berber army- that crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and landed at Gibraltar on 30th April 711, ostensibly to intervene in a Visigothic civil war. After a decisive victory over King Roderic at the **Battle of Guadalete** on 19th July 711, Tariq ibn-Ziyad, joined by the governor of Ifriqiya Musa ibn Nusayr, brought most of the Visigothic Kingdom under Muslim rule in a seven-year campaign. They crossed the Pyrenees and occupied Visigothic Septimania in southern France. By 716, within five years of the initial conquest, the Visigoths of Iberia had been defeated and Iberia was under Muslim control. The small army Tariq led in the initial conquest consisted mostly of Berbers, while Musa's largely Arab force of over 12,000 soldiers was accompanied by a group of *mawālī*, that is, non-Arab Muslims, who were clients of the Arabs. The Berber soldiers accompanying Tariq were garrisoned in the centre and the north of the peninsula, as well as in the Pyrenees, while the Berber colonists who followed settled in all parts of the country – north, east, south, and west. Thus, most of the Iberian Peninsula became part of the expanding Umayyad Empire during the reign of al-Walid I, under the name of al-Andalus. It was organized as a province subordinate to Ifriqiya, so, for the first few decades, the governors of al-Andalus were appointed by the emir of Kairouan, rather than the Caliph in Damascus. The regional capital

was set at Córdoba, and the first influx of Muslim settlers was widely distributed. Visigothic lords who agreed to recognize Muslim suzerainty were allowed to retain their fiefs (notably, in Murcia, Galicia, and the Ebro valley). Resistant Visigoths took refuge in the Cantabrian highlands, where they carved out a rump state, the Kingdom of Asturias.

II. Domestic Achievements

▪ Governance

The administrative reforms initiated by Abd al-Malik and al-Hajjaj in 693AD, continued under al-Walid. These included the dual processes of establishing a single Islamic currency in place of the previously used Byzantine and Sasanian coinage and replacing Greek and Persian with Arabic as the language of the bureaucracy in Syria and Iraq, respectively. In 705 or 706AD, during al-Walid's reign, Arabic replaced Greek and Coptic in the diwan (government departments) of Egypt. The change was implemented by al-Walid's half-brother, Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Malik, the governor of Egypt and appointee of Abd al-Malik. These policies effected the gradual transition of Arabic as the sole official language of the state, unified the varied tax systems of the Caliphate's provinces and contributed to the establishment of a more ideologically Islamic government. Al-Walid also maintained his father's policy of balancing the power of the two factions in the military

and administration, the loyalist Yaman confederation (with ancestral roots in Yemen) and the Qaysi, or northern Arab, tribes who largely supported Ibn al-Zubayr during the Second Civil War. Earlier in 684AD, because of the **Battle of Marj Rahit** which inaugurated Marwan's reign, a sharp division developed among the Syrian Arab tribes, who formed the core of the Umayyad army. Abd al-Malik reconciled with the Qays in 691AD, but competition for influence between the two factions intensified as the Syrian army was increasingly empowered and deployed to the provinces, where they replaced or supplemented Iraqi and other garrisons. Some historians believed that it is possible that al-Walid I kept this rivalry on the boil so that one faction would not acquire a monopoly of power. Despite his mother was genealogically affiliated with the Qays, al-Walid did not prefer one faction over the other, as he had no need to do so, and it is not reported" by the medieval historians.

▪ **Provinces**

It was Al-Walid I that coupled Islamicization with Arabicization. Conversion was not forced on conquered peoples; however, since non-believers had to pay an extra tax, many people did convert for religious and non-religious reasons. This created several problems, particularly since Islam was so closely connected with being Arab. Being Arab, of course, was more than an ethnic identity, it was a tribal identity based on kinship

and descent. As more and more Muslims were non-Arabs, the status of Arabs and their culture became threatened. In particular, large numbers of Coptic-speaking in Egypt and Persian-speaking Muslims threatened the primacy of the very language that Islam is based on. In part to alleviate that threat, al-Walid I instituted Arabic as the only official language of the empire. He decreed that all administration was to be done only in Arabic. It was this move that cemented the primacy of Arabic language and culture in the Islamic world.

In Hejaz, it was reported that in response to the mistreatment of Medina's pious residents by Abd al-Malik's appointed governor to the Hejaz, Hisham ibn Isma'il al-Makhzumi, al-Walid replaced Hisham with his cousin Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz in 706AD; the latter had friendly ties to the region's religious circles. However, Umar gained al-Hajjaj's enmity for providing safe-haven to Iraqis evading his persecution. Upon the advice of al-Hajjaj, al-Walid dismissed Umar in 712AD and split the governorship of the Hejaz, appointing al-Hajjaj's allies Khalid ibn Abdallah al-Qasri to Mecca and Uthman ibn Hayyan al-Murri to Medina.

In Palestine, al-Walid's brother Sulayman cultivated strong ties to the Yaman and in 708AD, sheltered the deposed Yamani governor of Khurasan, Yazid ibn al-Muhallab, a fugitive from al-Hajjaj's prison. Despite his initial disapproval, al-Walid pardoned Yazid as a result

of his brother Sulayman's lobbying and payment of the heavy fine that al-Hajjaj had imposed on Yazid.

In Egypt, al-Walid recalled his brother Abd Allah from there in 709AD, either as a result of mounting complaints against his corruption, which was blamed for famine in the province, the first recorded in Islamic history, or a desire to install one of his own loyalists, his *katib* (scribe), Qurra ibn Sharik of the Banu Abs. The latter served until al-Walid's death in 715AD and established a more efficient means of tax collection, enlisted more troops into Egypt's army and, on al-Walid's orders, restored the mosque of Fustat.

▪ **Public services and social welfare**

Al-Walid I was the first caliph to institute programs for social welfare, aiding the poor and handicapped in Al-Sham (Syria). From the beginning of his rule, al-Walid inaugurated public works and social welfare programs on a scale unprecedented in the Caliphate's history. The efforts were financed by treasure accrued from the conquests and tax revenue. In addition, war spoils from the conquests allowed al-Walid to finance impressive public works. Welfare programs included financial relief for the poor and servants to assist the handicapped, though this initiative was limited to Syria. Throughout his reign, al-Walid I and his brothers as well as his sons do built waystations and dug wells along the roads in Syria and installed street lighting in the cities. They invested in

land reclamation projects, entailing irrigation networks and canals, which boosted agricultural production.

III. Architecture and arts

▪ Nation Building

Al-Walid I is known as a patron of monumental buildings, and the works he commissioned include the Great Mosque of Damascus, the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and the Mosque of the Prophet at Medina. In addition, al-Walid himself continued the effective rule that was characteristic of his father, he developed a welfare system, built hospitals, educational institutions, and measures for the appreciation of art. Al-Walid was an enthusiast of architecture and he repaired and refurbished *Masjid al Nabawi* in Medina. He also improved mountain passes and wells in Hijaz. In addition, he demolished the Christian Basilica of St. John (Prophet Yahya in Islam) the Baptist to build a great mosque, now known as the Great Mosque of Damascus or simply the Umayyad Mosque. Thus, al-Walid I began the first great building projects of Islam, the most famous of which was the mosque at Damascus. Caliph Al-Walid I also ordered the building of Al-Aqsa Mosque, almost a decade after his father Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan ordered the building of the Dome of the Rock on the site where the Islamic Prophet Muhammad begun his journey to heaven (*Meraj*) on the Temple Mount. It was under Umayyad rule of Al-Walid

and his father Abd al-Malik that Christians and Jews were granted the official title of "Peoples of the Book" to underline the common monotheistic roots they shared with Islam. The long history of Islamic architecture really begins with al-Walid. This is also the period, however, in which Islamic court culture begins to germinate. With the caliph as a patron, artists and writers begin to develop a new, partly secular culture based on Islamic ideas.



The Grand Mosque of Damascus

Umayyad Mosque (Grand Mosque of Damascus)

The great mosque founded by al-Walid in Damascus, later known as the Umayyad Mosque, was the greatest architectural achievement of his rule. Under his predecessors, Muslim residents had worshipped in a small *musalla* (Muslim prayer room) attached to the 4th century cathedral of John the Baptist. Initially, the Muslim conquest of Damascus in 636AD did not affect the church, as the building was shared by Muslim and Christian worshippers. It remained a church although

the Muslims built a mud brick structure against the southern wall so that they could pray. By al-Walid's reign, the musalla could not cope with the fast-growing Muslim community and no sufficient free spaces were available elsewhere in the urban space of Damascus for a large congregational mosque. Under the Umayyad caliph Al-Walid I, however, al-Walid had the church converted into a mosque, compensating local Christians with other properties in the city. According to the legend, Al-Walid I himself initiated the demolition in 705AD by driving a golden spike into the church. At that point in time, Damascus was one of the most important cities in the Middle East and the capital of the Umayyad caliphate. Thus, the church was demolished and between 706 and 715 the current mosque built in its place. Most of the structure was demolished, with the exceptions of the exterior walls and corner towers, which were thenceforth covered by marble inlays and mosaics. Al-Walid's architects replaced the demolished space with a large prayer hall and a courtyard bordered on all sides by a closed portico with double arcades. A large cupola was installed at the center of the prayer hall and a high minaret was erected on the mosque's northern wall. The mosque holds a shrine which is said to contain the head of John the Baptist, honoured as a prophet (Yahya) by Muslims and Christians alike. The head was supposedly found during the excavations for the building of the mosque. The tomb of Saladin stands in a small garden adjoining the north wall of the mosque. The mosque was completed in 711AD and Blankinship

notes that the field army of Damascus, numbering some 45,000 soldiers, were taxed a quarter of their salaries for nine years to pay for its construction. The scale and grandeur of the great mosque made it a symbol of the political supremacy and moral prestige of Islam, according to several historians. Noting al-Walid's awareness of architecture's propaganda value, historians called the Damascus Mosque a 'victory monument' intended as a visible statement of Muslim supremacy and permanence. The mosque has maintained its original form until the present day.

- **Patronage of great mosques**

Al-Walid is credited with the construction or expansion of numerous great mosques throughout the Caliphate, including the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina. The mosques in Jerusalem and Medina have been substantially altered since al-Walid's era, while the Umayyad Mosque has maintained much of its original form.

1) The Aqsa Mosque

In Jerusalem, al-Walid continued his father's works on the Temple Mount. Several medieval Muslim accounts credit the construction of the al-Aqsa Mosque to al-Walid, while others credit his father. It is likely that the unfinished administrative and residential structures that were built opposite the southern and eastern walls of the

Temple Mount, next to the mosque, date to the era of al-Walid, who died before they could be completed and were not finished by his successors.

2) Prophet's Mosque in Medina

In 706AD (or 707), al-Walid I instructed Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz to significantly enlarge the Prophet's Mosque in Medina. Its redevelopment entailed the demolition of the living quarters of Prophet Muhammad's wives and the expansion of the structure to incorporate the graves of Prophet Muhammad and the first two caliphs, Abu Bakr (r. 632–634) and Umar. The vocal opposition to the demolition of Muhammad's home from local religious circles was dismissed by al-Walid I. An ornate enclosure was built around the graves and fitted with a concave mihrab (prayer niche), four minarets and a pentagonal-shaped entrance. Al-Walid lavished large sums for the mosque's reconstruction and supplied Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz with mosaics and Greek and Coptic craftsmen.

According to several historians, the building of a large-scale mosque in Medina, the original center of the Caliphate, was an acknowledgement by al-Walid I of his own roots and those of Islam itself, and possibly an attempt to appease Medinese resentment at the loss of their city's political importance to Syria under the Umayyads.

3) Other mosques

Other mosques that al-Walid is credited for expanding in the Hejaz include the Sanctuary Mosque around the Ka'aba in Mecca and the mosque of Ta'if.

- **Patronage of the Arts**

The reign of al-Walid I was also the period in which Islamic court culture began to germinate. With the caliph as a patron, artists and writers begin to develop a new, partly secular culture based on Islamic ideas. These territorial acquisitions brought a huge new tax income into the coffers of the Muslim state, enabling al-Walid to engage in public works and other projects on a lavish scale. Among these projects were the reconstructions of the great mosques in all the principal cities, including Makkah, Madinah, Jerusalem, Damascus, Sana', and probably other towns. Al-Walid is principally remembered as the patron of these building projects.

The only one of his constructions that is still standing in its original form is the great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. Its beautiful original mosaics resemble Byzantine art but scrupulously avoid representations of humans and animals, although they do include scenes of houses, public buildings, trees, and shrubs, in addition to geometrical patterns.

Valladolid

- Valladolid is an industrial city, and it is a municipality in north-central Spain, upon the Rio Pisuerga and within the Ribera del Duero region. It is the capital of the province of Valladolid and of the autonomous community of Castile and León, therefore is part of the historical region of Castile.
- There is no direct evidence for the origin of the modern name of Valladolid, but there are few etymological theories:
 - 1) One widely held etymological theory suggests that the modern name Valladolid derives from the Celtiberian language expression Vallis Tolitum (a conjunction of the Latin: VALLIS, "Valley", and Celtic: TOLITUM, "place of"), meaning "valley of waters" or "place of confluence of waters", referring to the confluence of rivers in the area. Indeed, their inhabitants are still called by the archaic form closer to its possible original name, "Vallisoletanian".
 - 2) Another etymological theory suggests that the name "Valladolid" is linked with the Arabic name for the city بلد الوليد meaning The City of Al- Walid, which is the Arabic exonym referring to Al-Walid I.
 - 3) A third theory claims that it derives from "Vallis Olivetum", meaning 'valley of the olives'; however, no olive trees are found in that terrain. Instead, innumerable pine trees abound in the south part of the city.
- The city is also popularly called Pucela, a nickname whose origin is not clear, but may refer to knights in the service of Joan of Arc, known as La Pucelle.

Succession dilemma

Al-Walid unsuccessfully attempted to nominate his son Abd al-Aziz as his successor, voiding the arrangements set by his father, in which Sulayman was to accede after al-Walid. Relations between the two brothers had become strained. Earlier and toward the end of his reign, Abd al-Malik, supported by al-Hajjaj, attempted to nominate al-Walid as his successor, abrogating the arrangement set by Marwan whereby Abd al-Malik's brother, the governor of Egypt, Abd al-Aziz, was slated to succeed. Though the latter refused to step down from the line of succession, he died in 704AD, removing the principal obstacle to al-Walid's nomination. However, al-Walid's attempt was a failure and some reports said that Umar II objected to al-Walid's suggestion to abrogate the arrangement set by his father Abd al-Malik. After the death of al-Walid in 715AD, Sulayman acceded. Rather than nominating his own sons or brothers, Sulayman appointed his cousin, Umar II, the son of Abd al-Aziz ibn Marwan, as his successor. While the traditional sources present the choice as related to the persuasion of the court theologian, Raja ibn Haywa, it may have been related to Umar II's seniority and his father's previous position as Marwan I's second successor. The family of Abd al-Malik protested the move, but were coerced into a compromise whereby Yazid II, the son of Abd al-Malik and Atika, would follow Umar II.

Death

Al-Walid died of an illness in Dayr Murran, an Umayyad winter estate on the outskirts of Damascus, on 23rd February 715, about one year after al-Hajjaj's death. He was buried in Damascus at the cemetery of Bab al-Saghir or Bab al-Faradis and Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (Umar II) led the funeral prayers. Al-Walid I's earlier attempt to void his father's succession arrangements by replacing Sulayman with his son Abd al-Aziz failed and Sulayman acceded in 715AD. Several panegyrics were dedicated to al-Walid and his sons by al-Farazdaq, his official court poet. The latter's contemporary, Jarir, lamented the caliph's death: "O eye, weep copious tears aroused by remembrance; after today there is no point in your tears being stored." Al-Walid was succeeded by his brother Suleiman. Sulayman once acceded, he dismissed nearly all of al-Walid's governors. Although he maintained the militarist policies of al-Walid and Abd al-Malik, expansion of the caliphate largely ground to a halt under Sulayman. Two of al-Walid's sons, Yazid III and Ibrahim, successively served as caliphs for less than a year in 744, during the decline phase of the Umayyad caliphate. Al-Walid's reign largely served as a continuation of his father's policies of centralization and expansion. By virtue of the conquests of Hispania, Sind and Transoxiana during his reign, his patronage of the great mosques of Damascus and Medina, and his charitable works, al-Walid's Syrian contemporaries viewed him as 'the worthiest of their caliphs'.

Domestically it was generally a period of peace and prosperity. According to some historians, the reigns of al-Walid and Abd al-Malik, tied together by al-Hajjaj, represented in some ways the high point of Umayyad power, witnessing significant territorial advances both in the east and the west and the emergence of a more marked Arabic and Islamic character in the state's public face. Other historians assert that al-Walid's reign was remarkably successful and represents, perhaps, the zenith of Umayyad power, though his direct role in these successes is unclear and his primary accomplishment may have been maintaining the equilibrium between the rival factions of the Umayyad family and military. Al-Walid was survived by several sons: al-Ya'qubi names sixteen, while the 10th century historian al-Tabari names nineteen. Two of his sons, Yazid III and Ibrahim, served as caliphs for less than a year, during the decline phase of the Umayyad caliphate. Yazid III's mother, Shah-i Afrid or Shahfirand, was a daughter of the last Sasanian king, Peroz III, and a concubine of al-Walid given to him by al-Hajjaj, while Ibrahim's mother was a concubine named Su'ar or Budayra. Al-Abbas, al-Walid's eldest son, was born to a Greek concubine. From his Umayyad wife Umm al-Banin, the daughter of his uncle Abd al-Aziz ibn Marwan, he had his sons Abd al-Aziz and Muhammad.



Umayyad empire after the conquest of Spain

Sulaymān ibn Abd al-Malik

Sulayman ibn Abd al-Malik was the seventh caliph of the Umayyad dynasty, succeeding his brother al-Walid and ruling from 24 February 715 until his death in 717AD. He was born probably in Medina about 55H/675AD, son of the subsequent caliph ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān and of Wallāda bt. al-Abbās b. D̡jaz’ from the Banū Abs, a tribe considered part of the Northern Arabian confederation of the Ghaṭafān. The details about Sulayman's first thirty years of life in the medieval sources are scant. It is likely that he came to Syria during the initial stage of the Second Civil War (60-73H/680-92AD) in the company of other members of the Marwānid branch of the Umayyads, being expelled from Medinah by al-Zubayer's supporters. Sulayman began his career as governor of Palestine (military district of Filastin), while his father Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705) and brother al-Walid I (r. 705–715) reigned as caliphs. There, the theologian Raja ibn Haywa al-Kindi mentored him, and he forged close ties with Yazid ibn al-Muhallab, a major opponent of al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, al-Walid's powerful viceroy of Iraq and the eastern Caliphate. Sulayman resented al-Hajjaj's influence over his brother. As governor, Sulayman founded the city of Ramla and built the White Mosque in it. The new city superseded Lydda as the administrative capital of Palestine. Lydda was at least partly destroyed, and its inhabitants may have been forcibly relocated to Ramla. Ramla developed into an

economic hub, became home to many Muslim scholars, and remained the administrative capital of Palestine until the 11th century. After his father Abd al-Malik (685-705 AD) had chosen Sulaimān to succeed his brother al-Walid I (705-715 AD), he entered the government after his brother's death. After succeeding al-Walid, there was some unrest in the administration of the eastern provinces when Sulayman deposed and persecuted the officials of al-Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq (AD 694-714). In addition, Sulayman dismissed his predecessor's governors and generals. Many had been handpicked by al-Hajjaj and had led the war efforts which brought the Caliphate to its greatest territorial extent. Among al-Hajjaj's loyalists who were deposed, the conqueror of Transoxiana (Central Asia), Qutayba (Qutaiba) ibn Muslim. This also led to the revolt of Qutayba in Khurassan, which was quickly suppressed, and he was killed by his own troops in an abortive revolt in anticipation of his dismissal. The conqueror of Sind (the western Indian subcontinent), Muhammad ibn Qasim, was dismissed then was executed. In the west, Sulayman deposed Musa ibn Nusayr, the conqueror of the Iberian Peninsula (al-Andalus) and governor of Ifriqiya (central North Africa), and had his son Abd al-Aziz, governor of al-Andalus, assassinated. Although he continued his predecessors' militarist policies, expansion largely stopped under Sulayman, partly due to effective resistance along the Central Asian frontiers and the collapse of Arab military leadership and organization there after Qutayba's death. Sulayman's appointee over

the eastern Caliphate, his confidant Yazid, invaded the southern Caspian coast in 716, but withdrew and settled for a tributary arrangement after being defeated by the local Iranian rulers. The most significant event of his short reign, however, was the siege of Constantinople in AD 717 and AD 718, which was catastrophic for the Arabs. Sulayman camped in Dabiq (Northern Syria) to direct the war against Byzantium as well as the siege and said: "I will not give up the fight with Constantinople, until I have forced my way into it, or I will surrender the entire territory of the Arabs to annihilation." He intensified the war with the Byzantine Empire, culminating in the 717–718 siege of Constantinople, which ended in an Arab defeat. Sulayman died in Dabiq because of an illness during the siege. Earlier, his eldest son and chosen successor, Ayyub, had predeceased him. Following the death of his son Ayyub, Sulayman made the unconventional choice of nominating his cousin, Umar II, as caliph, rather than a son or a brother. Sulaymān's successor was the caliph Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz also called Umar II, who ruled from AD 717 to AD 720.

Early years

Sulayman was born in Medina around 675AD. His father, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, belonged to the Umayyad clan of the Quraysh tribe, while his mother, Wallada bint al-Abbas ibn al-Jaz, was a great-granddaughter of Zuhayr ibn Jadhima, a prominent 6th

century chieftain of the Arab tribe of Banu Abs. Sulayman was partly raised in the desert by his Banu Abs kinsmen. There is almost no substantial information on the first three decades of Sulaymān's life. At the time of his birth, the Caliphate was ruled by Sulayman's distant cousin, Mu'awiya I, who had founded the ruling Umayyad dynasty in 661AD. Following the deaths of Mu'awiya I's successors, Yazid I and Mu'awiya II, in 683 and 684AD, Umayyad authority collapsed across the Caliphate and most provinces recognized the non-Umayyad, Mecca-based, Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr, as caliph. The Umayyads of Medina, including Sulayman, were therefore expelled from the city and became refugees in Syria, where they were supported by loyalist Arab tribes. These tribes elected Sulayman's grandfather, Marwan I, as caliph and formed the Yaman confederation in opposition to the Qaysi tribes, who dominated northern Syria and the *Jazira* (Upper Mesopotamia) and supported Ibn al-Zubayr. By 685, Marwan I had reestablished Umayyad control over Syria and Egypt. Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, Sulayman's father, who succeeded him, had by 692 reconquered the rest of the Caliphate. Under the rule of his brother al-Walid, Sulayman had been the governor of Palestine. In the tribal politics of the Near East at that time (the Qays-Yaman conflict) he allied himself to the Yamanis. When Yazid ibn al-Muhallab escaped from al-Hajjaj, he made his way to Sulayman in Palestine. Sulayman granted him refuge. Al-Hajjaj pressed al-Walid about this and the caliph commanded Sulayman to send him Yazid in

chains. Sulayman had his own son chained to Yazid approach al-Walid and present Sulayman's forcefully written letter insisting on sanctuary for Yazid. Al-Walid accepted this and so informed al-Hajjaj.

Pre-caliphate works and duties

1. Governorship of Palestine and granting ibn al-Muhallab refuge

At an unknown date, Abd al-Malik appointed his son Sulayman governor of Jund Filastin (the military district of Palestine), a post Abd al-Malik formerly held under Marwan I. Sulayman's appointment followed stints with underachievement by the Caliph's uncle, Yahya ibn al-Hakam, and half-brother, Aban ibn Marwan. Before Abd al-Malik died in 705, he nominated his eldest son, al-Walid I, as his successor, to be followed by Sulayman. However, Sulayman remained governor of Palestine throughout al-Walid's reign, which lasted until 715AD. His governorship likely brought him in close contact with the Yamani chieftains who dominated the district. He also established a strong relationship with Raja ibn Haywa al-Kindi, a local, Yamani-affiliated religious scholar who had previously supervised the construction of Abd al-Malik's Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Raja became Sulayman's tutor and senior aide. While in Palestine, Sulayman resented the influence of al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, the viceroy of Iraq and the eastern parts of the Caliphate, over al-Walid I, and cultivated ties with al-

Hajjaj's opponents. In 708 (or 709AD), he gave refuge to the fugitive and former governor of Khurasan, Yazid ibn al-Muhallab, and his family, the Muhallabids. Al-Hajjaj had dismissed and imprisoned Yazid, but he had escaped to Palestine. There, Yazid used his tribal connections with the district's large Yamani Azdi population to gain Sulayman's protection. Al-Walid I was angered with Yazid's defiance of al-Hajjaj, so Sulayman offered to pay the fine al-Hajjaj had imposed on Yazid. He also sent the latter and his own son, Ayyub, in shackles to the Caliph, with a letter pleading for the Muhallabids' pardon, which the Caliph granted. Yazid ibn al-Muhallab became a close confidant of Sulayman, who held him in the highest regard, and according to several historians Yazid even stayed with him [Sulayman], teaching him how to dress well, making delicious dishes for him, and giving him large presents. Ibn al-Muhallab remained with Sulayman for nine months, or until al-Hajjaj died in 714AD, and highly influenced and prejudiced him against al-Hajjaj and his family. It has been reported that in 701AD, Sulayman led the Hajj rituals in Mecca.

2. Foundation of Ramla

As governor of Palestine, Sulayman founded the city of Ramla -at the start of the 8th century- as the seat of his administration, replacing Lydda, the Muslims' original provincial capital and Sulayman's first residence in Palestine. Although the location of Lydda, a long-

established and prosperous city, was logistically and economically advantageous. His motives for founding Ramla were personal ambition and practical considerations. Some historians suggested that Lydda was "too Christian" in ethos for the taste of the Umayyad rulers, particularly following the Arabization and Islamization reforms instituted by Abd al-Malik. However, according to al-Jahshiyari, Sulayman sought a lasting reputation as a great builder following the example of his father and al-Walid, founder of the Great Mosque of Damascus. The construction of Ramla was his "way to immortality" and his personal stamp on the landscape of Palestine, according to several historians. Sulayman established his capital outside of the city proper, most likely due to a lack of available space for wide-scale development and agreements dating to the Muslim conquest in the 630s that, at least formally, precluded him from confiscating desirable property within the city of Lydda. In choosing the site, Sulayman utilized the strategic advantages of Lydda's vicinity while avoiding the physical constraints of an already-established urban center. The first structure Sulayman erected in Ramla was his palatial residence, which dually served as the seat of Palestine's administration (*diwan*). At the center of the new city was a congregational mosque, later known as the White Mosque. It was not completed until the reign of Caliph Umar II. Remains of the White Mosque in Ramla are still there, mainly the tower of Minaret. Sulayman built an aqueduct in the city called al-Barada, which transported

water to Ramla from Tel Gezer, about 10 kilometers (6 mi) to the southeast. Many of Lydda's Christian, Samaritan, and Jewish inhabitants were moved to the new city, Ramla. Although the traditional accounts are in agreement that Lydda almost immediately fell into obscurity following the founding of Ramla, narratives vary about the extent of Sulayman's efforts to transfer Lydda's inhabitants to Ramla, some holding that he only demolished a church in Lydda and others that he demolished the city altogether. Al-Ya'qubi noted Sulayman razed the houses of Lydda's inhabitants to force their relocation to Ramla and punished those who resisted. In the words of al-Jahshiyari: Sulayman founded the town of al-Ramla and its mosque and thus caused the ruin of Lod [Lydda]. In a tradition recorded by the historian Ibn Fadlallah al-Umari (d. 1347), a determined local Christian cleric refused Sulayman's requests for plots in the middle of Lydda. Infuriated, he attempted to have the cleric executed, but his adviser Raja dissuaded him and instead proposed building a new city at a superior, adjacent site. From early on, Ramla developed economically as a market town for the surrounding area's agricultural products, and as a center for dyeing, weaving and pottery. Ramla superseded Lydda as the commercial center of Palestine. It was also home to many Muslim religious scholars. Ramla remained the capital of Palestine through the Fatimid period, around 10th and 11th centuries.



Ramla city and the white mosque

3. Jerusalem

Jerusalem, located 40 kilometers (25 mi) southeast of Ramla, remained the region's religious focal point in Palestine. According to an 8th century Arabic source, Sulayman ordered the construction of several public buildings there, including a bathhouse, at the same time that al-Walid was developing the Temple Mount (*Haram al-Sharif*). The bathhouse was used for ablution by Muslims worshipping at the Dome of the Rock. Sulayman is further credited by an anonymous 13th century Syriac chronicler for building arches, mills and gardens in Jericho, but these were later destroyed by floods. He also maintained an agricultural tract near Qutayfa, in the environs of Damascus, that was called "*al-Sulaymaniyya*" after him.

Accession and assumption of power as caliph

In 714AD, al-Walid, encouraged or supported by al-Hajjaj, attempted to install his son Abd al-Aziz as his successor, voiding the arrangements set by Abd al-

Malik, which made Sulayman heir apparent. According to the historian Umar ibn Shabba (d. 878), al-Walid offered Sulayman generous financial incentives to agree to the change, but he refused. Al-Walid, nonetheless, issued requests to his provincial governors to recognize Abd al-Aziz, but only received favorable responses from al-Hajjaj and Qutayba ibn Muslim, the governor of Khurasan and conqueror of Transoxiana. It was also reported that Umer II objected to the al-Walid proposal, and advised him that it would be better to respect the Bay'a (allegiance) given to Sulyman during the reign of Abd Al-Malik. An adviser of al-Walid, Abbad ibn Ziyad, counseled the Caliph to pressure Sulayman by summoning him to the Caliph's court in Damascus, and then, after Sulayman stalled in his response, to mobilize his *shurta* (elite guard) and move against Sulayman in Ramla. However, al-Walid died shortly after, on 24 February 715AD, and Sulayman received the news at his estate in *al-Sab'* (Bayt Jibrin) and acceded to the caliphate unopposed. Sulayman received oaths of allegiance in Ramla, then in Damascus during his only recorded visit to that city. Sulayman continued to govern from Palestine, where he was much beloved, according to several historians, instead of Damascus, the Umayyads' traditional administrative capital. Some historians asserted that the medieval Syrian sources prove he obviously chose Jerusalem as his principal seat of government, while other historians held that he remained in Ramla. Thus, Sulayman was hailed as caliph on February 23, 715, the day al-Walid died.

He appointed Yazid ibn al-Muhallab governor of Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Salih ibn Abd al-Rahman financial administrator there. Salih was also instructed to arrest and execute the family of al-Hajjaj, one of two prominent leaders - the other was Qutaibah bin Muslim- who had supported the succession of al-Walid's son Yazid, rather than Sulayman. Al-Hajjaj had predeceased al-Walid, so he was no longer alive to pose a threat.

Caliph Sulayman's Achievements

I. Governance

A) Provincial politics

In his first year in office, Sulayman replaced most of al-Walid's and al-Hajjaj's provincial appointees with governors loyal to him. It is unclear whether these changes were the result of resentment and suspicion toward previous opponents of his accession, a means to ensure control over the provinces by appointing loyal officials, or a policy to end the rule of strong, old-established governors. While few historians argued Sulayman's choice of governors does not give the impression of bias toward the Yaman faction, others asserted that the Caliph's reign marked the political comeback of the Yaman and reflected his Yamani leanings.

Iraq

One of Sulayman's immediate decisions was to install his confidant, Yazid ibn al-Muhallab, as governor of Iraq. According to Muslim historians, Sulayman considered Yazid to be his "own al-Hajjaj". Yazid acted with a staunch preference for the Yaman, but according to some historians, there is no indication that Sulayman favored one faction over the other. There is a possibility, that Sulayman, from the time he was governor of Palestine, may have been persuaded that the rule of al-Hajjaj engendered hatred among the Iraqis toward the Umayyads rather than fostering their loyalty. Sulayman thus opposed him and his influence and deposed his appointees and allies, not because of their Qaysi affiliation, but because of their personal connection with al-Hajjaj. Meanwhile, Sulayman kept close ties with the Qaysi troops of the Jazira.

Khurasan and Sind

A protege of al-Hajjaj, Qutaiba (Qutayba) ibn Muslim, whose relations with Sulayman had been antagonistic, was confirmed in his post by the Caliph, but he was considerably alarmed at the ascension of Sulayman to the throne. Qutaibah remained wary that his dismissal was pending. He first sent an envoy to the caliph with letters asserting his loyalty as he was loyal to previous caliphs, urging Sulayman not to replace Qutaibah as governor of Khurasan with Yazid ibn al-Muhallab and,

finally, if the envoy saw Sulayman favouring Yazid, with Qutaibah's renunciation of allegiance to Sulayman. Sulayman sent the envoy back with a confirmation of Qutaibah's governorship. However, Qutaibah had already attempted to rebel. Around the time of Sulayman's accession, he had been leading his troops on an expedition toward the Jaxartes valley in Transoxiana. While stopping in Ferghana, Qutayba declared a rebellion against Sulayman, but most of his troops, exhausted by the constant campaigns into distant lands rejected his appeal to revolt, and turned against him. They killed him and sent his head to Sulayman. In fact, Qutaiba was killed by an army faction led by Waki ibn Abi Sud al-Tamimi in August 715AD. Waki declared himself governor of Khurasan, and was confirmed by Sulayman, but the latter restricted his authority to military affairs. The reason was Sulayman's concerns that Waki's nomination by the tribal factions of the Khurasani army - rather than by his own initiative - would lead to instability in the province. Waki's provisional governorship lasted nine months, ending in mid-716. Yazid ibn al-Muhallab had persuaded Sulayman that Waki was a troublesome *Bedouin* (Arab nomad) lacking administrative qualities. Khurasan, along with the other eastern parts of the Caliphate, were attached to Yazid's Iraqi governorship. The Caliph directed Yazid to relocate to Khurasan and leave lieutenant governors in the Iraqi garrison towns of Kufa, Basra and Wasit, while entrusting Iraq's fiscal affairs to his own appointee, a *mawla* (non-Arab freedman or

client) with lengthy experience in the province, Salih ibn Abd al-Rahman. Yazid was happy to escape the financial strictness of Salih ibn Abd al-Rahman in Mesopotamia (Iraq). Meanwhile, al-Hajjaj's kinsman and leader of the conquest of Sind, Muhammad ibn Qasim, did not revolt against Sulayman, but was nonetheless dismissed, summoned to Wasit, and tortured to death.

Mecca and Medina

Between 715 and 716, Sulayman dismissed Khalid ibn Abdallah al-Qasri and Uthman ibn Hayyan al-Murri, the respective governors of Mecca and Medina, both of whom owed their appointments to al-Hajjaj. Al-Qasri, later considered a champion of the Yaman, was replaced by an Umayyad family member, Abd al-Aziz ibn Abdallah.

Ifriqiya

In the west, Sulayman dismissed Musa (Moosa) ibn Nusayr, the Yamani-affiliated governor of Ifriqiya and conqueror of Hispania (*al-Andalus*), and his son Abd al-Aziz, the governor of al-Andalus. Earlier, both conquerors of Spain (*al-Andalus*) were summoned by the caliph al-Walid I to Damascus. Tariq arrived first, but then the caliph was taken ill, and caliph's brother Sulayman became temporarily in charge. According to some accounts Sulayman asked Musa, who was arriving with a cavalcade of soldiers and spoils, to delay

his grand entry into the city. He most certainly intended to claim the glories brought from the conquest for himself. But Musa dismissed this request, triumphantly entered Damascus anyway, and brought the booty before the ailing al-Walid I, which brought Musa and Tariq unprecedented popularity amongst the people of Damascus. Al-Walid I then died a few days later and was succeeded by his brother Sulayman, who demanded that Musa deliver up all his spoils. When Musa complained, Sulayman stripped him of his rank and confiscated all the booty, including the table which had reputedly once belonged to Solomon. Musa was imprisoned by Sulayman upon his accession and Abd al-Aziz was assassinated on Sulayman's orders in March 716, according to some traditions. The assassination order was carried out by some of the leading Arab commanders in *al-Andalus*, including Abd al-Aziz's top lieutenant Habib ibn Abi Ubayd al-Fihri. It was also rumoured that Musa's sons, Abd al-Aziz who married the ex-wife of Roderic Egilona, had secretly become a Christian. A group of Arabs assassinated him, cut off his head and sent it to the caliph. Al-Tabari held that Habib delivered Abd al-Aziz's head to the Caliph. Sulayman had Musa in his audience when the head arrived, and seeing whose it was, callously asked Musa if he recognized it. Musa maintained his dignity, saying he recognized it as belonging to someone who had always practiced the faith fervently, and cursed the men who had killed him. Another son, Abd Allah, who had acted as governor of Ifriqiya after Musa, was executed

on the orders of the caliph on suspicion of having had killed the man who had replaced him. Sulayman installed a *mawlā* of the Quraysh in place of Musa, and under his order, the new governor confiscated the wealth of Musa's family in Ifriqiya and had them tortured and killed. It was said that Musa had a history of embezzling funds during his career and Sulayman extorted considerable sums from him during his imprisonment. Caliph Sulayman later pardoned him and asked Musa to accompany him to Makkah for pilgrimage. When Spain was conquered, Musa was already in his seventies, and it was about time for him to retire when the Caliph in Damascus recalled him from Spain. Musa died naturally while on the Hajj pilgrimage with Sulayman in about the year 716AD. It was said that Musa died in Medinah -his birthplace- at the age of eighty, leaving behind a glorious record of continuous victories for the message of Islam and the Muslims. Because of his disgrace, and the misfortunes of his sons, there was a tendency among medieval historians of the Maghreb to attribute his deeds- particularly the conquest of Tangiers and the Sous- to Uqba ibn Nafi.

B) Policies as th caliph

As he remained close to the Yamanis, Sulayman did not move to Damascus on becoming Caliph, but rather he remained in Ramla in Palestine. His Khurasani governor Yazid continued expansion into mountainous parts of Iran such as Tabaristan. Sulayman also sent a large

army under Maslama ibn Abd al-Malik to attack the Byzantine capital, Constantinople. This was a determined attack that lasted through the winter. The caliph's armies also advanced beyond Byzantine territory and took a Slavic stronghold. The siege of Constantinople occasioned hunger inside the city and among the besiegers. After the intervention of Bulgaria on Byzantine side it ultimately proved to be unsuccessful. Sulayman was on his way to attack the Byzantine border when he died in 717AD. Sulayman led a conquest of Dahlak Archipelago from Kingdom of Aksum, which became caliphate territory from that point on, although later recovered in the 9th century and vassal to the Emperor of Ethiopia. In the domestic scene, he had wells built in Mecca for pilgrims, and organized enforcement of prayers. Sulayman was known for his exceptional oratory skills and was fondly remembered.

II. Conquests and military efforts

Although he largely replaced their governors, Sulayman generally maintained his predecessors' (al-Walid and Abd al-Malik) militarist and expansionist policies. Nonetheless, during his relatively short reign, the territorial expansion of the Caliphate that occurred under al-Walid virtually ground to a halt during Sulayman's reign. However, the halt in the conquests was not an indication that the impulse of expansion and conquest slackened under Sulayman, according to some

historians. The deaths of al-Hajjaj in 714 and Qutayba in 715 left the Arab armies in Transoxiana in disarray. For the next twenty-five years, no further eastward conquests were undertaken, and the Arabs lost territory. The Tang Chinese defeated the Arabs at the Battle of Aksu in 717, forcing their withdrawal to Tashkent. Meanwhile, in 716AD, the governor of Khurasan, Yazid ibn al-Muhallab, attempted to conquer the principalities of Jurjan and Tabaristan along the southern Caspian coast. His Khurasani and Iraqi troops were reinforced by Syrians, marking their first deployment to Khurasan, but the Arabs' initial successes were reversed by the local Persian coalition of Farrukhan the Great. Afterward, the Arabs withdrew in return for a tributary agreement. On the Byzantine front, Sulayman took up his predecessor's project to capture Constantinople with increased vigor. His brother Maslama besieged the Byzantine capital from the land, while Umar ibn Hubayra al-Fazari launched a naval campaign against the city. The Byzantines destroyed the Umayyad fleets and defeated Maslama's army, prompting his withdrawal to Syria in 718 AD. However, like the first siege of Constantinople (AD 674–678), the company failed with heavy losses for the Arabs. These massive losses led to a partial retrenchment of Umayyad forces from the captured Byzantine frontier districts.

▪ **Transoxiana**

On the eastern front, in Transoxiana, further conquests were not achieved for a quarter century after Qutayba's death, during which time the Arabs began to lose territory in the region. Sulayman ordered the withdrawal of the Khurasani army from Ferghana to Merv, and its subsequent disbandment. No military activity was carried out under Waki. Under Yazid ibn al-Muhallab's, deputy in Transoxiana, his son Mukhallad, expeditions were limited to summertime raids against Sogdian villages. Historians attributed the Arab military regression in Transoxiana to the void in leadership and organization left by Qutayba's death. In addition, it was also partly attributed to more effective resistance along the frontiers.

▪ **Jurjan and Tabaristan**

In 716AD, Yazid ibn al-Muhallab attempted to conquer the principalities of Jurjan and Tabaristan, located along the southern coast of the Caspian Sea. Ruled by local Persian dynasties and shielded by the Alborz Mountains, these regions had remained largely independent of Muslim rule, despite repeated attempts to subdue them. The campaign lasted for four months and involved a 100,000-strong army derived from the garrisons of Kufa, Basra, Rayy, Merv and Syria. It marked the first deployment of Syrian troops, the elite military faction of the Caliphate, to Khurasan. Yazid ibn

al-Muhallab defeated the Chöl Turks north of the river Atrek, and secured control of Jurjan by founding a city there (modern Gonbad-e Kavus). In a letter, Yazid congratulated Sulayman on the conquests of the two territories, which had eluded previous caliphs until 'God' made this conquest on behalf of Sulayman. Yazid's initial success was reversed by Tabaristan's ruler, Farrukhan the Great, and his coalition from neighboring Daylam, Gilan, and Jurjan in later confrontations that year. Afterward, Yazid withdrew Muslim troops from the region in return for a tributary arrangement with Farrukhan. Tabaristan remained independent of Arab rule until 760AD, when it was conquered by the Abbasids, the successors of the Umayyads, but remained a restive province dominated by local dynasts.

▪ **Siege of Constantinople**

The Sulayman's principal military focus was the perennial war with Byzantium, which was not only the largest, richest, and strongest of the Caliphate's enemies, but also directly adjacent to Syria, the center of Umayyad power. The Umayyads' first attack on the Byzantine capital, Constantinople, under Mu'awiya I had failed. Nevertheless, from 692 onwards, the Umayyads had been on the offensive, secured control of Armenia and the Caucasian principalities, and gradually encroached upon the borderlands of the empire. Umayyad generals, often members of the ruling family, raided Byzantine territory every year, as part of

perennial war, capturing towns and fortresses. Aided by a prolonged period of instability in Byzantium, by 712, the Byzantine defensive system began to show signs of collapse, as Arab raids penetrated ever deeper into Asia Minor. Following the death of al-Walid I, Sulayman took up the project to capture Constantinople with increased vigor. According to Arab sources, Sulaymān pursued the attack project because a prophecy foretold that a caliph who himself bore the name of a prophet would take Constantinople. Sulaymān was the only member of the Umayyad family to bear the name of an Islamic prophet (Solomon). This project of conquest was already prepared by Sulaymān's brother and predecessor, the caliph al-Walid I. In late 716AD, upon returning from the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, Sulayman encamped and mobilized his army in Dabiq in northern Syria. Sulayman said: "I will not give up the fight with Constantinople until I have forced my way into it, or I will surrender the entire territory of the Arabs to annihilation." Several *hadiths* (sayings or traditions attributed to Prophet Muhammad) associated the conquest of the city with the Mahdi, and Sulayman entered the role in his attempt to conquer it. From there, he oversaw the massive war effort against the Byzantines. Being too ill to lead the campaign in person, he dispatched his half-brother Maslama ibn Abd al-Malik to besiege the Byzantine capital from the land, with orders to remain until the city was conquered or he was recalled by the Caliph. Already from early 716, the Arab commander Umar ibn Hubayra al-Fazari had launched a

parallel naval campaign against Constantinople. While many troops were dispatched toward the Byzantine capital, Sulayman appointed his son Dawud to lead a summer campaign against the Byzantine frontier in 717, during which he captured *Hisn al-Mar'a* ("the Woman's Fortress") near Malatya. However, Sulayman's efforts ultimately failed. The Byzantines repulsed the Umayyad fleet from Constantinople in the summer of 717AD, while Maslama's army maintained its siege of the city. Umayyad fleets sent in the summer of 718 to aid the besiegers were destroyed by the Byzantines, while an Umayyad relief army was routed and repulsed in Anatolia. The extremely capable Byzantine Emperor Leo III was able to stop the onslaught of the troops of the caliph Sulaymān on Constantinople with the help of a weapon technology innovation, the Greek fire. Two months after the siege began, Sulaymān died either on 22nd September or 1st October 717, and his successor, the Caliph Umar II, continued the siege for few (just less than ten months) months without success. Having failed in the siege, Maslama's army withdrew from Constantinople in August 718, upon the orders of Sulayman's successor Umar II. The massive losses incurred during the campaign led to a partial retrenchment of the Umayyad forces from the captured Byzantine frontier districts, but already in 720, Umayyad raids against Byzantium recommenced. Nevertheless, the goal of conquering Constantinople was effectively abandoned, and the frontier between the two empires stabilized along the line of the Taurus and Anti-Taurus

Mountains, over which both sides continued to launch regular raids and counterraids during the next centuries. For the history of Europe, the defense of Constantinople (717-718AD) under the leadership of the Byzantine emperor Leo III was of great historical importance. With the almost complete loss of the Arab fleet, the Arabs' maritime domination in the eastern Mediterranean was broken for decades. On the straits between the Black Sea and Aegean Sea, the advance of the Muslims, who, at that time controlled over half of the Mediterranean coast, had been halted. Without the defense of Constantinople, the gate for Islamic expansion into Europe would have been open. The defense of Constantinople (717-718AD) was of essential importance for the development of medieval Europe. The defense of the troops of the caliphs Sulaymān and Umar II By Emperor Leo III represented the eastern counterpart to the **Battle of Tours and Poitiers** in 732 to defend Europe against Islamic expansion.

III. Cultural heritage

The poet al-Farazdaq compared Sulaymān in a poem of praise to the character of his actions with the Prophet Mohammed. This poem says: *You were sent to the people of the earth for protection and mercy, and to heal the traces of painful wounds, just as God sent the prophet Muhammad after a period of time when people were like animals.* Sulaymān spent his brief reign mainly in Palestine, with Ramla being his preferred

residence. Sulaymān has long been credited with building the *Qusair Amra* desert castle in present-day Jordan, known for its erotic wall paintings. However, recent research ascribes it to Caliph Al-Walid II (743-744 AD). In the religious literature of Islam, the report of an encounter between Sulaymān and the Medinan ascetic and traditionalist Abu Hāzim Al-Tabē'ey found wide resonance. Accordingly, while staying in Medina for Hajj, Sulaymān sent to Abū Hāzim to hear hadiths from him. Abu Hāzim, however, showed no interest in meeting the ruler. When he was finally brought in, he gave Sulaymān a long sermon in which he reproached him for his excess and exhorted him to look to the afterlife. The report serves as a teaching example in religious literature for the correct behavior of pious people towards the rulers.

Succession

In late 715 (or 716AD), Sulayman designated his eldest son Ayyub as his successor, after the death of his brother and potential successor, Marwan al-Akbar. The order is partly corroborated by an ode from the contemporary poet Jarir: The Imam, whose gifts will be hoped for, after the Imam [Sulayman], is the chosen successor, Ayyub ... You [Ayyub] are the successor to the merciful one [Sulayman], the one whom the people who recite the Psalms recognize, the one whose name is inscribed in the Torah. But shortly after Sulayman's nomination of his son Ayyub heir to the throne, Ayyub

died in early 717AD, succumbing to the so-called *ta'un al-Ashraf* ("plague of the Notables"), that afflicted Syria and Iraq. The same plague may have caused Sulayman's death. On his deathbed, Sulayman considered nominating his other son Dawud, but Raja advised against it, arguing that Dawud was away fighting in Constantinople and that it was unclear if he was still alive. In addition, his other sons were too young. Raja counseled Sulayman to choose his paternal cousin and adviser, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, describing him as a worthy, excellent man and a sincere Muslim. To avoid potential intra-dynastic strife between Umar II and Sulayman's brothers, Yazid ibn Abd al-Malik was appointed Umar's successor. Sulayman broke with tradition by not maintaining a hereditary dynasty and appointed Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz as his successor. Sulayman's nomination of Umar II over his own brothers defied the general assumptions among the Umayyad family that the office of the caliph would be restricted to the household of Abd al-Malik. Raja was chosen to execute Sulayman's will and secured allegiance to Umar II from the Caliph's brothers by threatening them with the use of force, following their protestations at being bypassed. According to some Western historians, Raja's personal connections to the traditional Muslim reports about Sulayman's nomination of Umar render Raja's role in the succession arrangements as likely 'exaggerated'. However, according to other historians, Sulayman nominated Umar because he was the contender most sympathetic to his policies. Umar II had

a reputation as being one of the most wise, capable, and pious persons of that era. This appointment is rare, although it technically fulfils the Sunni Islamic method of appointing a successor, whereas hereditary succession does not.

Death

Sulayman died in Dabiq in September 717AD and was buried there. Some reports said he was ill with pleurisy, other attributed his death to over-eating. Al-Ya'qubi described him as '*a voracious eater ... with a body that could not bear hunger*'. The 8th century Muslim historian Abu Mikhnaf dated his death to 23 or 24th September 717. He fell ill after returning from the Friday prayers and died a few days later. In an anecdote by al-Tabari and others, Sulayman donned an impressive green robe and turban and seeing himself in the mirror commented on how he looked to be in the prime of life. A slave girl belonging to Sulayman looked at him one day and said: 'You are the best object of delight—if only you would last, but man does not possess immortality. A week later he was dead. He was entombed at Dabiq following his death. Unfortunately, the tomb was destroyed during the terrorist group ISIS' takeover of the town in August 2014. The importance of Sulayman's reign does not seem to have been realized due to the medieval sources' overwhelming emphasis on the reign of his successor, Umar II. Several Islamic traditional sources credited Sulayman for reversing al-Hajjaj's measures

against non-Arab, Muslim converts by allowing the return to Basra of either the urban mawali who had supported the anti-Umayyad revolt of Ibn al-Ash'ath in 700–701, or the Iraqi peasants who converted to Islam and moved to Basra to avoid the *jizya* (poll tax designated for non-Muslims). However, the traditional accounts of Sulayman's policies regarding the runaway peasant converts were badly attested. Some historians have viewed his provincial and military appointments as, motivated by a desire to consolidate his control over the Caliphate by installing loyalists in positions of power, factional affiliations notwithstanding. Sulayman had fourteen sons. Sulayman's sons remained in Palestine and maintained strong ties with the district's Yamani tribal nobility. The Arab tribes formed Palestine's garrison and were committed to the family. His eldest surviving son was Muhammad, who was twelve years old at the time of his father's death.

Umar II

Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, commonly known as Umar II, was the eighth Umayyad caliph, reigning from September 717 until his death in 720AD. He made various significant contributions and reforms to the Umayyad society. He was also a cousin of the former caliph, being the son of Abd al-Malik's younger brother, Abd al-Aziz. He was also a matrilineal great-grandson of the second caliph, Umar ibn Al-Khattab. Umar II was born in 63H/682 AD in Madinah, although some sources said it was in Halwan, Egypt. He received his education in Madinah from his mother's uncle, the celebrated scholar Abdullah Ibn Umar. During that time his father was the governor of Egypt. Umar II stayed in Madinah till his father's death in 704, when he was called by his uncle Caliph Abdul Malik and was married to his daughter Fatima. He was appointed governor of Madinah in 706 A.D. succeeding caliph al-Walid. He was later dismissed by al-Walid because of al-Hajjaj interference, and Umar moved to Levant. Throughout the reign of caliph Suleiman, he remained as his adviser then his appointed heir. When Suleiman fell seriously ill, he wanted to appoint heir, as his sons were still minors, and his eldest son Ayyub passed away. Reja ibn Haiwah, the adviser, proposed to him to appoint his cousin Umar bin Abdul Aziz as his successor. Suleiman accepted the suggestion. When caliph Sulayman died, he was succeeded by his cousin, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz,

whose position among the Umayyad caliphs was somewhat unusual. He is the only Umayyad ruler to have been recognized by subsequent Islamic tradition as a genuine caliph (*khalifa*) and not merely as a worldly king (*malik*). After being nominated caliph, Umar II addressed the people from the pulpit saying: *"O people, I have been nominated your caliph despite my unwillingness and **without your consent**. So here I am, I relieve you of your pledge (baiyat) that you have taken, for my allegiance. Elect whomsoever you find suitable as your caliph."* People shouted that they have full faith in him. He then said: *"O people, obey me as long as I obey Allah; and if I disobey Allah, you are not duty-bound to obey me."* Umar II was extremely pious and averse to worldly luxuries. He preferred simplicity to extravagance. After his appointment as caliph, he discarded all the pompous appendages of princely life [servants, slaves, maids, horses, palaces, golden robes and real estates] and returned them to *Bait Al Maal* (public treasury). Surrounded with great scholars, Umar II is credited with having ordered the first official collection of Hadiths and encouraged education to everyone. At the same time, he remained tolerant with non-Muslim citizens. According to several historians, it was during the time of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz that the Islamic faith took roots and was accepted by huge segments of the population of Persia and Egypt. His generous reforms and leniency led the people to deposit their taxes willingly. Ibn Kathir writes that thanks to the reforms undertaken by Umar, the annual revenue from

Persia alone increased from 28 million dirham to 124 million dirhams. He undertook extensive public works in Persia, Khorasan, and North Africa, including the construction of canals, roads, rest houses for travelers and medical dispensaries. The result was that during his short reign of two and half years, people had become so prosperous and contented that one could hardly find a person who would accept alms. Umar II has been described as "the most pious and devout" of the Umayyad rulers and was often called the first *Mujaddid* and sixth righteous caliph of Islam. Umar is honoured for his attempt to resolve the fiscal problems attendant upon conversion to Islam. During the Umayyad period, most people living within the caliphate were not Muslim, but Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian, or members of other small groups. These religious communities were not forced to convert to Islam but were subject to a tax (*jizyah*) which was not imposed upon Muslims. When the officials complained that because of conversions, the *jizya* revenues of the state had experienced a steep decline, Umar II wrote back saying that "Prophet Muhammad was sent as a prophet (to invite the people to Islam) and not as a tax collector." He abolished home tax, marriage tax, stamp tax and many other taxes as well. When many of his agents wrote that his fiscal reforms in favor of new converts would deplete the Treasury, he replied, "Glad would I be, by Allah, to see everybody become Muslim so that you and I would have to till the soil with our own hands to earn a living." He also insisted on like treatment of Arab and non-Arab

(*mawali*) Muslims, and on the removal of obstacles to the conversion of non-Arabs to Islam. Following the example of Prophet Muhammad, he also sent out emissaries to China and Tibet, inviting their rulers to accept Islam. Militarily, Umar is sometimes deemed a pacifist, since he ordered the withdrawal of the Muslim army in places such as Constantinople, Central Asia and Septimania despite being a good military leader. However, under his rule the Umayyads conquered many territories from the Christian kingdoms in Spain. Umar II died in Rajab 101 H, at the age of 39 in a rented house at the place called *Dair Sim'aan* near Homs. He was buried in *Dair Sim'aan* on a piece of land he had purchased from a Christian. He reportedly left behind only 17 dinars with a will that out of this amount the rent of the house in which he died and the price of the land in which he was buried would be paid. And thus, departed the great soul from the world. Prior to his death he felt ill and there were speculations that he was poisoned. The general princely Umayyad class of that time could not digest his policies of justice, simplicity, and equality. It was reported that a slave of the caliph was bribed to administer the deadly poison to him. The caliph having felt the effect of the poison sent for the slave and asked him why he had poisoned him. The slave replied that he was given 1,000 dinars for the job. The caliph took the amount from him and deposited it in *Bait Al Maal*. Freeing the slave, he asked him to leave the place immediately, lest anyone might kill him. This was his last deposit in the *Bait Al-Maal* for the welfare of Muslims.

Early years and lineage

Umar was born in Medina around 2 November 682 (680). It was unlikely that he was born in Hulwan-Egypt, as his father became the governor there later in 685 or 686AD. His father, Abd al-Aziz ibn Marwan, belonged to the wealthy Umayyad clan resident in the city of Medina. While his mother, Umm Asim bint Asim, was a granddaughter of Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab (Umar I, r. 634–644). According to a Sunni Muslim tradition, Umar's lineage to Umar ibn al-Khattab stems from a famous event during the second Caliph's rule. During one of his frequent disguised journeys to survey the condition of his people, Umar I overheard a milkmaid refusing to obey her mother's orders to sell adulterated milk. The mother reportedly told her daughter to add water to the milk as caliph Umar is not there looking at them. The girl shot back that though caliph Umar is not looking at them, but Allah is always watching over everyone. He sent an officer to purchase milk from the girl the next day and learned that she had kept her resolve; the milk was unadulterated. Umar summoned the girl and her mother to his court and told them what he had heard. As a reward, he offered to marry the girl to his son Asim. She accepted, and from this union was born a girl named Layla that would in due course become the mother of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz. His descent from caliph Umar I would later be much emphasized by Umar II and the traditional Muslim sources to differentiate him from the other Umayyad

rulers. At the time of his birth, another branch of the Umayyads, the Sufyanids, ruled the Caliphate from Damascus. When Caliph Yazid I and his son and successor, Mu'awiya II, died in quick succession in 683 and 684, respectively, Umayyad authority collapsed across the Caliphate and the Umayyads of the Hejaz, including Medina, were expelled by supporters of the rival caliph, the Mecca-based Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr. The Umayyad exiles took refuge in Syria, where the dynasty was supported by loyalist Arab tribes. Umar II's grandfather, Marwan I, was ultimately recognized by these tribes as caliph and, with their support, reasserted Umayyad rule in Syria. In 685, Marwan ousted Ibn al-Zubayr's governor from Egypt and appointed Umar's father to the province as viceroy to the caliph. Umar spent part of his childhood in Egypt, particularly in Hulwan, which had become the seat of his father's governorship between 686 and his death in 705. Following the death of Umar's father, Abd al-Malik recalled Umar II to Damascus. He received most of his education in Medina, which was retaken by the Umayyads under Umar's paternal uncle, caliph Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705), in 692. Having spent much of his youth in Medina, Umar developed ties with the city's pious men and transmitters of hadiths. Later, Umar II married Abd al-Malik's daughter Fatima. His father-in-law would die soon after, and Umar II would serve as governor of Medina under his cousin Al-Walid I.

Pre-caliphate works and duties

1) Abd al-Malik's reign

Umar II spent much of his youth in Medina, learning and receiving his education from great scholars. It was said that caliph Abd al-Malik appointed him in Khunāsira' (Khanasir and in Arabic: **خناصر**) administration, a town located in the Khanasir valley at Syria's as-Safira District.

2) Al-Walid I's reign

Governor of Medina

Shortly after his accession, Abd al-Malik's son and successor, al-Walid I (r. 705–715), appointed Umar II governor of Medina. The main aim of al-Walid was to use Umar to reconcile the townspeople of Medina to Umayyad rule and the evil memory of the preceding Umayyad governors, namely Hisham ibn Isma'il al-Makhzumi, whose rule over Medina had been harsh for its inhabitants. Umar II took up the post in February/March 706 and his jurisdiction later extended to Mecca and Ta'if. Thus, he was governing the Hejaz region. Information about his governorship is scant, but most traditional accounts note that he was a "just governor". Unlike most rulers of that era, Umar II formed a council (*Shura*) with which he administered the province.

Umar II tolerated many of these scholars' open criticism of the Umayyad government's conduct. His time in Medina was so notable that official grievances sent to Damascus all but ceased. However, some other accounts hold that he showed himself to be materialistic during his early career. On caliph al-Walid's orders, Umar undertook the reconstruction and expansion of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina beginning in 707AD. He often led the annual Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca and showed favor toward the Islamic legal scholars of Medina, notably Sa'id ibn al-Musayyab. Under Umar's generally lenient rule, the Hejaz became a refuge for Iraqi political and religious exiles fleeing the persecutions of al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, al-Walid's powerful viceroy over the eastern half of the Caliphate. According to historians, this served as Umar's "undoing" as al-Hajjaj pressured the caliph to dismiss Umar in May/June 712.

The dismissal

While Umar II was governing Hejaz, many people emigrated to Medina from Iraq seeking refuge from their harsh governor, Al-Hajjaj bin Yousef. That angered Al-Hajjaj, and he pressed al-Walid to remove Umar. Much to the dismay of the people of Medina, al-Walid bowed to Hajjaj's pressure and dismissed Umar from his post. By this time, Umar had developed an impeccable reputation across the Islamic empire. It is said that 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul Aziz was removed because of his

justice and fairness which exposed the other Wulaa like Al-Hajjaj Bin Yousuf who was ruthless and ruled with an iron fist. This was the type of ruling that characterised the rule of caliph Al-Waleed whom the historians described as an oppressor and tyrant despite his many achievements regarding the spreading of Islam and conquests. In particular those in Andulus under the leadership of Taariq Bin Ziyaad and Sind under the leadership of Muhammad Bin Qaasim. It was also reported that when Umar II was made the governor of Madina, he asked the caliph that he wished to be excused from Hajjaj coming to Madinah. After which, Hajjaj was prevented from going to Madina. Some historians said that contributed to his dismissal. Despite his dismissal, Umar remained in al-Walid's favor, being the brother of the caliph's first wife, Umm al-Banin bint Abd al-Aziz. He remained in al-Walid's court in Damascus until the caliph's death in 715, and according to the 9th century historian al-Ya'qubi, he performed the funeral prayers for al-Walid.

3) Sulayman's era

Al-Walid's brother and successor, Sulayman, held Umar in high regard. Alongside Raja ibn Haywa al-Kindi, an influential religious figure in the Umayyads' court, Umar II served as a principal adviser of Sulayman. He accompanied the latter when he led the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca in 716 and on his return to Jerusalem. Likewise, he was at the caliph's side at the Muslims'

marshaling camp at Dabiq in northern Syria, where Sulayman directed the massive war effort to conquer the Byzantine capital of Constantinople in 717. As Suleiman fell seriously ill and was unlikely to recover, he was anxious to leave the throne to one of his sons who were still minors but was unable to do so because of their youth. His advisor Raja ibn Haywah then promptly proposed Umar II as the successor to the throne. Suleiman accepted this suggestion and Umar II, reluctantly accepted the position after trying unsuccessfully to dissuade Suleiman. Raja bin Haiwah, a scholar and an advisor to some of the Umayyad rulers, also worked closely with the scholars in Madina and he was the one who took Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz to Syria. Ibn Katheer wrote in his book the *Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah* that during the time of Abdul Malik, Raja bin Haiwah also managed the finances for the construction of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, that stands to this day. Later the future Umayyad ruler Sulaiman would also consult Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz. Al-Hajjaj opposed Sulaiman from becoming Caliph, even though his father had written in his will that after his brother, Sulaiman would be Caliph. So Sulaiman became even closer to Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz who also opposed Hajjaj.

Accession and assumption of power as caliph

According to the traditional Muslim sources, when Sulayman was on his deathbed in Dabiq, he was persuaded by Raja to designate Umar as his successor.

Sulayman's son Ayyub had been his initial nominee, but predeceased him, while his other sons were either too young or away fighting on the Byzantine front. The nomination of Umar II voided the wishes of Abd al-Malik, who sought to restrict the office to his direct descendants. The elevation of Umar II, a member of a cadet branch of the dynasty, in preference to the numerous descendants of Abd al-Malik surprised these princes. Raja managed the affair, calling the Umayyad princes into Dabiq's mosque and demanding that they recognize Sulayman's will, which Raja had kept secret. Only after the Umayyads accepted did Raja reveal that Umar was the caliph's nominee. Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik voiced his opposition but relented after being threatened with violence. A potential intra-dynastic conflict was averted with the designation of a son of Abd al-Malik, Yazid II, as Umar's successor. According to few historians, Raja's role in the affair was likely "exaggerated"; a more reasonable anecdote was that Umar's succession was the result of rather traditional patterns, like seniority and well-founded claims stemming from caliph Marwan I's original designation of Umar's father, Abd al-Aziz, as Abd al-Malik's successor, which had not materialized due to Abd al-Aziz predeceasing Abd al-Malik. Umar acceded without significant opposition on 22 September 717.

Caliphate of Umar II

The Umayyads had turned the Caliphate into a family business, they lived like kings and princes in luxury and extravagance, and they would use the wealth of the *Ummah* (nation) to satisfy their greedy desires. Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz was a scholar himself and surrounded himself with great scholars like Muhammed bin Kaab and Maimun bin Mehran. He offered stipends to teachers and encouraged education. Through his personal example, he inculcated piety, steadfastness, business ethics and moral rectitude in the general population. His reforms included strict abolition of drinking, forbidding public nudity, elimination of mixed bathrooms for men and women and fair dispensation of *Zakat* (alms). He undertook extensive public works in Persia, Khorasan, and North Africa, including the construction of canals, roads, rest houses for travelers and medical dispensaries. Umar II continued the welfare programs of the last few Umayyad caliphs, expanding them and including special programs for orphans and the destitute. He would also abolish the *jizya* tax for converts to Islam, who were former *dhimmis*, who used to be taxed even after they had converted under other Umayyad rulers.

I. Provincial administrations

Shortly after his accession, Umar II overhauled the administrations of the provinces. He appointed

competent men that he could control, indicating his intention was to keep a close eye on provincial administration. Historians noted that the caliph Umar II did not leave the governors to their own devices in return for their forwarding of the provincial revenues; rather, he actively oversaw his governors' administrations, and his main interest was not so much the increase of power as the establishment of right. He subdivided the vast governorship established over Iraq, and the eastern Caliphate under Abd al-Malik's viceroy al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. Sulayman's appointee to this super-province, Yazid ibn al-Muhallab, was dismissed and imprisoned by Umar for failing to forward the spoils from his earlier conquest of Tabaristan along the southern Caspian coast to the caliphal treasury. In place of Ibn al-Muhallab, he appointed Abd al-Hamid ibn Abd al-Rahman ibn Zayd ibn al-Khattab, a member of Caliph Umar I's family, to Kufa, Adi ibn Artah al-Fazari to Basra, al-Jarrah ibn Abdallah al-Hakami to Khurasan and Amr ibn Muslim al-Bahili, a brother of the conqueror Qutayba ibn Muslim, to Sind. He appointed Umar ibn Hubayra al-Fazari to the *Jazira* (Upper Mesopotamia). Although many of these appointees were pupils of al-Hajjaj or affiliated with the Qays faction, Umar II chose them based on their reliability and integrity, rather than opposition to Sulayman's government. Umar appointed al-Samh ibn Malik al-Khawlani to *al-Andalus* (Iberian Peninsula) and Isma'il ibn Abd Allah to *Ifriqiya*. He chose these governors because of their perceived neutrality in

the tribal factionalism between the Qays and Yaman and justice toward the oppressed.

II. Reforms

Equality (equalization measures)

The most significant reform of Umar II was affecting the equality of Arabs and *mawali* (non-Arab Muslims). This was mainly relevant to the non-Arab troops in the Muslim army, who had not been entitled to the same shares in spoils, lands and salaries given to Arab soldiers. The policy also applied to Muslim society at large. Under previous Umayyad rulers, Arab Muslims had certain financial privileges over non-Arab Muslims. Non-Arab converts to Islam were still expected to pay the *jizya* (poll tax) that they paid before becoming Muslims. Umar II put into practice a new system that exempted all Muslims, regardless of their heritage, from the *jizya* tax.

Taxation reforms

Umar II abolished the *jizya* tax (poll tax) for converts to Islam, who were former *dhimmis*, who used to be taxed even after they had converted under other Umayyad rulers. In addition, Umar II added some safeguards to the system to make sure that mass conversion to Islam would not cause the collapse of the finances of the Umayyad government. Under the new tax policy,

converted *mawali* would not pay the *jizya* (or any other dhimmi tax), but upon conversion, their land would become the property of their villages and would thus remain liable to the full rate of the *kharaj* (land tax). This compensated for the loss of income due to the diminished *jizya* tax base. He issued an edict on taxation stating: *'Whosoever accepts Islam, whether Christian, Jew or Zoroastrian, of those now subject to taxes and who joins himself to the body of the Muslims, in their abode, forsaking the abode in which he was before, he shall have the same rights and duties as they have, and they are obliged to associate with him and to treat him as one of themselves'*.

Islamization

Possibly to stave off potential blowback from opponents of the equalization measures, Umar II expanded the Islamization drive that had been steadily strengthening under his Marwanid predecessors. The drive included measures to distinguish Muslims from non-Muslims and the inauguration of an Islamic iconoclasm. He also put a stop to the ritual cursing of Caliph Ali (r. 656–661), the cousin and brother-in-law of Prophet Muhammad, in Friday prayer sermons. The ritual had begun under Ali's opponent and future founder of the Umayyad Caliphate Mu'awiya I during the First Muslim Civil War.

First official collection of hadith

Umar II is credited with having ordered the first official collection of *hadith* (sayings and actions attributed to the Islamic prophet Muhammad), fearing that some of it might be lost. Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn Amr ibn Hazm and Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri are among those who compiled hadiths at Umar II's behest. After his appointment Umar II set up a committee of the jurist in Madina headed by Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr and it included Urwah ibn Zubayr, Ubaidullah bin Abdullah bin Utbah, Abu Bakr bin Abdur-Rahman bin al-Harith bin Hisham, Abu Bakr bin Sulaiman bin Abu Hathmah, Sulaiman bin Yasar, Salim bin Abdullah, Abdullah bin Amir bin Rabee'ah and Kharijah bin Zaid bin Thabit, in Madina to advise on legal matters. The work of Malik ibn Anas and successive jurists is also based on the work of this early committee in Madina. Malik ibn Anas also refers to these *Fuqaha* (scholars) of Madina. Madina at the time had the largest number of Prophet Muhammad's companions therefore no one could lie about what Muhammad had said, while in Madina during that period. After becoming the caliph, Umar Ibn Adbul Aziz worked very closely with the scholars in Madina to make the laws in line with the Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad's.

Other reforms

Umar II made other reforms:

1. State officials were excluded from entering any business.
2. Unpaid labour was made illegal.
3. Pasture lands and game reserves, which were reserved for the family of the dignitaries, were evenly distributed among the poor for the purpose of cultivation.
4. He urged all the officials to listen the complaints of the people and during any occasion, he used to announce that if any subject had seen any officer mistreating others, he should report him to the leader and will be given a reward ranging from 100 to 300 dirhams.

III. Military policy

After his accession in late 717, Umar II ordered the withdrawal of the Muslim army led by his cousin Maslama ibn Abd al-Malik from their abortive siege against Constantinople to the regions of Antioch and Malatya, closer to the Syrian frontier. Umar II commissioned an expedition in the summer of 718 to facilitate their withdrawal. However, Umar II kept up the annual summer raids against the Byzantine frontier, out of the obligation to *jihad*. He remained in northern Syria, often residing at his estate in Khunasira (in Syria), where he built a fortified headquarters. At some point in 717, he dispatched a force under Ibn Hatim ibn al-Nu'man al-Bahili to Adharbayjan to disperse a group of Turks who had launched damaging raids against the

province. In 718, he successively deployed Iraqi and Syrian troops to suppress the Kharijite rebellion of Shawdhab al-Yashkuri in Iraq, though some sources say the revolt was settled diplomatically, as he started peace talks with the Kharijites. Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari states that *Umar II sent Ibn Hatim ibn al-Nu'man to repel Turks invading Azerbaijan. He faced a Kharijite uprising and preferred negotiations to armed conflict, personally holding talks with two Kharijite envoys shortly before his death.* Umar II is often deemed a pacifist by the sources and historians attributed that to several factors, although some other historians consider this reasoning to be insufficient:

- 1- The caliph's war-weariness to concerns over the diminishing funds of the caliphal treasury.
- 2- Umar II was disinclined to wars of conquest, well-knowing that they were waged, not for God, but for the sake of spoil.
- 3- The massive losses faced by the Arabs in their abortive siege against Constantinople, including the destruction of their navy, that caused Umar II to view his positions in al-Andalus, separated by the rest of the Caliphate by sea, and Cilicia as acutely vulnerable to Byzantine attack.
- 4- Umar II's efforts to curb offensives was linked to the resentment of the Yamani elements of the army, who had been politically dominant under Umar II, at excessive deployments in the field.

Thus, he favored withdrawing Muslim forces from these two regions, Constantinople, and Cilicia. This same calculus led to him to consider withdrawing Muslim forces from Transoxiana so as to shore up the defenses of Syria. Though Umar did not place as much an emphasis on expanding the Empire's borders as his predecessors had, he was not passive. During his reign, the Muslim forces in al-Andalus conquered and fortified the Mediterranean coastal city of Narbonne in modern-day France

IV. Efforts in inviting people to Islam (*Dawah*)

According to several scholars and historians, it was during the time of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz that Islam took roots and was accepted by a large segment of the population of Persia and Egypt. When the officials in these provinces complained that because of conversions to Islam, the *jizya* (poll-tax) revenues of the state had experienced a steep decline, Umar II wrote back saying that he had accepted the Caliphate to invite people to Islam and not to become a tax collector. The infusion of non-Arabs in large number into the fold of Islam shifted the center of gravity of the empire from Medina and Damascus to Persia and Egypt. Although Umar II halted further eastward expansion, the establishment of Islam in several cities in Transoxiana, precluded Umar's withdrawal of Arab troops from there. Following the example of the Prophet, Umar II sent out

emissaries to China and Tibet, inviting their rulers to accept Islam.

Death

On his way back from Damascus to Aleppo or possibly to his Khunasira estate, Umar II fell ill. It was reported that he was poisoned because he reduced the allowances of the Umayyad family members, which they deeply resented. His reforms in favor of the people greatly angered the nobility of the Umayyads, and they would eventually bribe a servant into poisoning his food. Umar II learned of this on his death bed and pardoned the culprit, collecting the punitive payments he was entitled to under Islamic law but depositing them in the public treasury. He died between 5th and 10th February 720, at the age of 39 (probably forty years old), in the village of *Dayr Sim'an* (also called *Dayr al-Naqira*) near Ma'arrat al-Nu'man. Umar II had purchased a plot there with his own funds and was buried in the village, where the ruins of his tomb, built at an unknown date, are still visible till recently. The tomb is located in village of Deir Al-Sharqi near Maaret al-Numan. However, in May 2020, during the Syrian Civil War, the pro-regime forces in Idlib reportedly set fire to the tomb after capturing the town of Maaret al-Numan from opposition hands. No information was available about where the remains buried inside were moved. Umar II was succeeded by his cousin Yazid II. The Muslim traditions recognized Umar as an authentic caliph, while the other Umayyads

were viewed as kings. The unanimous view in the Muslim traditional sources is that Umar was pious and ruled like a true Muslim in singular opposition to the other Umayyad caliphs, who were generally considered godless usurpers, tyrants, and playboys. His policies made him very popular with the population but not so popular with the Umayyads. Following his death, when the future rulers tried to reverse his policies, the population started to rebel. Several historians stated, that he was a pious individual who attempted to solve the problems of his day in a way which would reconcile the needs of his dynasty and state with the demands of Islam. In addition, Umar II acted to prevent the collapse of the caliphate by maintaining the unity of the Arabs; removing the grievances of the *mawālī*; and reconciling political life with the claims of religion. Shah Waliullah Dehlawi, an 18th century Sunni Islamic scholar, stated: 'A *Mujadid* appears at the end of every century: The Mujadid of the 1st century was Imam of Ahlul Sunnah, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz. The Mujadid of the 2nd century was Imam of Ahlul Sunnah Muhammad Idrees Shaafi. The Mujadid of the 3rd century was Imam of Ahlul Sunnah Abu Hasan Ashari. The Mujadid of the 4th century was Abu Abdullah Hakim Nishapuri'.



Umayyad empire in 720.

- "Prophet Muhammad was sent as a prophet (to invite the people to Islam) and not as a tax collector."
- " *Al-Taqwa* (piety) does not mean spending the night in prayers and observing fast in the day, but it does mean: to perform Divine obligations and to avoid prohibitions; and if one acts upon additional good deeds, this will be light upon light."
- " None can reach the state of *taqwa* (piety) until he possesses neither actions nor words that can be exposed to his embarrassment, either in this World or the Hereafter. "
- " There are five things which if a judge missed any of them, it will be a blemish on him: A judge should be discerning, deliberate, chaste, resolute, knowledgeable and inquisitive. "

Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (Umar II)

Yazid ibn Abd al-Malik

Yazid ibn Abd al-Malik ibin Marwân, also referred to as Yazid II, was the 9th Umayyad caliph, who ruled from February 720/101H until his death in 724/105H. According to the medieval Persian historian Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Yazid II came to power on the death of Umar II on February 10, 720/101H. Yazid II was familiar with recklessness, laziness, and his love for women. In his reign the rebels revolted against him, conquests stopped, and numerous civil wars began to break out in different parts of the empire such as in the *Al Andalus* (the Iberian Peninsula), North Africa and in the east. His forces engaged in battle the Kharijites with whom Umar had been negotiating. After initial setbacks, Yazid's troops prevailed and the Kharijite leader Shawdhab was killed. Yazid ibn al-Muhallab had escaped confinement on the death of Umar. He made his way to Iraq. There he was much supported. He refused to acknowledge Yazid II as caliph and led a very serious uprising. Initially successful, he was defeated and killed by the forces of Maslamah ibn Abd al-Malik. In 102H (720-721) in Ifriqiyah, the harsh governor Yazid ibn Muslim was overthrown and Muhammad ibn Yazid, the former governor, restored to power. The caliph accepted this and confirmed Muhammad ibn Yazid as governor of Ifriqiyah. In the east, al-Djarrah ibn Abdullah, Yazid's governor in Armenia and Azerbaijan, pushed into the Caucasus, taking Balanjar in 104H

(722-723). The Byzantine chronicler Theophanes *the Confessor* stated that a wizard advised Yazid II that he would reign for forty years if he opposed Christian icons. Yazid did issue his iconoclastic decree, but he died the same year. During his reign, the anti-Umayyad groups began to gain power among the disaffected. Al-Tabari records that Abbasids were promoting their cause in 102H (720-721). They were already building a power base that they would later use to topple the Umayyads in 750. Yazid married a daughter of Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafi, the brother of the longtime governor of Iraq, al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafi. Together they had a son, the future al-Walid II. An anecdote by al-Tabari told of Yazid is that his wife Sudah learning he was pining for an expensive slave girl, purchased this slave girl and presented her to Yazid II as a gift. This woman's name was *Hababah*, and she predeceased Yazid. It is said that, while feasting with *Hababah*, Yazid II threw a grape into her mouth, on which she choked and died in his arms. Yazid II died the next week in 724 and some reported said he died of tuberculosis. He was succeeded by his brother Hishâm bin Abd al-Malik bin Marwân I.

Early life

Yazid ibn Abd al-Malik or Yazid II was born in Damascus, the center of the Umayyad Caliphate, around 690/91. He was the son of Caliph Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705) and his influential wife Atika, the daughter

of Caliph Yazid I (r. 680–683). Thus, Yazid II's pedigree united his father's Marwanid branch of the Umayyad dynasty, in power since 684, and the Sufyanid branch of Yazid I and the latter's father Mu'awiya I (r. 661–680), founder of the Umayyad Caliphate. Yazid II did not possess military or administrative experience before his reign. He rarely left Syria except for a few visits to the Hejaz (western Arabia, home of the Islamic holy cities Mecca and Medina), including once for the annual Hajj pilgrimage sometime between 715 and 717. He was possibly granted control of the region around Amman by his father caliph Abd al-Malik. There Yazid II built the Umayyad desert palaces of *al-Qastal* and *al-Muwaqqar*, both in the general vicinity of Amman. The palaces are conventionally held to have been built during his caliphate, though a few archaeologists suggest Yazid II began their construction before 720. Yazid II established marital ties to the family of the powerful viceroy of Iraq for his father and brother Caliph al-Walid I, al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf (died 714), marrying the latter's niece Umm al-Hajjaj, the daughter of Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafi. During the lifetime of al-Hajjaj, she gave birth to Yazid's sons al-Hajjaj, who died young, and al-Walid II, who became caliph in 743.

Accession

Yazid II was a natural candidate for the succession to the caliphate by dint of his descent. During this period in the Caliphate's history, a noble Arab maternal lineage

held political weight and Yazid II took pride in his maternal Sufyanid descent, viewing himself superior to his Marwanid brothers. He was chosen by his paternal half-brother Caliph Sulayman (r. 715–717) as the second-in-line for the caliphate after their first cousin Umar II, who ruled from 717 to 720. Yazid acceded at the age of 29 following the death of Umar II on 9 February 720. For much of his reign, he resided in Damascus or his estates in *Jund al-Urdunn* (the military district of Jordan), which was centered in Tiberias and roughly corresponded with the Byzantine province of Palaestina Secunda.

Achievements during his Caliphate

I. Military Works

1) Suppression of Muhallabids and ibn al-Muhallab's revolt

When Sulayman came to the throne in 96H/715, he appointed Yazid Ibn al-Muhallab to govern Iraq, who was dismissed earlier by al-Hajj during the reign of al-Walid I. The next year Sulayman appointed Yazid governor of Khurasan. During Sulayman's reign, Yazid Ibn al-Muhallab, an enemy of al-Hajjaj, had been responsible for the torture and deaths of members of al-Hajjaj's family, Yazid's in-laws, and feared retaliatory maltreatment when Yazid's accession became apparent. Shortly before or immediately after Yazid II's

accession, the veteran commander and disgraced governor of Iraq and the vast eastern province of Khurasan, Yazid ibn al-Muhallab, escaped from the fortress of Aleppo where Umar II had him imprisoned. Yazid II had long held suspicions, nurtured by al-Hajjaj, of Ibn al-Muhallab's and the Muhallabid family's influence and ambitions in Iraq and the eastern Caliphate. Evading the pursuit of Umar II's or Yazid II's commanders, Ibn al-Muhallab made his way to Basra, the center of his Muhallabids family and Azd Uman tribe. On Yazid's orders Basra's governor Adi ibn Artat al-Fazari arrested many of Ibn al-Muhallab's brothers and cousins before his arrival to the city. However, ibn Artat was unable to stop Ibn al-Muhallab's entry and the latter, with support from his Yamani tribal allies in the Basra garrison, besieged Ibn Artat in the city's citadel. The Qays–Mudar factions of the garrison, though traditional rivals of the Yaman and unsympathetic to Ibn al-Muhallab, did not actively or effectively oppose him. Thus, ibn al-Muhallab seized the citadel, captured the governor, and established control over Basra. Yazid II pardoned him, but Ibn al-Muhallab continued his opposition, declaring a holy war (*jihād*) against the caliph and the Syrian troops who effectively served as the enforcers of Umayyad authority in Iraq. Apparently, Umar II had earlier withdrawn most of the Syrians from Wasit, their main Iraqi garrison, that could be due to logistic or financial reasons. Ibn al-Muhallab was able to capture the strategic city of Wasit with relative ease. Most of the

pious Qur'an readers and the *mawālī* (non-Arab Muslim converts) of Basra supported Ibn al-Muhallab's cause, apart from the prominent scholar al-Hasan al-Basri. The dependent districts of Basra, namely Ahwaz, Fars, and Kerman, joined the revolt, though not Khurasan, where Qays–Mudar troops counterbalanced the pro-Muhallabid Yamani faction in the province's garrisons. Ibn al-Muhallab advanced toward Kufa, the other main garrison center of Iraq, where he attracted support across the tribal spectrum and among many of its noble Arab households. In the meantime, Yazid II dispatched his kinsmen, the veteran commanders Maslama ibn Abd al-Malik and al-Abbas ibn al-Walid, to suppress the revolt. They killed Ibn al-Muhallab and routed his army near Kufa on 24 August 720. Yazid II ordered the executions of the roughly two hundred prisoners-of-war captured from Ibn al-Muhallab's camp, while Ibn al-Muhallab's son Mu'awiya ordered the execution of Ibn Artat, and his thirty supporters incarcerated in Wasit. Afterward, the Umayyad authorities pursued and killed many of the Muhallabids, including nine to fourteen boys who were sent to Yazid II and executed by his order.

1) War against the Khazars

The Arab–Khazar wars were a series of conflicts fought between the armies of the Khazar Khaganate and the Rashidun, Umayyad, and Abbasid caliphates and their

respective vassals. Historians usually distinguish two major periods of conflict:

- The First Arab–Khazar War (642–652)
- The Second Arab–Khazar War (722–737)

In addition, the Arab–Khazar military confrontation also involved sporadic raids and isolated clashes from the middle of the 7th century to the end of the 8th century. The Arab–Khazar wars were a result of the attempts of the nascent Caliphate to secure control of Transcaucasia and the North Caucasus, where the Khazars were already established. Relations between the two powers remained relatively quiet until the early years of the 8th century, by which time the stage for a new round of conflict was set: Byzantine political authority had been marginalized in the Caucasus, and the Caliphate tightened its grip on Armenia after the suppression of a large-scale rebellion in 705, placing it under direct Arab rule as the province of Armenia (Arminiya). The Arabs and the Khazars now directly confronted each other for control of the Caucasus. Hostilities with the Umayyad Caliphate broke out only in the 710s, with raids back and forth across the Caucasus Mountains. In 721/722, the main phase of the war began. In the winter of this year, 30,000 Khazars invaded Armenia and inflicted a crushing defeat on the mostly Syrian army of the local (Armenia and Adharbayjan) governor Mi'laq ibn Saffar al-Bahrani at Marj al-Hijara in February and March 722. The Syrian

army of Yazid II's governor was routed by the Khazars in Armenia, south of the Caucasus. The defeat marked the culmination of the Caliphate's winter campaign against the Khazars and resulted in considerable Syrian losses. To avenge this defeat, Yazid II sent one of his most celebrated generals, al-Jarrah ibn Abdallah, at the head of a 25,000-strong army of Syrians, who pushed into the Caucasus homeland of the Khazars. On the news of his approach, the Khazars retreated to the vicinity of Derbent, whose Muslim garrison was still holding out. Advancing swiftly, al-Jarrah was able to enter Derbent without facing resistance and launched raiding columns into Khazar territory. Following with the bulk of his own army, he defeated a 40,000-strong Khazar army under Barjik, one of the Khazar khagan's sons, one day's march north of Derbent. Advancing north, the Arab army captured the settlements of Khamzin and Targhu, whose inhabitants were resettled elsewhere. Finally, the Arab army reached Balanjar. The city had featured strong fortifications during the first Muslim attacks in the mid-7th century, but apparently, they had been neglected in the meantime, for the Khazars chose to defend their capital by ringing the citadel with a laager or a circle of wagons. The Arabs broke it apart and stormed the city on 21 August 722. Most of Balanjar's inhabitants were killed or enslaved, but a few, including its governor, managed to flee north. The booty seized by the Arabs was so enormous that each of the 30,000 horsemen—probably an exaggeration by later historians—in the Arab army is said to have received

300 gold dinars from it. The main body of the highly mobile Khazars avoided the Muslims' pursuit and their presence compelled al-Jarrah to withdraw to Warthan south of the Caucasus and request reinforcements of from Yazid. In 723, al-Jarrah led another raid north of Balanjar but made no remarkable gains. Some of the Khazar prisoners were drowned on al-Jarrah's orders. His army reduced the neighbouring fortresses as well and continued their march north. The strongly garrisoned fortress of Wabandar capitulated in exchange for tribute, but the Arab advance was cut short before reaching the next important Khazar settlement, Samandar. Despite their success, the Arabs had not yet defeated the main Khazar army, which like all nomad forces was not dependent on cities for supplies. The presence of this force near Samandar, as well as reports of rebellions among the mountain tribes in his rear, forced the Arabs to retreat to Warthan south of the Caucasus. On his return, al-Jarrah reported on his campaign to the Caliph, but requested additional troops to defeat the Khazars, an indication of both the severity of the fighting and perhaps that his campaign was not such a resounding success as portrayed in the Muslim sources. The sources are obscure on al-Jarrah's activity in 723, but he seems to have led another campaign north beyond Balanjar. In response, the Khazars raided south of the Caucasus, but in February 724, al-Jarrah inflicted a crushing defeat on them in a battle between the rivers Cyrus and Araxes that lasted for several days. The new caliph, Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik (r. 724–743),

promised to send reinforcements, but eventually failed to do so. Later in 730, in one such raid, the Khazars inflicted a major defeat on the Umayyad forces at the **Battle of Ardabil**, killing al-Jarrah, but were in turn defeated the next year and pushed back north. Maslama then recovered Derbent, which became a major Arab military outpost and colony, before being replaced by Marwan ibn Muhammad (the future caliph Marwan II) in 732.

b) Escalation of Qays–Yaman factionalism

The Muhallabid revolt's suppression marked the last of the great anti-Umayyad uprisings in Iraq. The defeat of the Muhallabids and Yazid II's successive appointments to the governorship of Iraq of Maslama—who was shortly dismissed for not forwarding the provincial tax surplus to the caliph's treasury—and Maslama's lieutenant Umar ibn Hubayra al-Fazari signaled a triumph for the Qays–Mudar faction in the province and its eastern dependencies. According to several historians the proscription of the whole of the prominent and powerful Muhallabid family, a measure hitherto unheard of in the history of the Umayyids, came like a declaration of war against the Yamani faction in general, and the corollary was that the government was degenerating into a Qaisite party-rule. Thus, Yazid II was to blame for the escalation of factionalism and attributed the appointment of Ibn Hubayra to his own desire for revenge against the

Muhallabids' Yamani backers. The Yamani-affiliated tribes of Khurasan viewed the events as a humiliation and during the Abbasid Revolution which toppled the Umayyads in 750 they adopted as one of their slogans "revenge for the *Banu Muhallab* [Muhallabids]". On the other hand, several historians consider Yazid II's portrayal as "a pro-Mudar and anti-Yamani extremist" as unfair, as he actually tried to balance the conflicting groups, just as other Umayyad rulers did. Furthermore, Yazid II did not champion the Qays over the Quda'a, a major component of the Yamani confederation in Syria. Indeed, members of the Quda'a's principal tribe, the Banu Kalb, had formed the core of the caliph's army during the suppression, pursuit and elimination of the Muhallabids. In addition, he appointed Yamani governors to the large provinces of Ifriqiya (North Africa west of Egypt) and the Jazira (Upper Mesopotamia) and its dependent districts of Adharbayjan and Armenia.

II. Fiscal and military policies

The expenses of enforcing Umayyad rule in Iraq and the expansionist war efforts along multiple fronts, including the enormous cost of the failed sieges of Constantinople in 717–718, had erased much of the monetary gains from the conquests of Transoxiana, Sind and the Iberian Peninsula under al-Walid I and caused a financial crisis in the Caliphate. Among the solutions of Yazid II's predecessor to the fiscal burden were:

- The withdrawal of the Syrians from Iraq
- A halt on conquests
- Near elimination of grants to Umayyad princes
- An unrealized goal to withdraw Arab troops altogether from Transoxiana, the Iberian Peninsula and Cilicia.

Earlier, the most significant reforms of Umar II was granting equality to the *mawālī* in Khurasan, Sind, Ifriqiya and the Iberian Peninsula by abolishing the *jizya*, the poll tax traditionally exacted on non-Muslim subjects but in practice extended to non-Arab Muslim converts, and instituting equal pay for *mawālī* in the ranks of the Caliphate's Arab-dominated armies. According to some historians, these reforms favoring the *mawālī* may have been guided by Umar II's piety, but also a fiscal consideration, which is: if equal treatment with the Arabs made the government popular with the *mawālī* it could translate into delegating an increased security role for the *mawālī* in their native provinces and their enthusiastic defense of the Caliphate's frontiers, thereby reducing the expense of deploying and garrisoning Arab troops. Yazid attempted to reverse, with limited success, the reforms of Umar II, which were opposed by the Arab militarist camp in the Caliphate and the Umayyad ruling family. During Umar II's rule the militarist camp led by Maslama may have accepted a temporary pause in activity to recover from the Constantinople debacle. Under Yazid, Maslama and his proteges, including Ibn Hubayra, were restored or appointed to senior

commands, Syrian garrisons were reintroduced to Iraq, the traditional annual raids against the Byzantines and the war with the Khazars were restarted, and the grants of estates or generous sums to Umayyad princes resumed. Although Yazid's policies were presumably meant to gain the backing of the ruling elite and restore the flow of war spoils, they proved insufficient to finance the Caliphate's troops, particularly as booty had become increasingly difficult to obtain by the Arab expeditionary forces. To fill the depleted coffers of the caliphal treasury Yazid II made some changes:

- He turned to the fifth of provincial tax revenues officially owed to the caliph. Historically, the provinces neglected to forward the revenues if political conditions allowed, and governors often pilfered such funds.
- To ensure the flow of revenues to the treasury, Yazid II appointed governors based on the example set by al-Hajjaj, i.e., upright, meticulously loyal, and ruthless in the collection of taxes. Unlike the era of al-Hajjaj, however, Yazid applied this principle for the first time to Ifriqiya, Khurasan, Sind and the Iberian Peninsula. A major aspect of his policy was the reinstatement of the jizya on the mawālī, which alienated the mawālī in these provinces. In **Ifriqiya**, the caliph's governor Yazid ibn Abi Muslim, himself a *mawla* from Iraq and a protégé of al-Hajjaj, was assassinated by his Berber guard in 720, shortly after his appointment, for attempting to reinstate the jizya. The Berbers reinstalled Ibn Abi Muslim's

predecessor Ismail ibn Abd Allah ibn Abi al-Muhajir and notified Yazid, who approved the change. The incident in Ifriqiya was a blow to the Caliphate's prestige in North Africa and served as a harbinger for the Berber Revolt in 740–743. In **Khurasan**, the reinstatement of the jizya in 721/22 by Ibn Hubayra's deputy Sa'id ibn Amr al-Harashi led to revolts and wars in the province that continued for twenty years and partly contributed to the Abbasid Revolution. In **Egypt** pay increases to the indigenous mawālī sailors of the Muslim fleet were reversed.

III. Iconoclastic edict

While Byzantium under the rule of Emperor Leo III in the mid-eighth century turned in upon itself through the destruction of numerous religious icons in the “First Iconoclasm”, the Umayyad Caliphate under Yazid II similarly oppressed Christian imagery through destruction of imagery in the areas where the Christians and Muslims met. These two iconoclasms, while occurring almost simultaneously and in overlapping areas, were motivated by wholly different histories, ideals, and religious opinions. These disparate motives exemplify the overwhelmingly influential nature of imagery in the early Middle Ages, at a time when icons and other art objects were believed by many to possess preternatural powers. Yazid II's iconoclasm and violence against Christian imagery were markedly different from the actions of previous caliphs, who

generally left Christians to themselves regarding use of images in their own worship spaces. Yazid II, however, became embroiled in a war upon Christian imagery beginning in 721 after he was allegedly informed by a magician that an opposition to such images would result in his successful for reign for the next thirty years. According to Greek sources, Yazid II issued an edict ordering the destruction of all icons in Christian churches across the Caliphate under the influence of a Jewish magician from Tiberias, variously called Beser or Tessarakontapechys, who promised Yazid a long life of fortune in return. Syriac sources further note that Yazid entrusted Maslama ibn Abd- al-Malik to execute the order and that the edict influenced the Byzantine emperor Leo III (r. 717–741) to enact his own iconoclastic policy in the Byzantine Empire. The assumption that Leo III's iconoclasm was influenced by Umayyad attacks on Byzantium seems relatively straightforward. The Egypt-based Arabic historians al-Kindi (d. 961), Bishop Severus ibn al-Muqaffa (d. 987) and al-Maqrizi (d. 1442) also made note of the edict and describe its execution in Egypt. The medieval historians cite different years for Yazid's edict, but modern historians hold that July 721 is the most reliable date. Later, the order was reversed by Caliph Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik, Yazid II's successor.

Death

Yazid-II died in Irbid in the Balqa (Transjordan) subdistrict of *Jund Dimashq* (military district of Damascus) on 26 Sha'ban 105 H/ 28 January 724. His son al-Walid or half-brother Hisham led his funeral prayers. Yazid had intended to appoint al-Walid as his immediate successor, but was persuaded by Maslama to appoint Hisham instead, followed by al-Walid.

Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik

Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik was the 10th Umayyad caliph who ruled from 723 until his death in 743. His father Abd al-Malik ibn Marwân was the 5th Umayyad caliph (r. 685–705). When he was born in 691 his mother named him after her father. Inheriting the caliphate from his brother Yazid II, Hisham was ruling an empire with many different problems. He would, however, be effective in attending to most of these problems, and in allowing the Umayyad empire to continue as an entity. Hisham established his palace and court in the city of Resafa in northern Syria. His long rule was to some extent an effective one, and it saw a rebirth of reforms that were originated by Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz. Hisham returned to a stricter interpretation of the *Sharia* (Islamic law) as Umar II had, and enforced it, even upon his own family. His ability to stand up to the Umayyad clan may have been an important factor in his success and may point to why his brother Yazid II was ineffective. On the military front his empire suffered a series of setbacks, including in Transoxiana. In 739 a major Berber Revolt broke out in North Africa, which was probably the largest military setback in the reign of caliph Hisham. Hisham sent armies to end the Hindu rebellion in Sindh and was successful when the Hindu ruler Jai Singh was killed. This allowed the Umayyads to reassert their rule over some portions of their provinces in India. In Spain, the internal conflicts of the years' past were ended, and

Hisham's governor, Abd ar Rahman ibn Abdallah, assembled a large army that went into France. He besieged Bordeaux and pushed to the Loire. This marked the limit of Arabic conquest in Western Europe. The wave was halted at the **Battle of Tours** (*Balat Al-Shuhada'*) by Charles Martel who inflicted a crushing defeat to the Arabs. Hisham also faced a revolt by the armies of Zayd ibn Ali in 122H/ 740 AD, grandson of Husayn bin Ali, which was put down because of the betrayal of the Kufans. Like his brother al-Walid I, Hisham was a great patron of the arts, and he again encouraged arts in the empire. He also encouraged the growth of education by building more schools, and perhaps most importantly, by overseeing the translation of numerous literary and scientific masterpieces into Arabic. Hisham died on 6 February 743 / 6 Rabi' Thani 125H, and his son Maslama led the funeral prayers. Al-Walid II succeeded him without any major opposition. Prior to his death, Hisham's attempts following the Hajj of 735 to persuade al-Walid II to step down in favor of his son Maslama or give Maslama the oath of allegiance as al-Walid's successor were rejected. Opinions are divided about his reign, as some historians believed that the military disasters of Hisham's reign brought about the Umayyad dynasty's demise. While others are of the view that Hisham has overseen a successful reign, on par with the similarly long reigns of the Umayyad Caliphate's founder Mu'awiya I (r. 661–680) and Abd al-Malik. The final son of Abd al-Malik to become caliph

was Hisham, whose long and eventful reign was above all marked by the curtailment of military expansion.

Early life

Hisham was born in Damascus, the administrative capital of the Umayyad Caliphate, in 71 H/ 691AD. His father was the Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik. His mother was A'isha, daughter of Hisham ibn Isma'il of the Banu Makhzum, a prominent clan of the Quraysh, and Abd al-Malik's longtime governor of the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina. According to the historian al-Tabari (d. 923), Hisham was given the kunya (patronymic) of *Abu al-Walid*. There is scant information about Hisham's early life. He was too young to play any political or military role during his father's reign. Hisham supposedly led the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca once during his brother al-Walid I's reign (r. 705–715) and while there, he met the respected descendant of Caliph Ali ibn Abi-Talib, Zayn al-Abidin. He is held by al-Tabari to have led an expedition against the Byzantines across the Caliphate's frontier in 706 and to have captured a number of their fortified positions. On his deathbed Sulayman had nominated their paternal first cousin Umar II but kept the order secret, entrusting the revelation to his chief advisor Raja ibn Haywa. When Raja informed the Umayyad family of the caliphal decision, Hisham protested that the office was the preserve of Abd al-Malik's direct descendants and only relented from his opposition when threatened with the use of force. It was

said that Hisham began to demonstrate aspirations for the caliphate at the death of his brother Sulayman in 717. He played no political or military role under Umar II (r. 717–720) but is mentioned in the latter's 10th century biography as having issued a letter to the caliph complaining of his and brothers' treatment under Umar's rule. Hisham also held no posts under his brother Yazid II (r. 720–724), Umar II's successor.

Accession

Upon the counsel of their brother, the leading general Maslama, Yazid II nominated Hisham as his successor over his own son al-Walid II, whom he had originally intended to designate as first-in-line. Hisham acceded after Yazid II died in January 724. He received the news while at his Syrian desert estates, *al-Zaytuna* (Qasr *al-Hayr al-Gharbi*) near al-Rusafa; Hisham's favored residence. He was given the caliphal ring and staff by a postal messenger, after which he rode to Damascus, where he was publicly acclaimed caliph.

Hisham's Reign

Hisham established his court at Resafa in northern Syria, which was closer to the Byzantine border than Damascus. Hisham inherited an empire with many different problems. He would, however, be effective in attending to these problems, and in allowing the Umayyad empire to continue as an entity. His long rule

– to some extent- was an effective one, and it saw a rebirth of reforms that were originated by Umar bin Abd al-Aziz. He returned to a stricter interpretation of the Sharia as Umar II had, and enforced it, even upon his own family. His ability to stand up to the Umayyad clan may have been an important factor in his success and may point to why his brother Yazid II was ineffective. According to tradition, Hisham ordered the hadith scholar Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri (d.742) to commit the hadith he had memorized to writing. Like a-Walid I, Hisham was a great patron of the arts, and he again encouraged arts in the empire. He also encouraged the growth of education by building more schools, and perhaps most importantly, by overseeing the translation of numerous literary and scientific masterpieces into Arabic.

Military activities

On the military front Hisham's empire suffered a series of setbacks, especially in the Caucasus against the Khazars (the **Battle of Marj Ardabil**) and in Transoxiana against the Turgesh (the "Day of Thirst" and the **Battle of the Pass**). In the Caucasus, the confrontation with the Khazars peaked under Hisham: the Arabs established Derbent as a major military base and launched several invasions of the northern Caucasus but failed to subdue the nomadic Khazars. The conflict was arduous and bloody, and the Arab army even suffered a major defeat at the Battle of Marj Ardabil in 730. Marwan ibn Muhammad, the future

Marwan II, finally ended the war in 737 with a massive invasion that is reported to have reached as far as the Volga, but the Khazars remained unsubdued. Hisham suffered still worse defeats in the east, where his armies attempted to subdue both Tokharistan, with its centre at Balkh, and Transoxiana, with its centre at Samarkand. Both areas had already been partially conquered but remained difficult to govern. Once again, a particular difficulty concerned the question of the conversion of non-Arabs, especially the Sogdians of Transoxiana. Following the Umayyad defeat in the "**Day of Thirst**" in 724, Ashras ibn 'Abd Allah al-Sulami, governor of Khurasan, promised tax relief to those Sogdians who converted to Islam but went back on his offer when it proved too popular and threatened to reduce tax revenues. Discontent among the Khorasani Arabs rose sharply after the losses suffered in **the Battle of the Defile** in 731. In 734, al-Harith ibn Surayj led a revolt that received broad backing from Arabs and natives alike, capturing Balkh but failing to take Merv. After this defeat, al-Harith's movement seems to have been dissolved. The problem of the rights of non-Arab Muslims would continue to plague the Umayyads.

1) **Military Campaigns**

Sind

In **Sind**, Hisham sent armies to end the Hindu rebellion and was successful when the Hindu ruler Jai Singh was

killed. This allowed the Umayyads to reassert their rule over some portions of their provinces in India. Some invasions of Indian kingdoms were led by the Arab governors of Sind, but they were unsuccessful. In addition, in India, the Umayyad armies were defeated by the south Indian Chalukya dynasty and by the north Indian Pratiharas Dynasty, stagnating further eastward Arab expansion

Byzantine front

On the **Byzantine front**, under Hisham's rule, regular raids against the Byzantine Empire continued. In fact, Hisham established his court at Resafa in northern Syria, which was closer to the Byzantine border than Damascus, and resumed hostilities against the Byzantines, which had lapsed following the failure of the last siege of Constantinople. The new campaigns resulted in several successful raids into Anatolia, but also in a major defeat (the **Battle of Akroinon**) and did not lead to any significant territorial expansion. One regular commander of Arab forces was the redoubtable Maslama, Hisham's half-brother. He fought the Byzantines in 726AD /107H and the next year captured Caesarea Mazaca. Maslama also fought the Khazars in the Caucasus. In 728, he fought for a month against the Khaqan there and defeated him. Hisham's son Mu'awiya was another Arab commander in the almost-annual raids against the Byzantine Empire. In 728, he took the fort of Samalu in Cilicia. The next year

Mu'awiya thrust left and Sa'id ibn Hisham right, in addition to a sea raid. In 731, Mu'awiya captured Kharsianon in Cappadocia. Mu'awiya raided the Byzantine Empire in 731AD/113H. The next year he captured Aqrun (Akroinos), while Abdallah al-Battal took a Byzantine commander prisoner. Mu'awiya raided Byzantium from 734–737. In 737, al Walid ibn al Qa'qa al-Absi led the raid against the Byzantines. The next year Sulayman ibn Hisham captured Sindira (Sideroun). In 738–739, Maslama captured some of Cappadocia and also raided the Avars. Theophanes the Confessor states that while some Arabs raided successfully in 739 and returned home safely, others were soundly defeated at the Battle of Akroinon. He recorded that internal Byzantine strife- which was the struggle between Constantine V and the usurper Artabasdos- facilitated Arab raids by Sulayman ibn Hisham in 741–742AD that made many Byzantines Arab captives. Al-Tabari refers to the same raid.

North Africa

In **North Africa**, Kharijite teachings combined with natural local restlessness to produce a significant Berber revolt. In 740AD, a large Berber force surrounded a loyal army at Wadi Sherif, where the loyalists fought to the death. Hisham dispatched a force of 27,000 Syrians, which was destroyed in 741. In 742AD, Handhala ibn Safwan began successfully, but soon was besieged in Qairawan. He led a desperate

sortie from the city that scattered the Berbers, killing thousands and re-establishing Umayyad rule.

However, the major Berber Revolt of 739-40 that broke out in North Africa, was probably the largest military setback in the reign of caliph Hisham for several reasons, including:

1. From it, emerged some of the first Muslim states, outside the Caliphate.
2. It is also regarded as the beginning of Moroccan independence, as Morocco would never again come under the rule of an eastern caliph or any other foreign power until the 20th century.
3. It was followed by the collapse of Umayyad authority in al-Andalus.

Spain

In **Spain**, the internal conflicts of the year's past were ended, and Hisham's governor, Abd al-Rahman ibn Abdallah, assembled a large army that went into France. He besieged Bordeaux and pushed to the Loire. This marked the limit of Arabic conquest in Western Europe. The wave was halted at the **Battle of Tours** by Charles Martel who ruled the kingdom of the Franks. Thus, Hisham's reign witnessed the end of expansion in the west, following that defeat of the Arab army in 732.

2) Revolt by Zayd ibn Ali

Hisham faced a revolt by the armies of Zayd ibn Ali in 122H/ 740 AD, grandson of Husayn bin Ali, which was put down because of the betrayal of the Kufans. Zayd is the son of Ali ibn Husayn Zayn al-Abidin and great-grandson of Ali ibn Abi Talib, Zayd belonged to the Quraysh's aristocratic Banu Hashim clan. He was allegedly the author of *Musnad Zayd*, the earliest known work of Islamic law. However, the attribution is disputed; these likely represent early Kufan legal tradition. Zayd ibn Ali is also seen as a major religious figure by many Sunnis and was supported by the prominent Sunni jurist, Abu Hanifa, who issued a fatwa in support of Zayd against the Umayyads. Unlike his brother, Muhammad al-Baqir, the fifth Imam of the Twelver and Isma'ili Shi'as, Zayd ibn Ali believed the time was ripe for renewing the rebellion against the Umayyad Caliphs in support of the claims of his own Hashemite clan. Zayd was ordered to leave Kufa and though he appeared to set out for Mecca, he returned and dwelt secretly in Kufa moving from house to house and receiving the allegiance of many people. Zayd was persuaded by pro-Alids of Kufa that he had support of 10,000 warriors and could easily drive out a few hundred Umayyad soldiers stationed there. He started his propaganda in Kufa, Basra and Mosul and 15,000 people were enlisted on his army register. Yusuf ibn Umar al-Thaqafi, Iraq's (Kufa) Umayyad governor, learned of the plot, commanded the people to gather at the great mosque,

locked them inside and began a search for Zayd. Zayd with some troops fought his way to the mosque and called on people to come out. However, in events that echoed Husayn's own abandonment by the Kufans decades earlier, the bulk of Zayd's supporters deserted him and joined the Umayyads, leaving Zayd with only a few dozen outnumbered followers. Nevertheless, Zayd fought on. His small band of followers was soundly defeated by the much larger Umayyad force, and Zayd fell in battle to an arrow that pierced his forehead. The arrow's removal led to his death on 2nd Safar 122H/ 740 AD (aged 42). He was buried in secret outside Kufa, but the Umayyads were able to find the burial place, and, in retribution for the rebellion, exhumed Zayd's body and crucified it. The body was beheaded, and the head sent to Hisham and later to Medina. It was claimed that the corpse remained on the cross for three years. After the death of Hisham, the new caliph ordered his corpse to be burned. The ashes were scattered in the Euphrates. Zayd ibn Ali is considered an important revolutionary figure by Shias and a martyr (*shahid*) by all schools of Islam, Sunnis, and Shias. The calling for revenge for his death, and for the brutal display of his body, contributed to the Abbasid Revolution. When the Abbasids, who, like Zayd, were Hashemites, overthrew the Umayyads in 750, they in turn exhumed Hisham's body, crucified it, and burned it, out of revenge for Zayd. Zayd's rebellion gave rise to the Zaidiyyah sect of Shia Islam, which holds him as the next Imam after Ali ibn Husayn Zayn al-Abidin. It is believed that from them

originated the word for Shi'ites, Rafida. To Twelver and Ismaili Shias however, his elder half-brother Muhammad al-Baqir is seen as the next Imam of the Shias.

Succession

Hisham had attempted to secure his son Maslama as his successor in place of Yazid II's son, al-al-Walid II. Hisham's initial attempts following the Hajj of 735 to persuade al-Walid II to step down in favor of Maslama or give Maslama the oath of allegiance as al-Walid's successor were rejected. Afterward, Hisham sought to undermine al-Walid II and secretly gathered support for Maslama. The latter's nomination was supported by his eponymous paternal uncle, the prominent general Maslama ibn Abd al-Malik, and Hisham's maternal grandfather, Hisham ibn Isma'il al-Makhzumi, the latter's sons Ibrahim and Muhammad, as well as the sons of the influential Banu Abs chief of northern Syria, al-Qa'qa' ibn Khulayd. Maslama's mother Umm Hakim also lobbied for her son. Opposed to Maslama's proposed succession was Khalid al-Qasri, the governor of Iraq, to which Maslama responded by insulting him and his dead brother Asad. Maslama ibn Abd al-Malik's death in the late 730s was a major setback to Hisham's succession plans as it represented the loss of the plan's key supporter in the Umayyad dynasty. Al-Walid II acceded and immediately ordered his cousin, the veteran commander al-Abbas ibn al-Walid, arrest

Hisham's sons at Rusafa, near Palmyra, but expressly forbade that Maslama or his household be disturbed in deference to their old companionship and Maslama's defense of al-Walid II from Caliph Hisham.

Death

Hisham died on 6 February 743 / 6 Rabi' Thani 125H, and his son Maslama led the funeral prayers. Al-Walid II succeeded him without any major opposition. According to several modern historians, the military disasters of Hisham's reign brought about the Umayyad dynasty's demise. The state struggled to absorb the significant losses incurred by these defeats. Its treasury was dependent on war booty, and it lacked efficient means to collect tax revenue from its subjects. An unprecedented economic crisis ensued, precipitating stringent taxation efforts and a substantial reduction in spending. This caused widespread discontent throughout the Caliphate, while also failing to remedy state finances. Meanwhile, the harshness and diminishing material returns from campaigning along the frontiers sapped the enthusiasm of the provincial garrisons and further increased Hisham's dependence on the Syrian army, the bedrock of the dynasty, to the chagrin of the locally established troops. As Syrian troops were dispatched against external forces on the frontiers and to quell major internal revolts throughout the Caliphate, they suffered the brunt of the military debacles. The Syrians were

mostly Yamani, and their dispersal and heavy losses disrupted the factional balance, upon which the Umayyad state depended, in favor of the Qays/Mudar of the *Jazira*. The Qays/Mudar became the main component of the army under Marwan II (r. 744–750) and their rout by the Khurasani troops of the Abbasids marked the end of the Umayyad dynasty. Other modern historians and the early Islamic tradition are of the view that Hisham has overseen a successful reign, on par with the similarly long reigns of the Umayyad Caliphate's founder Mu'awiya I (r. 661–680) and Abd al-Malik. Similarly, the Islamic tradition portrays Hisham as a conscientious and efficient, if severe and tightfisted, administrator. In addition, the Umayyad state had never been as strong as it had been under Hisham only a decade before the final collapse in 750AD.

Chapter II

Phase of Decline and Collapse

(Second phase of Marwanids)

Al-Walid ibn Yazid (Al-Walid II)

Al-Walid ibn Yazid ibn Abd al-Malik, usually known simply as al-Walid II, was the eleventh Umayyad caliph ruling from 743 until his assassination. He succeeded his uncle Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik on his death in 743AD, as his father Yazid had predestined (720-724). In his early years, his uncle caliph Hisham became increasingly displeased with his nephew's behaviour - including an excessive love for poetry and drinking of alcohol - and considered passing the succession to Hisham's son instead. However, Hisham's attempts to secure Maslama ibn Hisham as his successor in place of the appointed successor, his predecessor's son al-Walid II failed. Maslama's mother Umm Hakim (daughter of al-Hajjaj brother Muhammad) also lobbied for her son's succession. Al-Walid II refused to step down in favor of Maslama, and after Hisham's death Al-Walid II acceded to the caliphate in February 743. Under his government, the tensions between the tribes of the North and South Arabians tightened considerably. Increasingly lost the Umayyad prestige and authority, as they were no longer viewed by the careless policy of al-Walid II as a neutral mediator. Thus, the Umayyad rule became increasingly weakened, since they were based in the exercise of power, particularly in the Arab tribes and their troops. At that time, the Kharijites in Iraq Kufa were dominating large parts of the country, and the Umayyad also lost

control of the Iranian provinces. Thus, the Kharijites were able to spread the propaganda of the Abbasids quickly. Despite these internal problems al- Walid devoted himself to his construction projects in Syria, as well as the promotion of literature. He should also have self- written poems. When al - Walid II certain two of his underage sons heirs to the throne, there were tensions within the Umayyadensippe. As these sons descended from a slave and thus were not entitled to succession, many Umayyad felt ignored. Thus, it was with Yazid III a throne legitimate son of al - Walid I to challenge him. In addition, al-Walid II faced a rebellion due to his reputed drinking - against the tenets of Islam. In 744 Sulayman ibn Hisham's army defeated and killed him. He initially had the support of the future Marwan II, but Marwan later deserted to Yazid III. Al- Walid II was overthrown and murdered on 17 April 744. The reputation of the Umayyad as well as the loyalty of the Arab tribes was heavily damaged by the murder of the caliph and the now erupting power struggles. Within a few years this should lead to the downfall of the dynasty and the rise of the Abbasids.

Lineage and early life

Al-Walid was the son of Umayyad caliph Yazid II and his wife Umm al-Hajjaj bint Muhammad al-Thaqafi in 709. His mother was the daughter of Umayyad official Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafi (brother of al-Hajj). His father, Yazid II ruled the Caliphate from 720 to January

724. Yazid II died in Irbid in the Balqa (i.e., Transjordan) subdistrict of *Jund Dimashq* (military district of Damascus) on 26 Sha'ban 105H /28 January 724. His son al-Walid and half-brother Hisham led his funeral prayers. In his early years, his uncle caliph Hisham became increasingly displeased with his nephew's behaviour - including an excessive love for poetry and drinking of alcohol - and considered passing the succession to Hisham's son instead.

Accession

Yazid II had intended to appoint al-Walid II as his immediate successor, but was persuaded by Maslama to appoint Hisham instead, followed by al-Walid II. As al-Walid II grew older, caliph Hisham became increasingly displeased with his nephew's behaviour - including an excessive love for poetry and sex - and considered passing the succession to Hisham's son, Maslama, instead. Apparently, caliph Hisham spoke to al-Walid II about his drinking of alcohol and commanded al-Walid II to send away his best drinking companion. He also cut off funds to his heir and strongly encouraged him to be more respectful in religious matters. Later, Hisham attempted to secure Maslama ibn Hisham as his successor in place of the appointed successor, his predecessor's son al-Walid II. Hisham's initial attempts following the Hajj of 735 to persuade al-Walid to step down in favor of Maslama or give Maslama the oath of allegiance as al-Walid's successor were rejected by al-

Walid. Afterward, Hisham sought to undermine al-Walid and secretly gathered support for Maslama. The latter's nomination was supported by his paternal uncle, the famous general Maslama ibn Abd al-Malik, Hisham's maternal grandfather, the former governor of Medina Hisham ibn Isma'il al-Makhzumi, and his sons Ibrahim and Muhammad, and the sons of the influential Banu Abs chief of northern Syria, al-Qa'qa' ibn Khulayd. Maslama's mother Umm Hakim also lobbied for her son's succession. Opposed to Maslama's proposed succession was Khalid al-Qasri, the governor of Iraq, to which Maslama responded by insulting him and his dead brother Asad. Maslama ibn Abd al-Malik's death in the late 730s was a major setback to Hisham's succession plans as it represented the loss of the plan's key supporter in the Umayyad dynasty. After Hisham's death he was succeeded by Al-Walid II in February 743. Al-Walid II acceded to the caliphate and immediately ordered that Hisham's sons at Rusafa, near Palmyra, be arrested by their cousin al-Abbas ibn al-Walid, but expressly forbade that Maslama or his household be disturbed in deference to their old companionship and Maslama's defense of al-Walid from Caliph Hisham.

Caliphate

Al-Walid II succeeded to the throne on the death of Hisham on 6 February 743. As heir, al-Walid was known for his open-handedness. As caliph, he took special care of the crippled and blind, increasing their stipend.

He named his two sons, al-Hakam and Uthman, to succeed him in that order as documented by a letter dated 21 May 743 in al-Tabari. Al-Tabari also quotes several of al-Walid's poems. Al-Walid II at first confirmed Nasr ibn Sayyar as governor of Khurasan. However, bribed by Yusuf ibn Umar, the caliph dismissed him. Al-Walid II appointed his uncle Yusuf ibn Muhammad governor of Medina. At the same time, Yahya ibn Zayd, the son of Zayd ibn Ali, was found in Khurasan. Nasr urged him to present himself to the caliph, to maintain Islamic unity. However, Yahya chose another path and after initial victory was slain. Al-Walid put Sulayman ibn Hisham in prison. Such a deed, as well as his reputed drinking, singing and immorality aroused opposition. Al-Walid II was fond of versifying, and he arranged horse races. The upright Yazid ibn al-Walid spoke against the new ruler's moral laxity. A group began plotting his assassination. When approached, Khalid ibn Abdallah al-Qasri declined to join in and even cautioned al-Walid. However, his vague warning aroused al-Walid's ire. Strangely, al-Walid II imprisoned Khalid and then gave him to Yusuf ibn Umar for fifty million dirhams. Yusuf tortured and killed Khalid. This intensely angered many of al-Walid's own relatives. During the reign of al-Walid II, Yazid ibn al-Walid (Yazid III) spoke out against Walid's "immorality" which included discrimination on behalf of the Banu Qays Arabs against Yemenis and non-Arab Muslims, and Yazid received further support from the Qadariya and Murji'iyah. Hearing of the plot, Marwan ibn Muhammad wrote from Armenia urging a

more prudent course of action, one more promising for the stability of the state and the preservation of the Umayyad house. This was disregarded and many armed men moved into Damascus.

His assassination

Yazid ibn al-Walid slipped into Damascus and deposed al-Walid II in a coup, following this up with a disbursement of funds from the treasury. The caliph was besieged in a castle outside the city. He fought well, but on April 16, 744, at *Al-Aghdaf*, in modern Jordan, he was defeated and killed by the forces of Sulayman ibn Hisham. According to Yazid's own account, Yazid ibn al-Walid sent Abd al-Aziz ibn al-Hajjaj to meet al-Walid II at *al-Bakhra*. Abd al-Aziz offered to set up a tribal assembly (*shura*) to decide the future of the realm. Al-Walid II rejected this offer and attacked, by which action he lost his life. He was succeeded by his cousin Yazid III. Al-Walid II had two sons, Al-Hakam and Uthman and he nominated his two young sons as Heir. Following al-Walid II's death, his cousin Yazid ibn al-Walid (Yazid III) became Caliph. Yazid III then imprisoned Walid's sons Uthman and Hakam, whom al-Walid had designated as his heirs.

Yazid III

Yazid ibn al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik, commonly known as Yazid III, was the twelfth Umayyad caliph, ruling for six months from April 744 until his death. Born in 701AD, he was the son of caliph al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik, and his mother was a Persian princess, Shah-i Afrid. In April 744, Yazid III, a son of al-Walid I, was proclaimed caliph in Damascus, and his army tracked down and killed al-Walid II in a coup. Yazid III has received a certain reputation for piety and may have been sympathetic to the Qadariyya. He died a mere six months into his reign. On accession, Yazid III promised to squander no money on wives or children, transfer no money from one province to another without a reason. He also promised not to overtax the *ahl al-dhimma* (non-Muslims). Furthermore, he promised abdication if he failed to meet his declared goals and resort to *Shura* for the selection of future caliph. His reign was marked by his defective measures, earning him the title of "The Deficient". Among the most notable was his refusal to pay a raise promised to the Army by al-Walid II. The city of Homs and several other dissident movements refused allegiance to him. His cousin, Marwan II, governor of Armenia, had initially supported al-Walid II and on al-Walid's death entered Iraq to avenge him. Although Marwan II initially opposed Yazid III's accession, Marwan later pledged allegiance to Yazid III. Yazid III ruled the Caliphate from April 744 to 4 October 744, and

he named his brother Ibrahim as his successor. Yazid fell ill, likely because of a brain tumour, and died on 3rd (or 4th) October 744. Yazid III would be succeeded by his brother Ibrahim. After reigning for only two months, Ibrahim abdicated to Marwan II, the grandson of Marwan I. Marwan II led an army from the northern frontier and entered Damascus in December 744, where he was proclaimed caliph and immediately moved the capital north to Harran, in present-day Turkey.

Early life

Yazid was the member of the influential Umayyad dynasty. His father, al-Walid was survived by several sons: al-Ya'qubi names sixteen, while historian al-Tabari named nineteen. Yazid III was the grandson of great Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik, and his grand mother was Wallada bint al-Abbas ibn al-Jaz al-Absiyya. He was the son of a Persian princess who had been given as a concubine to Caliph al-Walid I. His mother was Shah-i Afrid, a daughter of Peroz. Al-Tabari quotes a couplet of Yazid's on his own ancestry: 'I am the son of Chosroes, my ancestor was Marwan, Caesar was my grandsire, and my grandsire was Khagan'. Tabari further records descriptions of Yazid as being tall and handsome.

Ousting Al-Walid II

During the reign of his cousin al-Walid II, Yazid III spoke out against Walid's "immorality" which included

discrimination on behalf of the Banu Qays Arabs against Yemenis and non-Arab Muslims. Yazid III received further support from the *Qadariya* and *Murji'iya* (believers in human free will). In April 744, Yazid III slipped into Damascus and deposed Walid II in a coup, following this up with a disbursement of funds from the treasury. According to Yazid III's own account, he sent Abd al-Aziz ibn al-Hajjaj ibn Abd al-Malik to meet Walid II at al-Bakhra'. Abd al-Aziz offered to set up a tribal assembly (*shura*) to decide the future of the realm. Walid rejected this offer and attacked, by which action he lost his life. Yazid III had Walid's head hoisted on a lance and paraded around Damascus; Yazid III then imprisoned Walid's sons Uthman and Hakam, whom Walid II had designated as his heirs.

Accession

On accession, Yazid III gave a speech to explain that he had rebelled (against caliph al Walid II) on behalf of the Book of Allah and the Sunna of His Prophet, and that this entailed ensuring that the strong not prey upon the weak. He promised to engage in no building works, squander no money on wives or children, transfer no money from one province to another without a reason. He also promised to keep no troops on the field too long, and not to overtax the *ahl al-dhimma* (non-Muslims); instead, he would eschew discrimination and would make his payments on time. He promised abdication if he failed to meet these goals and held in

principle to *al-amr shura* – (selection council) to an elected caliphate. Al-Tabari recorded Yazid III's nickname "the Diminisher" (*Naqis*), was given because he reduced military annuities by 10%, whereas his predecessor had promised a raise. According to Islamic popular tradition, recorded in an apocalyptic style, Yazid III would go himself into the marketplace. However, the city of Homs refused allegiance to Yazid III, and there were several other dissident movements against him. Another cousin, Marwan ibn Muhammad ibn Marwan, governor of Armenia, had initially supported al-Walid II and on al-Walid's death entered Iraq to avenge him. Although the former initially opposed Yazid III's accession, Marwan later pledged allegiance to Yazid.

Caliphate

In Iraq, Yazid III appointed Mansur ibn Jumhur to replace Yusuf ibn 'Umar as governor of Iraq. On May 15, Yazid III wrote a letter (reproduced in Tabari) to the people of Iraq laying out Yazid III's version of the event at al-Bakhra, asking for support of the Umayyad dynasty up to but not including "the enemy of Allah" al-Walid II. At the end, Tabari's rendition has Yazid III exhorting the Iraqis to follow Mansur ibn Jumhur. The ex-governor of Iraq, Yusuf ibn 'Umar, was subsequently imprisoned and later killed by the son of Khalid ibn 'Abdallah al-Qasri. Mansur attempted to dismiss the Khurasani governor Nasr ibn Sayyar, but Nasr refused to accept this. Facing opposition from Juday al-Kirmani, Nasr invited al-Harith

ibn Surayj to return from his thirteen-year stay in Turgesh territory. Al-Harith arrived wearing a fine suit of armour the Khaqan had given him and gained the support of many people in Khurasan.

Death

Yazid ruled the Caliphate from April 744 to 4 October 744. Yazid named his brother Ibrahim as his successor. Yazid fell ill of a brain tumour and died on October 3 or 4, 744. Yazid III would be succeeded by his brother Ibrahim. After reigning for only two months, Ibrahim abdicated to Marwan II.

Ibrahim ibn al-Walīd

Ibrahim ibn al-Walid was the thirteenth and penultimate Umayyad caliph, ruling for only two months from October 744 until December 744 when he abdicated to Marwan II. Ibrahim was a son of Caliph al-Walid I (r. 705–715). He has been appointed by his brother, Yazid III, as his successor. When Yazid III persisted in overthrowing al-Walid II, Marwan II (governor of Armenia and Azerbaijan) at first opposed him, then rendered allegiance to him. Throughout Yazid III's Caliphate Marwan II remained a governor and he didn't claim the throne for himself. On Yazid III's early death, Marwan renewed his ambitions. Marwan II ignored Yazid's named successor Ibrahim and in 744 led an army from the northern frontier and entered Damascus in December 744, where he was proclaimed caliph. Thus, he deposed Ibrahim and became the new caliph. Ibrahim initially hid, then requested Marwan II give him assurances of personal safety. This Marwan granted and Ibrahim even accompanied the new caliph to Hisham's residence of Rusafah. Like most members of the Umayyad family, Ibrahim was executed by the Abbasids in 750AD/132H.

Early years

Ibrahim was the member of the influential Umayyad dynasty. Ibrahim was the grandson of great Umayyad

caliph Abd al-Malik, and his grand mother was Wallada bint al-Abbas ibn al-Jaz al-Absiyya. He was the son of sixth Umayyad caliph al-Walid I, who ruled from 705 to 715. Ibrahim's mother was a concubine named Su'ar or Budayra. His father, al-Walid was survived by several sons: al-Ya'qubi names sixteen, while historian al-Tabari (d. 923) names nineteen.

Reign

Yazid III named his brother Ibrahim as his successor. Shortly, Yazid III fell ill of a brain tumour and died in October 744, and Ibrahim duly succeeded him. However, Ibrahim ruled only for two months in 744 before he abdicated and went into hiding out of fear of his political opponents. The shortness of this time (4th October 744 – 4th December 744) and his incomplete acceptance led Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari to state that he did not succeed in becoming caliph. However, al-Tabari does record that Ibrahim as caliph did confirm the appointment of Abdallah ibn Umar as governor of Iraq.

Abdication

Ibrahim was named heir apparent by his brother Yazid III. Marwan II, the grandson of Marwan I, decided to oppose Yazid III, and even though he later gave allegiance to Yazid III. Throughout Yazid III's Caliphate Marwan remained a governor and he didn't claim the

throne for himself. On the early death of that caliph, Marwan II renewed his own ambitions. His ambitions, ignored Yazid's named successor Ibrahim. Marwan II led an army from the northern frontier and entered Damascus in December 744, where he was proclaimed caliph. Ibrahim requested and was granted Marwan's assurance of personal safety. He travelled with Marwan to former Caliph Hisham's residence at Rusafah in Syria. Some reports claimed that Ibrahim was imprisoned for a short period at the beginning of Marwan II's reign.

Death

Like most members of the Umayyad family, Ibrahim was executed by the Abbasids in 750AD/132H. After toppling Ibrahim, Marwan II immediately moved the capital north to Harran, in present-day Turkey. A rebellion soon broke out in Syria, perhaps due to resentment over the relocation of the capital, and in 746 Marwan razed the walls of Homs and Damascus in retaliation.

Marwān II ibn Muhammad

Marwan ibn Muhammad ibn Marwan ibn al-Hakam, usually known simply as Marwan II, was the fourteenth and last caliph of the Umayyad Caliphate, ruling from 744 until he was killed in 750AD. Marwan II was appointed Governor of Armenia and Azerbaijan by Caliph Hisham in 733, and in 736 he invaded Georgia, taking three fortresses from the Alans. He proved to be a competent leader when he served as governor of Armenia and Azerbaijan since in 733, before his short-lived rule as caliph (744–50). In April 744, when Yazid III, a son of al-Walid I, was proclaimed caliph in Damascus, and his army tracked down and killed caliph al-Walid II in a coup, Marwan II opposed Yazid III in favor of Ibrahim ibn al-Walid, although some reports claimed he was in favour of the two sons of al-Walid II. However, he later favored Yazid III then rendered allegiance to him. Throughout Yazid III's Caliphate Marwan II remained a governor and he didn't claim the throne for himself. Yazid III's short-lived rule as caliph lasted only for six months, from April to October 744. On Yazid III's early death, Marwan renewed his ambitions. Marwan II ignored Yazid's named successor Ibrahim and in 744, he led an army from the northern frontier and entered Damascus in December 744, where he was proclaimed caliph. Thus, he deposed Ibrahim and became the new caliph. Ibrahim initially hid, then requested Marwan II give him assurances of personal

safety. This Marwan granted and Ibrahim even – as per few reports- accompanied the new caliph to Hisham's residence of Rusafah. Marwan reorganized his army, took Edessa (Homs) from the Abbasids when they rebelled against him, and took Syria by 746. Marwan II's reign as caliph was almost entirely devoted to trying to keep the Umayyad empire together. Marwan II faced significant opposition from Kharijites in Iraq and Iran, who put forth first Dahhak ibn Qays and then Abu Dulaf, as rival caliphs. Al-Dahhak ibn Qays al-Shaybani led the Kharijite rebellion in 745 against Marwan II. He defeated the Syrian forces and took Kufa. Sulayman ibn Hisham turned against Marwan II but suffered a severe defeat. The Kharijites advanced on Mosul and were defeated. Sulayman joined them. Al-Dahhak's successor al-Khaybari was initially successful in pushing back Marwan's center and even took the caliph's camp and sat on his carpet. However, he and those with him fell into fighting in the camp. Shayban succeeded him. Marwan pursued him and Sulayman to Mosul and besieged them there for six months. Then, reinforced, the caliph drove them out. Shayban fled to Bahrayn where he was killed; Sulayman sailed to India. In 747, Marwan II managed to reestablish control of Iraq, but by this time a more serious threat had arisen in Khurasan, the **Abbasid Revolution** (Third Fitna). Thus, much of his reign was dominated by a civil war (Third Fitna), which was a series of civil wars and uprisings against the Umayyad Caliphate by Abbasids in Khurasan and Iraq. Starting around the end of Umar II's reign, the

Abbasid campaign gathered momentum in Khurasan. When the Abbasid envoy Abu Muslim arrived in Khurasan, the province was in turmoil due to the impact of the ongoing Umayyad civil war, which had re-ignited the feud between the Yaman and Qays tribal groups: the numerous Yamani element in the province opposed the longtime governor, Nasr ibn Sayyar, and sought to replace him with their champion, Juday al-Kirmani. Al-Kirmani led an uprising against Ibn Sayyar, and drove him from the provincial capital, Merv, in late 746, with the governor fleeing to the Qaysi stronghold of Nishapur. Abu Muslim, who is now serving as the commander-in-chief of the Abbasid Caliphate and the leader of the Abbasid Revolution, launched the Abbasid military campaign against the Umayyads. His general, Kahtaba took Merv in December 747 (or January 748), defeating the Umayyad governor, as well as Shayban al-Khariji, a Kharijite aspirant to the caliphate. That was the first step in a civil war that would lead to the fall of the Umayyad dynasty and its replacement with the Abbasids two years later. Soon afterwards, Abbasid army took Nishapur, where Nasr had sought refuge, defeated a 10,000-strong Umayyad force at Gurgan in August and subsequently took Rayy. Nahawand (Nihavand) fell after a short siege by Hassan, a son of Kahtaba, and the Abbasid army began moving towards Iraq (The Iraq phase of the Abbasid Revolution). In 748, Abu Muslim's army besieged the new garrison town of Wasit in Iraq, the town where al-Hajjaj had decreed only Syrians could live. Finally, Kufa, the capital of Iraq, fell

without significant resistance on 2 September 748. In Kufa mosque, Abu Muslim nominated Abul Abbas Al-Saffah as the first Abbasid Caliph on the 13th Rajab 132 AH/ 25th November 749, and the Abbasid era began. Marwan II was finally alarmed at these developments, especially the fall of Kufa, Marw and Wasit. The impulsive Marwan II advanced towards Iraq with an army of 120,000. Opposing him was an Abbasid army of 100,000 led by Abdullah bin Ali and the able general, Abu Ayun. The two armies met on the banks of the River Zab in Iraq near the village of *Kushaf* on the 25th of January 750. Marwan II suffered a decisive defeat by Abu al-Abbas al-Saffah on the banks of the Great Zab, **Battle of the Zab**. At this battle alone, over 300 members of the Umayyad family died. Marwan fled the battlefield, leaving Damascus, Jordan and Palestine and reaching Egypt. He pursued relentlessly by the Abbasids, and it was there on the Egyptian Nile delta, a few months after the Zab battle, that a short battle took place (Battle of Abusir). Marwan II was slain by a lance hurled by an Abbasid soldier on 6th August 750, bringing to an end Umayyad rule in the Middle East. The Abbasid victors desecrated the tombs of the Umayyads in Syria, sparing only that of Umar II, and most of the remaining members of the Umayyad family were tracked down and killed. When Abbasids declared amnesty for members of the Umayyad family, eighty gathered to receive pardons, and all were massacred. Marwan II's death on 6th August 750/ Dhul Hijja 132H, signaled the end of Umayyad fortunes in the East and was followed by the

mass killing of Umayyads by the Abbasids. Almost the entire Umayyad dynasty was killed, except for the prince Abd ar-Rahman who escaped to Spain and founded an Umayyad dynasty there (Al-Andalus).

Early life

Marwan ibn Muhammad was a member of the Marwanid household of the Umayyad Caliphate. Marwan's father, Muhammad ibn Marwan, an Umayyad prince who was the son of the fourth Umayyad Caliph Marwan I, and hence half-brother to fifth Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. Muhammad ibn Marwan was one of the most important generals of the Umayyad Caliphate in the period 690–710, and the one who completed the Arab conquest of Armenia by defeating the Byzantines, conquering their Armenian territories, and crushing the Armenian rebellion. His mother was a woman who's mostly unnamed, however sometimes is called Rayya or Tarubah, but she was most commonly known as *Umm Marwan* (meaning "Mother of Marwan"). She is likely of non-Arab origin, a Kurd according to some accounts, who has been taken captive during the suppression of Ibn al-Zubayr's revolt.

Pre-caliphate works

In 732–733, Caliph Hisham appointed Marwan II governor of Armenia. In 735–736, Marwan II invaded Georgia, devastated it and then took three fortresses of

the Alans and made peace with Tumanshah. In 739–740, he launched further raids and obtained tribute. In 744–745, on hearing news of the plot to overthrow al-Walid II, Marwan II wrote to his relatives from Armenia strongly discouraging this. He urged them to harmoniously preserve the stability and well-being of the Umayyad house. However, this was disregarded, many armed men moved into Damascus, and Yazid III slipped into Damascus and deposed al-Walid II in a coup, following this up with a disbursement of funds from the treasury. Reportedly, Marwan II, who for several years had supervised the campaigns against the Byzantines and the Khazars on the Caliphate's northwestern frontiers, had considered claiming the caliphate at the death of al-Walid II, but a Kalbi rebellion had forced him to wait. Instead, Yazid III appointed him governor to Upper Mesopotamia, and he took up residence in the Qays-dominated city of Harran. Throughout Yazid III's Caliphate Marwan remained a governor and he didn't claim the throne for himself.

Ousting Ibrahim

When Yazid III persisted in overthrowing al-Walid II, Marwan II at first opposed him, then rendered allegiance to him. However, Yazid III fell ill of a brain tumour after naming his brother Ibrahim as his successor. On Yazid III's early death in October 744, Marwan II renewed his ambitions, ignored Yazid's named successor Ibrahim, and led an army from the northern frontier and entered

Damascus in December 744, where he was proclaimed caliph. Ibrahim initially hid, then requested Marwan II to give him assurances of personal safety. This Marwan II granted, and Ibrahim even accompanied the new caliph to Hisham's residence of Rusafah.

Caliphate

Marwan named his two sons Ubaydallah and Abdullah heirs. He appointed governors and proceeded to assert his authority by force. However, the anti-Umayyad feeling was very prevalent, especially in Iran and Iraq. The Abbasids had gained much support. As such, Marwan II's reign as caliph was almost entirely devoted to trying to keep the Umayyad empire together.

I. Military campaigns

Iraq and Al-Dahhak Kharijite rebellion

Al-Dahhak ibn Qays al-Shaybani was the leader of a widespread but unsuccessful Kharijite rebellion in Iraq against the Umayyad Caliph Marwan II in 745. The deposition of al-Walid II in spring 744 began a turbulent period in the Umayyad Caliphate; his successor Yazid III died within a few months, and the ambitious governor of Armenia and Azerbaijan Marwan ibn Muhammad, rebelled against Yazid's designated successor, Ibrahim ibn al-Walid. Marwan II succeeded in gaining control of

Damascus and Syria, but elsewhere his authority ranged from theoretical to non-existent. In Iraq, this turmoil spilled over in the form of a struggle between Yazid III's governor Abdallah ibn Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz and Marwan's appointee, al-Nadr ibn Sa'id al-Harashi. This conflict allowed the Kharijites, a Muslim sect which had originated in Mesopotamia, to rise up. This revolt was initially led by Sa'id ibn Bahdal, but he died soon of the plague, and was succeeded by Dahhak. Dahhak quickly assembled a sizeable army, and managed to defeat the two rival governors, who had joined forces, in April/May 745. In the aftermath of their defeat, al-Harashi returned to Marwan II and Abdallah ibn Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz retreated to the fortress of Wasit, where he was soon besieged. In August however Ibn Umar gave himself up, and, in an unprecedented act for a member of the Umayyad dynasty and of the Prophet's own Quraysh tribe, did homage to Dahhak, who was neither and who had by now been declared caliph by his followers. Kufa was now occupied by Dahhak's forces and became his seat, while Ibn Umar was named governor of Wasit, eastern Iraq and western Persia. Dahhak's generosity in rewarding his followers, as well as the attractiveness of Kharijite doctrine quickly swelled his ranks further, until his army is said to have reached 120,000 men. Among others, the famed general Sulayman, a son of Caliph Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik and opponent of Marwan, sought refuge with him. While Marwan II was preoccupied with besieging Sulayman's brother Sa'id and his supporters in Homs,

Dahhak marched into northern Mesopotamia. After Dahhak took Mosul, Marwan II ordered his own son Abdallah, who resided at Harran, to confront the Kharijites' advance. Abdallah however was defeated and retreated to Nisibis, where he was besieged. After Homs fell however, Marwan II with his army moved swiftly east. The two armies met at al-Ghazz in Kafartuta in August/September 746, and Dahhak's forces were decisively defeated, with Dahhak himself falling early in the battle. His successor, al-Khaybari, tried to renew the attack but was also killed. The Kharijite rebellion persisted, under Abu Dulaf, for another year, but by the end of 747, Mesopotamia, Iraq and Persia had been secured by Marwan.

Egypt and Bashmuric (Bashmurian) Revolt

Bashmurian revolts were a series of revolts by the Egyptians in the Bashmur region in the north of the Nile Delta (from Fuwwa in the west to Ashmun al-Rumman in the east) against the Umayyad then Abbasid Caliphates in the eighth and ninth centuries. Both Coptic and Arabic sources attribute them to oppressive taxation and the unjust treatment of Christians by the Arab governors. Bashmur was a region of marshland with sand banks and dense cover of reeds. In 749, the Bashmurians were in open revolt. The leader of the rebels is called Abū Mina by al-Kindī and Mina ibn Bāqīra (Menas, son of Apacryus) in the History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria. Multiple land and sea campaigns by

Governor Ḥawthara ibn Suhayl had failed to subdue them. The failure of the governor to crush the revolt prompted the Caliph Marwān II to come in person with an army from Damascus. Although he proposed an armistice, the Bashmurians rejected it and the army from Damascus was sent against them. Ḥawthara took the Coptic patriarch, Michael I, hostage to Rosetta, and threatened to have him killed if the Bashmurians did not lay down their arms. The Bashmurians attacked Rosetta, and sacked it, massacring its Muslim inhabitants. Marwan II campaigned in Egypt in 749 to quell the Bashmuric Revolt and secure his rear. In response an offensive against an Umayyad army near Pelusium, Marwān II ordered the pillaging and razing of Coptic villages and monasteries throughout the Delta. However, his campaign was considered a failure.

Khurasan and ibn Surayj revolt

The campaigns and reforms of the Umayyad Khurasan ruler Nasr ibn Sayyar consolidated Muslim rule over Khurasan and much of Transoxiana, but his success was fragile: the native princes resented their loss of autonomy and the increasing assimilation of their people by their Arab conquerors and sent embassies to the Chinese court for aid, while the rivalry between the Mudari and Yamani tribal groups, evident across the Muslim world, still divided the Arabs themselves. Al-Harith ibn Surayj was an Arab leader of a large-scale social rebellion against the Umayyad Caliphate in

Khurasan and Transoxiana. Harith's rebellion began in 734 and represented the grievances of both the local Arab settlers as well as the native Persian converts (*mawali*), who were not recognized as equal to the Arab Muslims, against the Umayyad regime. Harith based his revolt on religious grounds and won over a large part of both the Arab settlers and the native population but failed twice to capture the provincial capital of Marw. The rebellion was finally suppressed by Asad ibn Abdallah al-Qasri in 736. Along with a few supporters, Harith escaped capture and allied himself with the heathen Türgesh. With Türgesh power collapsing after the Battle of Kharistan in 737AD, Harith remained in Transoxiana supported by the native princes. On the accession of the pro-Yemenite caliph Yazid III in 744, the Khurasani Yemenites supported Juday al-Kirmani's candidature as governor, and when this did not come about, they rebelled. Asad's successor, Nasr ibn Sayyar, campaigned against Harith and his native supporters, but eventually, hoping to use him to bolster his position in the Arab inter-tribal rivalries. Nasr felt it is necessary to bring Harith and his adherents back, to both strengthen his own position—Harith and his followers had a long history of enmity towards al-Kirmani—and remove a potential source for another foreign invasion. Nasr secured a full pardon for Harith and his supporters from Yazid III. Their confiscated property was returned, and the Caliph even promised to rule "according to the Book and the sunna". Consequently, Harith returned to Marw in 745. When

Harith arrived at Marw in early July 745/127H, however, the situation had changed: Yazid III was dead, a full-blown civil war had erupted in Syria, and Nasr ibn Sayyar, although still occupying the position of governor, lacked authority. Although he recognized Marwan II, most of his own followers did not accept Marwan II as Caliph. Harith was quick to distance himself from the Umayyad governor Nasr ibn Sayyar, and he refused the offer of a district governorship, and distributed the gifts he received among his supporters. Harith even vocally denounced Marwan II. Soon however he raised a sizeable armed force and was soon joined by 3,000 of his fellow Tamimis, while his secretary, Jahm ibn Safwan, drummed up further support. Within a short time, Harith had become a graver threat to Nasr than rebellious Juday al-Kirmani, the Khurasani Yemenites supported candidature as governor during the pro-Yemenite caliph Yazid III in 744. Harith challenged authority of the Umayyad governor Nasr ibn Sayyar. After attempts to negotiate an agreement proved fruitless, Nasr attacked Harith's forces in March 746, and scored a first victory over them, in which Jahm ibn Safwan fell. At this point, al-Kirmani joined forces with Harith, and together they forced Nasr to abandon Marw and withdraw to Naysabur. The two allies entered the capital of Khurasan, but within days fell out and began fighting each other in 746/128H. In these clashes, Harith was killed, leaving al-Kirmani the master of the city. This revolt weakened Arab power in Central Asia and

facilitated the beginning of the Abbasid Revolution that would overthrow the Umayyads.

Abbasid Campaign in Khurasan

In Khurasan there was internal discord, with the Umayyad governor Nasr ibn Sayyar facing opposition from al-Harith and al-Kirmani, and they fought each other. In addition, Abbasid envoys arrived, as During Ramadan of 129 H/ May – June 747. Khurasan was seething with discontent. The legacy of Umayyad excesses had created extreme bitterness among the local population. Unfair taxation had fostered dislike of the Arabs among the Persians. The Arabs were divided among themselves along tribal lines. Capable men and scholars were either silenced by the Umayyads or they withdrew from public life. In this atmosphere, Abbasid propaganda for the rights of the Hashemites and of Ahl-al Bait found an extremely positive reception. The *Alavites* supported the Abbasids as the best opportunity to overthrow the hated Umayyads and perhaps establish the rule of the house of Ali and Fatima. The common man had toiled too long under the oppressive maltreatment of Umayyad officials and prayed for deliverance. The key Abbasid figure in Khurasan was a man known as Abu Muslim; he was the Abbasid agent but was probably a Persian who became a fanatical Shi'ite. Abu Muslim was able to rally enough fighting men to the cause that they could bring a large army west. It was a long journey and probably few of them got

home again, so that was some serious commitment to the cause. Abu Muslim told them that they were fighting to put a special holy man of the Prophet's family in power, but he didn't say who it was. It's likely that many of the fighters believed it would be a descendant of Ali. There had long been religious fervor and a kind of messianic expectation of Abbasid ascendancy. Following the death of the rebellious Arab leader Al-Harith ibn Surayj, the conflict between the Umayyad governor Nasr ibn Sayyar and the other rebel al-Kirmani continued but was soon overtaken by events: exploiting the conditions of civil war, the Abbasids under Abu Muslim launched their own anti-Umayyad revolt in Khurasan. Abu Muslim had at his service some of the ablest generals of this era, among them Kahtaba (Qahtaba) bin Shabib, an Arab from Madina, and he also had Khalid bin Barmek, a Persian. Nasr ibn Sayyar tried to conclude an alliance with al-Kirmani but failed when the latter was murdered by one of Harith's sons in revenge. Nasr sent his retainer Yazid against the Abbasids. Yazid, however, was bested, taken, and held captive. He was impressed by the Abbasids and when released told Nasr he wanted to join them, but his obligations to Nasr brought him back. Abu Muslim managed to exploit the situation to his advantage and fighting continued throughout Khurasan with the Abbasids gaining increasing ascendancy. In early 748, Kahtaba and his men entered Marw (Merv), the first step in a war that would lead to the fall of the Umayyad dynasty and its replacement with the Abbasids two

years later. Following the fall of Merw (Merv) to the Abbasids and their supporters in February 748, Kahtaba was placed in command of the Abbasid forces that pursued the last Umayyad governor of Khurasan, Nasr ibn Sayyar. Kahtaba pursued Nasr southwards towards Isfahan. His army took Nishapur, where Nasr had sought refuge, defeated a 10,000-strong Umayyad force at Gurgan in August and subsequently took Rayy. Finally, Nasr fell sick and died at Rayy on 9 November, 748 at the age of eighty-five. There Kahtaba wintered, and in March 749 he defeated a larger Umayyad army under Amir ibn Djubara, allegedly 50,000 strong, near Isfahan. Nahawand (Nihavand) fell after a short siege by Hassan, a son of Kahtaba, and the Abbasid army began moving towards Iraq. Kahtaba's army advanced swiftly with the aim of taking Kufa, but was confronted by the Umayyad governor, Yazid ibn Hubayra. Kahtaba was able to launch a surprise night attack on the Umayyad camp, forcing Yazid and his troops to flee to Wasit. Kahtaba himself fell in this battle, in unexplained circumstances, and his son al-Hasan ibn Kahtaba assumed command. In 748, Abu Muslim's army besieged the new garrison town of Wasit in Iraq, the town where al-Hajjaj had decreed only Syrians could live. A lot of Umayyad forces were trapped in Wasit in the siege, while other Abbasid armies moved on. Kahtaba son al-Hasan took possession of Kufa on 2 September 748. Arabs who had suffered at Umayyad hands joined them, making it easy to take Kufa. In fact, Kufa, the capital of Iraq, fell without significant

resistance. Both al-Hasan and his brother, Humayd ibn Kahtaba, were important military leaders in the early decades of the Abbasid regime.

II. Abbasid Revolution and Battle of Zab

Abbasid Revolution

The Abbasid revolution was the first major military-political upheaval in the Muslim world, which resulted in the destruction of one dynasty and its replacement by another. The Abbasid movement, centered on the claim of the following issues:

1. The Umayyads were unsuccessful in establishing the legitimacy of their rule. The Abbasid movement, centered on the claim that the Caliphate belonged to Bani Hashim of which the Abbasids were a branch. However, the ideological basis for Abbasid rule was not provided until a generation after they gained power. It was Caliph Mansur, who provided this ideological basis in 770 in response to a question from a Kharijite. According to this position, since the Prophet left no sons and lineage passes from father to son, the children of Fatima had no claim to succession. Accordingly, succession had to be through the male progeny of the Prophet's uncle Abbas.
2. The Umayyads lost their spiritual claim to leadership. During the 92 years of Umayyad rule, there was a

paradigm shift from Tawhid to the dinar. The rulers forgot that Islamic rule was a divine trust, and its primary function was to transmit the message of *Tawhid*. It was this transcendence that had carried the *mujahid* fighters from Hejaz to the outskirts of Paris and the banks of the River Indus. This transcendence was lost during the Umayyad period. The Omayyads became a dynasty just like other dynasties in Asia or Europe with their focus on riches and power. The rulers became tax collectors so that they could sustain their palaces in Damascus. They lost their spiritual claim to leadership.

3. The Umayyads forgot the fraternal message of Islam and treated the new converts with disdain. Often, the converts were forced to pay the *Jizya* even after they had accepted Islam. It was against such discrimination that in Khorasan and Persia, the Arabs held most of the higher positions in the armed forces and in the upper echelons of government. The result was racial division and social fragmentation. As conversion increased, the center of gravity shifted to the newly converted Persians and the Turks, who were kept away from the privileges of power. The social structure increasingly looked like an inverted pyramid with a small privileged Arab minority at the apex of power. The material for social revolution took root and it was only a matter of time before the pyramid was toppled.

4. The Umayyads lost the ability to foster cohesion in society. Instead, they became partisans in the tribal squabbles of fellow Arabs. During the Omayyad period, the old schism resurfaced with renewed intensity (the Omayyads were supported by the Muzruis. the northern Arabs). Thanks to Omayyad blunders, the Yemenis (the southern Arabs) became their enemies. The architects of the nascent Abbasid revolution exploited this division.
5. The corruption that started from the top filtered down to the provincial governors and the petty officials. The cruelty and ruthlessness of Hajjaj bin Yusuf is proverbial. Instead of promoting officials based on capability and integrity, , or on the basis of examination and merit, the Umayyads chose their governors and officials on the basis of loyalty to the rulers. The brutality of the governors was viewed as an asset in maintaining the conquered territories under control. Damascus, in essence, lost touch with the far-flung provinces, a fact that was exacerbated by the rudimentary communications of the day. So, when a determined challenge to Umayyad rule surfaced in far-away Khorasan, the response from the palaces of Damascus was slow, feeble, and disjointed.
6. The Umayyads had become city dwellers and had lost the resilience of desert Arabs. The corruption of city life destroys the primal asabiyah (cohesion based on tribal loyalty), which Ibn Khaldun requires as the building block of civilizations.

7. The Caliphate should be open to all Muslims. That was the position taken by the Kharijites who maintained that the Caliphate should be open to all Muslims, whether Arab or non-Arab and should not be the privilege only of Omayyads or Hashemites. This seemingly democratic position always remained at the fringe of the Muslim body politic because of the violent and cruel ways of the Kharijites and their extremist demands.

Muhammed bin Ali Abbas, a grandson of Abbas who is the uncle of the Prophet, established the movement of the Abbasid branch of Bani Hashim. Muhammed bin Ali Abbas was a tireless worker for the Abbasid cause and established a network of supporters throughout Iraq, Persia, Khurasan and in areas that today lie in the Central Asian republics of Turkmen, Kyrgyz, Tadzig and Uzbek peoples. After Muhammed, his son Ibrahim- The Imam- became the Imam. As the Abbasid movement, centered on the claim that the Caliphate belonged to Bani Hashim of which the Abbasids were a branch, gained momentum, so did the repression from the Umayyads. The Umayyad Caliph Marwan II had Ibrahim arrested, put in jail and finally killed by forcing his head into a sack of boiling lime. Before his death, Ibrahim managed to communicate with his brother Abul Abbas Abdullah (Al-Saffah) and appointed him the Imam. Abul Abbas vowed to take revenge on the Umayyads for the cruel death of his brother. Thus, it was that in the year 740, as the storms gathered on the horizon for a

revolution, the body politic of the Muslims was rent asunder by conflicting claims to the Caliphate and Imamate. The Banu Umayya were in power, but that power was increasingly challenged by Bani Hashim through the Abbasids. The Abbasids had inherited their legitimacy from the *Alavis* (or Shi' Aan e Ali) through an accident of history. But the *Alavis* were themselves divided between Zaidis, Fatimids (sixers), Sabayees (seveners) and the Ithna-Asharis (Twelvers). With Marw, and Kufa (2 September 748) under the control of Abbasid army, Abu Muslim moved to the final phase of the Abbasid Revolution to topple the Umayyad ruler. The people of Kufa were summoned to the Jamia Masjid of Kufa. Abu Muslim, who had deftly forged unity between the disaffected Persians, Yemeni Arabs, the Abbasids and the Alavis and had carefully kept at bay competing claims to the Imamate and Caliphate, gave an impassioned speech in which he proclaimed that the usurper. It was now time to elect a new Imam and Caliph and there was no one better than Abul Abbas Abdallah who met all the criteria of the Imamate and the Caliphate. Abu Muslim thus nominated Abul Abbas Al-Saffah as the first Abbasid Caliph in Kufa on the 13th Rajab 132 AH/ 25th November 749, and the Abbasid era began.

The Battle of Zab

Marwan II was finally alarmed at these developments, especially the fall of Kufa, Marw and Wasit. However, in

Syria the situation was not good at all, as the Umayyads had been fighting each other, and there was a major earthquake. Marwan II was still in charge, but he had fewer fighting men than usual. Just like the Roman and Persian armies diminished by years of campaigning against each other, the Umayyad armies had been supporting one or another Umayyad until they, too, had diminished and were tired. Money was growing short, and of course as soon as Abu Muslim took over Merv, taxes from the far east stopped coming to Damascus. Additionally, the Berber revolt in North Africa and a Kharijite rebellion in Yemen took place around the same time. Marwan II advanced towards Iraq with an army of 120,000. Marwan II was an able soldier, but he was also impulsive and headstrong. Opposing him was an Abbasid army of 100,000 led by Abdullah bin Ali and the able general Abu Ayun. The two armies met on the banks of the River Zab in Iraq near the village of *Kushaf* on the 25th of January 750. The impulsive Marwan II built a bridge across the river and advanced to meet the enemy, a tactical error that allowed him no chance to retreat. The Abbasids, impelled by a sense of grievance and revenge, charged. Fate intervened. The Abbasid army formed a spear wall, a tactic they had adopted from their Umayyad opponents, presumably from witnessing it in earlier battles. This entailed standing in a battle line with their lances pointed at the enemy. The Umayyad cavalry charged, possibly believing that with their experience they could break the spear wall. This was a mistake on their part, however, and they were all

but butchered. The Umayyad army fell into retreat, its morale finally shattered. Many were cut down by the zealous Abbasids or were drowned in the wintertime River Zab. During the battle, it was said that while Marwan II was dismounted, his horse ran away without him. When they saw the horse without its rider, Marwan II's troops assumed that he had been killed. It was a complete rout. Marwan II suffered a decisive defeat by Abu al-Abbas al-Saffah on the banks of the Great Zab, **Battle of the Zab**. At this battle alone, over 300 members of the Umayyad family died. Marwan II himself escaped the battlefield and fled down the Levant, pursued relentlessly by the Abbasids, who met no serious resistance from the Syrians because the land had recently been laid waste by an earthquake and pestilence.

Marwan II's death and the end of Umayyad ruling

Marwan II fled towards Mosul, but that city would not open its gates to him. He continued his flight westward towards Damascus, trying to raise another army. But the Abbasids were in hot pursuit. Abdullah bin Ali followed him from city to city. Damascus was stormed and captured in April 750. Marwan II crossed into Egypt and reached Fustat (modern Cairo), in place called Abusir/Busir, which is a small town on the Egyptian Nile delta. Abdullah bin Ali sent his brother Saleh and General Abu Ayun after him. Marwan II thought of invoking the help of the Christian Byzantines but was

dissuaded from this effort by his lieutenants who would have nothing of external interference in this civil war. At last, he was cornered in an abandoned monastery on the west bank of the river Nile. It was there, a few months after the Zab battle, that a short battle took place (Battle of Abusir). Undaunted, Marwan II charged, sword in hand, ready to offer combat and was slain by a lance hurled by an Abbasid soldier on 6th August 750, bringing to an end Umayyad rule in the Middle East. Thus, perished the last scion of the mighty Umayyads. Some reports said that Marwan II's tongue was fed to a cat. Marwan II was replaced as caliph by Saffah (reigned 750–754). The Abbasids lived up to their vow to take revenge on the Umayyads. A reign of terror was let loose. The Umayyad men were hunted like rabbits and slaughtered. Only old men, women and children were spared. The bones of the Umayyad rulers (except those of Omar bin Abdul Aziz) were dug up and burned. In Damascus, Abdullah bin Ali, coaxed eighty of the Omayyad princes to dinner on the pretext of amnesty. As the princes sat down, they were tied with ropes, wrapped in carpets, and clubbed to death. As the Umayyad princes were hunted from place to place, three of them reached the river Euphrates. Upon hearing the news of an amnesty, two of them turned back and were captured and killed. But one valiant prince, Abdur Rahman I, threw himself into the river. Undaunted by the swift current, he swam across and after years of travel incognito, arrived in Spain. There, he was received with favor by the remnants of the

Umayyads and founded the Umayyad dynasty in Andalus. It was this dynasty that was to grow in later centuries to be the beacon of culture and learning in Europe. Under Abdur Rahman's lineage Andalus was to become a crown jewel of Islamic civilization.

Death

Marwan II's death on 6th August 750/ Dhul Hijja 132H, signaled the end of Umayyad fortunes in the East and was followed by the mass killing of Umayyads by the Abbasids. Almost the entire Umayyad dynasty was killed, except for the prince Abd ar-Rahman who escaped to Spain and founded an Umayyad dynasty there.



Umayyad empire in 750/132H

Chapter III

The End of Umayyad Caliphate

Collapse of the Umayyad Empire

The Umayyad Empire prospered in several ways including expansion. As the empire expanded, unrest among the people and opposition to the Umayyads increased. However, despite its success, it perpetuated a major division among the Muslims. Consequently, it failed to promote unity, which is critical to the attainment of political stability. Additionally, the empire was undemocratic because it segregated non-Umayyads from power. In addition, Many Muslims felt that the Umayyads had become too secular and were not following the ways of Islam. Hisham ibn abd al-Malik is described as ruling effectively, giving a rebirth to Umar II reforms, particularly equality and fairness within the empire. He died after 19 years of rule, in 743, at 52, from another toxic bacterial attack little understood at the time: diphtheria. Hisham was succeeded by several caliphs with weak leadership skills, and they lacked discipline as well as piety. They spent much of the state's money and pursued pleasures that included drink and debauchery at desert retreats. From among the ruling Umayyad family a conspiracy arose against every new caliph. Al-Walid II was assassinated and was succeeded by Yazid III, who died after few months. And the disgruntled Umayyad governor of Armenia, Marwan, arrived in Damascus with his army, ousting Ibrahim and assumed power, taking the title Marwan II. Marwan II tried to enforce his rule across the empire by military

force. But the good will he needed to rule was lacking. Across the empire the frustrations of non-Arab Muslims were made worse by their seeing themselves as belonging to an older and more highly developed cultural tradition than that of the Arabs. Many of the conquered were still converting to Islam – incidentally saving themselves from the extra taxes applied to non-Muslims. Those who converted to Islam were in theory full citizens of the great Islamic community, but not so in practice. Outside of Syria, Arabs and non-Arabs were still attending different mosques. Arab warriors, veterans and government officials formed an aristocratic caste which others could not enter. In some towns an Arab might be ostracized by his fellow Arabs if he were seen walking with a non-Arab Muslim. Many non-Arab Muslims were embracing the dissident Shia branch of Islam. Respect for rule from Damascus had deteriorated to the point that it was no longer widely recognized. Even in Syria, rule by the Umayyads had come into question. Among Muslims across the empire the feeling had arisen that the Umayyads had strayed too far from Muhammad's teachings. In 750, the Abbasids, a rival clan to the Umayyads, rose to power and overthrew the Umayyad Caliphate. It was another time that integration won over segregation. An integrated rebel army of Arab and non-Arab Muslims from Khurasan (the Abbasid army) headed for Damascus, picking up support along the way. They took control and formed the Abbasid Caliphate. Abbas, a descendant of the paternal uncle of Prophet Muhammad, was declared caliph. Abbas

promised a new era of concord, happiness and just rule in strict accordance with God's law. The Abbasids would rule much of the Islamic world for the next several hundred years.

Factors Facilitating the Decline and Fall of the Umayyad Empire

- The Umayyad Empire prospered in several ways under the leadership of different Caliphs. Nonetheless, the empire experienced several internal and external challenges. Eventually, the challenges led to its decline.

1) Ineffective leadership

Some of the Caliphs who ascended to power adopted ineffective leadership styles. As a result, they failed to manage the vast empire effectively. For instance, Umar II was succeeded by a series of incapable Caliphs. This led to a rebellion from the Shia Muslims and non-Muslims who resented the Umayyads' regime. Additionally, some of the distant territories within the empire, such as Spain began to disintegrate from the central government. This was due to a lack of effective leadership. The rulers of the empire should have decentralized power to ensure that every region was effectively managed. Moreover, decentralization of power could have inhibited any form of disintegration from the main government.

2) Failure of Constantinople siege

The empire's military prestige had been damaged by the failure of the second attempt to size Constantinople. A good number of the Muslim soldiers were killed while others drowned in a series of storms. The Umayyads could have avoided the devastating defeat by choosing the appropriate time to attack Byzantine. As a result, they could have avoided the massive loss of their soldiers due to unfavourable weather conditions.

3) The third Fitna

The Umayyad Empire was greatly weakened by the third Fitna. The third Fitna resulted from the resentment of the non-Muslims know as *Mawali*. The Mawali felt that the government had neglected them. Additionally, the Mawali were treated as second-class citizens in the Umayyad Empire. Therefore, they were denied several privileges. Consequently, the *Mawali* and the Shiites formed an army that led to the **Battle of the Zab**. The Abbasids emerged victorious in the battle. This led to the eventual collapse of the Umayyad dynasty. However, the collapse could have been avoided by promoting equality and fairness within the empire. This could have promoted unity among the Muslims and the Mawali.

Reasons behind the fall of Umayyad Empire

The Umayyads had become increasingly unpopular, especially in the eastern territories of the caliphate. The Umayyads favoured Syrian Arabs over other Muslims and treated *mawali*, newly converted Muslims, as second-class citizens. The most numerous groups of *mawali* were the Persians, who lived side by-side with Arabs in the east who were angry at the favour shown to Syrian Arabs. Together, they were ripe for rebellion. Other Muslims were angry with the Umayyads for turning the caliphate into a hereditary dynasty. Some believed that a single family should not hold power, while Shiites believed that true authority belonged to the family of the Prophet Muhammad through his son-in-law Ali, and the Umayyads were not part of Muhammad's family. All these various groups who were angry with the Umayyads united under the Abbasids, who began a rebellion against the Umayyads in Persia. The Abbasids built a coalition of Persian *mawali*, Eastern Arabs, and Shiites. Together, they were ripe for rebellion. The Abbasids were able to gain Shiite support because they claimed descent from Prophet Muhammad through his uncle Abbas. Their descent from Prophet Muhammad was not through Ali, as Shiites would have preferred, but Shiites still considered the Abbasids better than the Umayyads. The Umayyads fell from grace because of catalogue deficiencies in their rule, the most obvious factors were:

1) The issue of legitimacy

The issue of legitimacy has been playing a major role in the downfall of the Umayyads. The Umayyads were unsuccessful in establishing the legitimacy of their rule. They transformed the caliphate from a religious institution (during the *Rashidun* caliphate) to a dynastic one, a more secular kingdom (Sultanate). The issue of succession and legitimacy of rule arose immediately after the assassination of Caliph Omar. The differences appear in greater clarity at the meeting of the *Shura* (Consultation and Deliberation) committee constituted by caliph Omar I to elect a successor and arose from the conflicting claims of Bani Hashim tribe and Banu Umayyah tribe to the leadership of the community. The majority view accepted the *ijma* (consensus) of the Companions, which was the opinion adopted by supporters of Uthman. On the other hand, the supporters of Ali ibn Abi Talib (were called *Shi'iat-Ali*) held that the chain of authority flowed from the Qur'an, Sunnah of the Prophet and by delegation from the Prophet to Ali. The *Shiite* believed that Ali was the rightful successor to Prophet Muhammad, being a cousin of the Prophet and belonged to Bani Hashim. The companion Muawiya (a cousin of Uthman) as well as his progeny belonged to Banu Umayyah. Politically, this implies acceptance of the Caliphate of Uthman as a legitimate expression of the collective will of the Companions. Relations between the two tribes may

have become strained after this and some of the Muslims- mainly *Shiite*- rejected the Caliphate of Uthman. In 656AD, Ali was appointed caliph by the companions after Uthman was assassinated, with the involvement of rebels from various regions (Muhajirun, Ansar, Egyptians, Kufans and Basrites) who put pressure on Ali and companions to expedite the succession. The Umayyads, kinsmen of Uthman, fled to *Al-Sham* (the Levant) under the governance of Muawia (a cousin of Uthman), or remained in their houses, later refusing 'Ali's legitimacy. In addition, the Umayyads, especially Muawiya-I and Marwan-I, wanted 'Ali to punish the rioters who had killed Uthman, even some Umayyads blamed him for Uthman's assassination. However, Ali could not arrest and punish the perpetrators. Ali's reign was one of the most turbulent periods in Muslim history and saw civil wars. Soon after Ali became caliph, he dismissed Uthman's governors immediately; against the counsel of his advisers that it would not be politically wise to do so, as he refused to be complicit in their injustice and corruption. In December 656, caliph Ali emerged victorious after fighting the **Battle of the Camel**. Afterwards, Mu'awiya, the incumbent governor of Syria, declared war on Ali ostensibly to avenge Uthman's death. The two parties fought the **Battle of Siffin** in July 657 which ended in stalemate and a call for arbitration, which was resented by the Kharijites. In the meantime, Mu'awiya seized control of Egypt with the aid of Amr ibn al-As. In 661, Ali was assassinated by one of the Kharijite and following

Ali's death, his heir, al-Hassan, was elected caliph and soon after attacked by Mu'awiya. The embattled Hassan concluded a peace treaty (**Abdication Agreement**) to avoid more Muslims bloodshed (Year of *Jama'a*), acknowledging the rule of Mu'awiya I. In 661, Muawiyah officially founded the new caliphate, the Umayyad Caliphate and ruled as its first caliph. In his peace agreement with al-Hassan, Mu'awiya I has to leave the matter to a Shura council to elect a successor (in some reports, al-Hassan was the successor to be, but he died while Mu'awiya I still ruling the caliphate). However, prior to his death in 680 AD, Muawiyah I had broken convention – as well as the Abdication Agreement, by naming his son Yazid I his successor. Because he made rule of the caliphate hereditary—passed down from father to son— Muawiyah is said to have begun the first Islamic dynasty. Many Muslims felt that this was wrong. Some felt that the new caliph should be chosen by members of the community (Shura Council), rather than inheriting the title. Others believed that the caliph should be from the family of Prophet Muhammad, which neither Muawiyah nor his son could claim. Several rebellions and revolts took place because of the issue of “legitimacy”. A rebellion by al-Hussein took place immediately after Yazid became caliph. Earlier, Ali's son Hassan had agreed to give up all claim to the caliphate and retire (Abdication), but his younger brother Hussein had made no such agreement. The army of Yazid I slaughtered Hussein and his family in the “Battle of Karbala”. This massacre was a major event in the Shia-Sunni split, and

rebellions from Shiite supporters of Ali's family would continue to plague the Umayyads. Many Muslims continued to oppose the passing down of the caliphate from father to son. A new and more dangerous opponent of the Umayyads appeared in 'Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr, son of one of Muhammad's closest companions. Ibn al-Zubayr made a powerbase in Mecca and claimed to be the true caliph. That led to the Second Arab Civil War (The Second Fitna). Marwan did not survive long, ruling only about a year. But he was succeeded by his son, Abd al-Malik, who would be remembered as perhaps the most important Umayyad caliph. The Umayyad army of the new caliph, Abd al-Malik, stormed the Mecca city, ibn al-Zubayr was killed in a last stand at the Kaaba, and the opposition to Abd al-Malik was crushed, and an Umayyad ruler was once again in firm control of the caliphate. The issue of legitimacy continues to feed more revolts and in addition to inhouse fighting, the Umayyad military became more susceptible to rebellion. In 744AD, a new civil war, called the "Third Fitna", tore the Umayyad caliphate apart. In the end, the descendants of Abd al-Malik were wiped out, and power went to Marwan II. This civil war weakened the Umayyads military, in the meantime, the major areas of rebellion against the Umayyads were at the eastern lands that had once been the Persian Empire. These eastern lands were home to largest group of mawali, the Persians, as well as many Shiites, and they believed that the Umayyad caliphate was illegitimate because it was not ruled by the family of

Prophet Muhammad. The Abbasids (Members of Prophet Muhammad's family—his uncle Abbas's line) appealed to the disaffected Arabs of Persia, to the mawali of the region, and, thanks to their descent from Prophet Muhammad to the Shiites. They started a revolution that ended the Umayyad Empire.

2) The issue of succession

The Umayyads transformed the caliphate from a religious institution to a dynastic one, which was a secular kingdom (Sultanate). Almost like other dynasties in Asia or Europe with their focus on riches and power. According to the peace treaty (*Hasan–Muawiyah treaty, Rabi II 41/August 661*), al-Hassan ceded the caliphate to Muawiyah I, but the latter could name no successor during his reign; instead, he was to let the Islamic world choose its successor afterward. Thus, Muawiyah should not be entitled to appoint his successor but that there should be an electoral council (*Shura*). However, in the year 56 H Muawiyah I forced people to pledge allegiance to his son, Yazeed, to be his heir to the Caliphate after him. This decision to designate his son Yazid as his successor was one of the most controversial and enduring legacies, and it did not help to improve his reputation for double dealing. The people did not appoint Muawiyah as a Caliph, he became one by force, and consequently the people had no choice but to give him their pledge of allegiance (*bay'ah*). In

addition, there was a clear breach to his treaty with al-Hasan ibn Ali when he appointed his son, Yazid, as his successor. The Umayyads were always vulnerable to charges that they had usurped and seized power from the house of the Prophet. This was their weak political flank, and this was precisely the ideological direction from which the Abbasid movement attacked them.

3) Double dealing

While employment of Christians was part of a broader policy of religious tolerance that was necessitated by the presence of large Christian populations in the conquered provinces, the non-Arabs were treated as second class citizens, particularly the Persians. Prominent positions in the governmental structures were held by Christians, some of whom belonged to families that had served in Byzantine governments. Muawiya's wife Maysum (Yazid's mother) was the daughter of the chief of the Kalb tribe, a Jacobite Christian Arab tribe in Syria.

4) Sectarianism and factionism

Even though the Umayyads radically changed the Caliphate from electoral consensus to dynastic rule, they championed the orthodox Sunni position out of political necessity. But they could not suppress the claims of Bani Hashim or Shiite of Ali. Except for Omar

bin Abdul Aziz, no Umayyad made a serious attempt to reconcile the differences among the Muslims. Confrontations continued, leading to continuous warfare against the Kharijites and sporadic but violent clashes with Shiites of Ali as manifested in the great tragedy of Karbala.

5) Maltreatment of the converts

The Umayyads forgot the fraternal message of Islam and treated the new converts with disdain and scorn. Often, the converts were forced to pay the *Jizya* (a per capita yearly tax historically levied on non-Muslim subjects) even after they had accepted Islam. It was against such discrimination that *Imam* Abu Haneefa, who lived through the Abbasid revolution, fought. In one of his dictums Abu Haneefa said: "*The belief of a newly converted Turk is the same as that of an Arab from Hejaz*". However, the Umayyads resented such reforms and Abu Haneefa was jailed for his activism. In Khorasan and Persia, the Arabs held most of the higher positions in the armed forces and in the upper echelons of government. The result was racial division and social fragmentation. As conversion increased, the centre of gravity shifted to the newly converted Persians and the Turks, who were kept away from the privileges of power. The social structure increasingly looked like an inverted pyramid with a small privileged Arab minority at the apex of power. The material for "social revolution" took root

and it was only a matter of time before the pyramid was toppled.

6) Loss of transcendence

The Umayyad rulers, during their 92 years of reign, forgot that Islamic rule was a divine trust, and its primary function was to transmit the message of *Tawhid* (the Oneness or singleness of God). It was this transcendence (Arabic: *tasamī*) that had carried the Muslim fighters (*mujahids*) from Hejaz of Arabia to the outskirts of Paris in Europe. This transcendence was lost during the Umayyad period, and they became a dynasty just like other dynasties in Asia or Europe with their focus on riches and power. The paradigm shift to dinar. The rulers became tax collectors so that they could sustain their palaces in their capital, Damascus. They lost their spiritual claim to leadership. Where faith is weak, a civilization decline. When spirituality is lost, political rule must of necessity be sustained at the point of the blade. Their rule became increasingly repressive and had to be sustained by increasing brutality.

7) Dis-cohesive society

The Umayyads lost the ability to foster cohesion in society. Instead, they became partisans in the tribal squabbles of fellow Arabs. In pre-Islamic Arabia, the Arabs were hopelessly divided along tribal lines and

often fought pitched battles against other tribes. One of the major tribal divisions was between the *Qays or Mudhar* (the northern Arabs) and the *Yemenis* (the southern Arabs). The Prophet of Islam did manage to heal this social crack and united the tribes into a common brotherhood, but during the Umayyad period, this schism resurfaced with renewed intensity. The Umayyads were supported by the *Mudhars*, but thanks to Umayyad blunders, the *Yemenis* became their enemies. The architects of the nascent Abbasid revolution exploited this division. The power of *Qays-Mudhar* as a unified group diminished with the rise of the Abbasid Caliphate which did not derive and attain its military strength solely from the Arab tribes. The Umayyads had become city dwellers and had lost the resilience of desert Arabs. The corruption of city life destroys the primal *asabiyah* (tribal cohesion and loyalty), which Ibn Khaldun requires as the building block of civilizations. Surrounded by the opulence of Damascus, the later Umayyad rulers could hardly understand the drive, energy, enthusiasm and pristine faith of their desert forefathers, and they were due to leave the stage of history.

8) Corruption

The corruption that started from the top filtered down to the provincial governors and the petty officials. The cruelty and ruthlessness of Hajjaj bin Yusuf is proverbial. Instead of promoting officials based on

capability and integrity, as was the case during the Caliphate of Omar ibn al Khattab, or on the basis of examination and merit as was the case in the contemporary Chinese dynasty, the Umayyads chose their governors and officials on the basis of loyalty to the Caliphs. The brutality of the governors was viewed as an asset in maintaining the conquered territories under control. The capital Damascus, in essence, lost touch with the far-flung provinces, a fact that was exacerbated by the rudimentary communications of the day. So, when a determined challenge to Umayyad rule surfaced in far-away Khorasan, the response from the palaces of Damascus was slow, feeble, and disjointed.

9) Ineffective leadership and lack of vision

When the pro-peace leader Umar II became caliph in 717, he changed the policy as well as the behaviour of previous caliphs and sought to put the empire on a Muslim rather than a strictly Arab basis. He accepted the fundamental equality of all Muslims, Arab and non-Arab, and he promulgated new laws to that end. Many Arabs themselves had been changing from a tribal and clan orientation to a more urban or cosmopolitan outlook. They were mingling with non-Arabs. Arabs in what had been conquered territories were abandoning their old role as occupation soldiers and were taking civilian occupations, and those who had converted to Islam were adopting the Arab language. What had been garrison centers were becoming cities, while those who

had not converted remained bound to their ancient heritages. He also discouraged raids against peaceful nations and made peace with all he could. He believed that he and other Arab leaders should live up to Islamic ideals. He disbanded his harem and began practicing frugality. Umar tried to address economic grievances. He made his wife give her jewelry to the public treasury. Umar II attempted reconciliation with the Shia, and he supported assimilation between Muslim Arabs and those who had converted to Islam, believing that Islam should bind the empire together. He urged conversion to Islam despite the loss this would bring in tax revenues. However, his fervor for Islam and his new policy of integration had a downside for Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. Those who did not convert were given restrictions. Christians and Jews would not be allowed to hold public office. They were to be prohibited from wearing turbans and would be required to wear clothing that identified them as Christians or Jews. They could ride only packhorses, and they had to ride without a saddle. They could erect no new places of worship. And Jews were ordered to cut their forelocks. All these policies brought stability to the state and improved social integration, but after Umar II died, those reforms were abandoned. Umar II was succeeded by a series of incapable Caliphs. This led to a rebellion from several groups, the Shia Muslims, Mawali and non-Muslims, who resented the Umayyads' regime. This led to the eventual collapse and fall of the Umayyad dynasty. However, the collapse could have been avoided by

promoting equality and fairness within the empire. This could have promoted unity among the Muslims and the Mawali.



Figure. The Umayyad's Caliphate during Abbasid Revolution.

Chapter IV

Legacy and Achievements of the Umayyads

Accomplishments of the Umayyads

The Umayyad caliphate was marked both by territorial expansion and by the administrative and cultural problems that such expansion created. The Umayyad Empire expanded because of several reasons. First, the Umayyad government adopted the Byzantine system of government. The Byzantines had a bureaucratic system of governance. The bureaucratic system of governance enabled the Umayyad Caliph to control the empire effectively from its capital in Damascus. Additionally, the Caliph appointed Muslim governors who were known as Emirs. The Emirs assisted the Caliph to manage the provinces within the Umayyad Empire. In addition, the Emirs collaborated with the local clan leaders. This ensured that every region within each province was governed efficiently and effectively. Mass conversions brought a large influx of Muslims to the caliphate. Many Muslims criticized the Umayyads for having too many non-Muslim, former Roman administrators in their government. St. John of Damascus was also a high administrator in the Umayyad administration. As the Muslims took over cities, they left the people's political representatives and the Roman tax collectors and administrators. The people's political representatives calculated and negotiated taxes. The central government and the local governments got paid respectively for the services they provided. Many Christian cities used some of the taxes to maintain their

churches and run their own organizations. Later, the Umayyads were criticized by some Muslims for not reducing the taxes of the people who converted to Islam. Despite some notable exceptions, the Umayyads tended to favor the rights of the old Arab families, and their own, over those of newly converted Muslims (*mawali*). Therefore, they held to a less universalist conception of Islam than did many of their rivals. During the period of the Umayyads, Arabic became the administrative language. State documents and currency were issued in the language. The Umayyads also constructed famous buildings such as the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem, and the Umayyad Mosque at Damascus. According to one common view, the Umayyads transformed the caliphate from a religious institution (during the Rashidun caliphs) to a dynastic one. However, the Umayyad caliphs do seem to have understood themselves as the representatives of God on earth, and to have been responsible for the definition and elaboration of God's ordinances, or in other words the definition or elaboration of Islamic law. Some of the historians commented that Islam was in fact regarded as the property of the conquering aristocracy. The Umayyad Empire played a significant role in history. It established the first Islamic government that had a major influence in North Africa, the Middle East, and some parts of Europe. The empire also developed Islamic architecture, which has continued to influence Islamic constructions up to date. Additionally, it facilitated the spread of Islam and Arabic culture.

The Umayyads have met with a largely negative reception from later Islamic historians, who have accused them of promoting a kingship (*mulk*, a term with connotations of tyranny) instead of a true caliphate (*khilafa* or caliph). In this respect it is notable that the Umayyad caliphs referred to themselves not as *khalifat rasul Allah* (“successor of the messenger of God”, the title preferred by the tradition), but rather as *khalifat Allah* (“deputy of God”). The distinction seems to indicate that the Umayyads regarded themselves as God’s representatives at the head of the community and saw no need to share their religious power with, or delegate it to, the emergent class of religious scholars. In fact, it was precisely this class of scholars, based largely in Iraq, that was responsible for collecting and recording the traditions that form the primary source material for the history of the Umayyad period. In reconstructing this history, therefore, it is necessary to rely mainly on sources, such as the histories of Tabari and Baladhuri, that were written in the Abbasid court at Baghdad. Modern Arab nationalism regards the period of the Umayyads as part of the Arab Golden Age which it sought to emulate and restore. This is particularly true of Syrian nationalists and the present-day state of Syria, centered like that of the Umayyads on Damascus. White, one of the four Pan-Arab colors which appear in various combinations on the flags of most Arab countries, is considered as representing the Umayyads.

The Umayyad Empire grew because of various factors, such as a common language, currency, and pilgrimage. Despite the vastness of the Umayyad Empire, it remained stable and powerful for a considerable period. The Umayyads' collaboration with local leadership enabled them to win support in distant areas from its capital in Damascus. However, the empire collapsed because of its vastness and ineffective leadership.

Umayyad Achievements and Reforms

Most of the historians agreed that between 685 AD and 705 (the year Abd al-Malik died), the Umayyad Caliphate reached its apex of power and prestige. Its armies conquered areas from Spain the west to Sindh in what is now India. One after another, additional Central Asian cities fell to the Muslim armies - Bukhara, Samarkand, Khwarezm, Tashkent, and Fergana. This rapidly expanding empire had a postal system, a form of banking based on credit, and some of the most beautiful architecture ever seen. Along with monetary reforms and buildings such as the Dome of the Rock (*Masjid Qubbat ash-Shakhara*) in Jerusalem, the establishment of Arabic as the official language was important both socio-politically and symbolically, since it manifested the authority of the Muslims and, particularly in the case of the coins, spread the message of Islam right into the pockets of people, Muslims and/or non-Muslims, within the borders of the *dawla* and beyond.

I. State Administration and Governance

The first four caliphs created a stable administration for the empire, following the practices and administrative institutions of the Byzantine Empire which had ruled the same region previously. These consisted of four main governmental branches: political affairs, military affairs, tax collection, and religious administration. Each of these was

further subdivided into more branches, offices, and departments. Umayyad rule was divided between two branches of the family: the **Sufyānids** (reigned 661–684), descendants of Abū Sufyān; and the **Marwanids** (reigned 684–750), Marwan I ibn al-Hakam and his successors. The Sufyānids, notably Mu‘āwiyah I (reigned 661–680), centralized caliphal authority in Damascus. The Syrian army became the basis of Umayyad strength, which created a united empire through greater control of the conquered provinces and of Arab tribal rivalries. The Umayyad caliphate reached its peak under Abd al-Malik (reigned 685–705). Muslim armies overran most of Spain in the west and invaded Mukrān and Sindh in India, while in Central Asia the Khorāsānian garrisons conquered Khwarezm, Samarkand, Bukhara, Fergana, and Tashkent.

1) **Centralization of power**

The Sufyānids, notably Mu‘āwiyah I (reigned 661–680), centralized caliphal authority in Damascus. The centralized administration of the Marwanids, notably Abd al-Malik, has established became the prototype of later medieval Muslim states. The centralisation of control was a response to the chaotic situation during the civil wars, including conflicts not only with the Zubayrids, but also the various Khawarijis and proto-Shi’a movements. It does not seem to have been a pre-thought-out programme, but one which developed in response to events. In relation to the on-going discussion - at that time- about the Chaliph as a Sultan, a political leader, or an Imam with a spiritual role as well, Abdal-Malik

made no claims for religious authority for the position of the Chaliph. The Marwanid centralized, bureaucratic caliphate was in many ways an impressive achievement, but the political, economic, and social divisions that developed within the Islamic community during Abd al-Malik and al-Walid reigns were to prove something of a difficult inheritance for the later Umayyads. The Marwanid government evidently became more technical and hierarchical, though not nearly to the extent of the later Abbasid caliphs. Thus, the Marwanid rule moved from the more indirect rule of the Sufyanids to a more centralised form of governance. As opposed to the freewheeling governing style of the Sufyanids, Marwanid caliphs ruled strictly over their officials and kept interactions with them largely formal. They put an end to the provinces' retention of the lion's share of surplus tax revenues, as had been the case under the Sufyanids, and had them redirected to the caliphal treasury in Damascus.

2) Provinces

Geographically, the Umayyad empire was divided into several provinces, the borders of which changed numerous times during the Umayyad reign. These included: Iraq, Khurasan and the East, Levant and Palestine, Egypt, Hejaz and Ifrqiya (North Africa). In addition to Spain, which was called al-Analus. Each province had a governor appointed by the caliph. The governor oversaw the religious officials, army leaders, police, and civil administrators in his province. Local expenses were paid for by taxes coming from that

province, with the remainder each year being sent to the central government in Damascus. As the central power of the Umayyad rulers waned in the later years of the dynasty, some governors neglected to send the extra tax revenue to Damascus and created great personal fortunes.

3) **Governance and Government workers**

As the empire grew, the number of qualified Arab workers was too small to keep up with the rapid expansion of the empire. Therefore, Muawiyah I allowed many of the local government workers in conquered provinces to keep their jobs under the new Umayyad government. Thus, much of the local government's work was recorded in Greek, Coptic, and Persian. It was only during the reign of Abd al-Malik that government work began to be regularly recorded in Arabic (**Arabicisation**). The administrative reforms initiated by Abd al-Malik and al-Hajjaj in 693AD, continued under al-Walid I. These included the dual processes of establishing a single Islamic currency in place of the previously used Byzantine and Sasanian coinage and replacing Greek and Persian with Arabic as the language of the bureaucracy in Syria and Iraq, respectively. In 705 or 706AD, during al-Walid's reign, Arabic replaced Greek and Coptic in the diwan (government departments) of Egypt. The change was implemented by al-Walid's half-brother, Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Malik, the governor of Egypt and appointee of Abd al-Malik. These policies effected the gradual transition of Arabic as the sole official language of the state, unified the varied tax systems of the Caliphate's provinces and contributed to the

establishment of a more ideologically Islamic government. In addition, the *ashraf* (tribal leaders) were replaced during the Marwanid era by 'officials' directly answerable to the caliph. This was also necessary because many of the *mawali* were becoming Muslim while more Arabs were ceasing to play a military role. They received estates and settled down.

4) **Arabicisation (Arabization)**

It was only during the reign of Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan that government work began to be regularly recorded in Arabic (Arabicisation). However, it was Al-Walid I that coupled Islamicization with Arabization. Conversion was not forced on conquered peoples; however, since non-believers had to pay an extra tax, many people did convert for religious and non-religious reasons. This created several problems, particularly since Islam was so closely connected with being Arab. Being Arab, of course, was more than an ethnic identity, it was a tribal identity based on kinship and descent. As more and more Muslims were non-Arabs, the status of Arabs and their culture became threatened. In particular, large numbers of Coptic-speaking in Egypt and Persian-speaking Muslims threatened the primacy of the very language that Islam is based on. In part to alleviate that threat, al-Walid I instituted Arabic as the only official language of the empire. He decreed that all administration was to be done only in Arabic. It was this move that cemented the primacy of Arabic language and culture in the Islamic world.

5) Organization and Arabicisation of the Diwans

The first *dīwān* was created under Caliph Umar (reigned 634–644) in 20 AH/641 AD. The *dīwān* (or *divan*) was a government ministry or government department in the Islamic states, and could be also a chief administrative office, or regional governing body. The first diwan was an army register (*dīwān al-jund*) comprised the names of the warriors of Medina who participated in the Muslim conquests as well as their families and was intended to facilitate the payment of salary (*‘aṭā*) to them. With the advent of the Umayyad Caliphate, the number of *dīwāns* increased. To the *dīwān al-jund*, the first Umayyad caliph, Mu'awiya (r. 661–680), added the bureau of the land tax (*dīwān al-kharāj*) in Damascus, which became the main *dīwān*, as well as the bureau of correspondence (*dīwān al-rasā'il*), which drafted the caliph's letters and official documents, and the bureau of the seal (*dīwān al-khātām*), which checked and kept copies of all correspondence before sealing and dispatching it. A number of more specialist departments were also established, probably by Mu'awiya: the *dīwān al-barīd* in charge of the postal service; the bureau of expenditure (*dīwān al-nafaqāt*), which most likely indicates the survival of a Byzantine institution; the *dīwān al-ṣadaqa* was a new foundation with the task of estimating the *zakāt* and *‘ushr* levies; the *dīwān al-mustaghallāt* administered state property in cities; the *dīwān al-ṭirāz* controlled the government workshops that made official banners, costumes and some furniture. Aside from the central government, there was a local branch of the

dīwān al-kharāj, the dīwān al-jund and the dīwān al-rasā'il in every province. Aside from the central government, there was a local branch of the *dīwān al-kharāj*, the *dīwān al-jund* and the *dīwān al-rasā'il* in every province. Under Abd al-Malik, the practices of the various departments began to be standardized and Arabized. Abd al-Malik may have inaugurated several high-ranking offices, and Muslim tradition generally credits him with the organization of the *barīd* (postal service), whose principal purpose was to, efficiently inform the caliph of developments outside of Damascus. Abd al-Malik established postal routes and made the existing ones more efficient, which conducted information to the centre. He built and repaired roads that connected Damascus with Palestine and linked Jerusalem to its eastern and western hinterlands, as evidenced by seven milestones found throughout the region, the oldest of which dates to May 692 and the latest to September 704. The road project formed part of Abd al-Malik's centralization drive, special attention being paid to Palestine due to its critical position as a transit zone between Syria and Egypt and Jerusalem's religious centrality to the caliph.

Organization of the Diwans (Divans)

- To assist the Caliph in administration there were six boards at the centre: Diwan al-Kharaj (the Board of Revenue), Diwan *al-Rasa'il* (the Board of Correspondence), Diwan *al-akhatam* (the Board of Signet), Diwan *al-Barid* (the Board of Posts), Diwan *al-Qudat* (the Board of Justice) and Diwan *al-Jund* (the Military Board).
- **Diwan al-Kharaj (land tax):** The Central Board of Revenue administered the entire finances of the empire. It also imposed and collected taxes and disbursed revenue.
- **Diwan al-Rasa'il:** A regular Board of Correspondence was established under the Umayyads. It issued state missives and circulars to the Central and Provincial Officers. It coordinated the work of all Boards and dealt with all correspondence as the chief secretariat.
- **Diwan al-akhatam (or al-Khatm or the seal):** In order to reduce forgery, Diwan al-Khatam (Bureau of Registry), a kind of state chancellery, was instituted by Mu'awiyah I. It used to make and preserve a copy of each official document before sealing and despatching the original to its destination. Thus, in the course of time a state archive developed in Damascus by the Umayyads under Abd al-Malik. This department survived till the middle of the Abbasid period.
- **Diwan al-Barid:** Mu'awiyah-I introduced the postal service, Abd al-Malik extended it throughout his empire, and Walid made full use of it. Umar bin Abdul-Aziz developed it further by building caravanserais at stages along the Khurasan highway. Relays of horses were used for the conveyance of dispatches between the caliph and his agents and officials posted in the provinces. The main highways were divided into stages of 12 miles (19 km) each and each stage had horses, donkeys, or camels ready to carry the post. Primarily the service met the needs of Government officials, but travellers and their important dispatches were also benefited by the system. The postal carriages were also used for the swift transport of troops. They were able to carry fifty to a hundred men at a time.
- **Diwan al-Qudat:** In the early period of Islam, justice was administered by Prophet Muhammad and the Rashudin (orthodox) Caliphs in person. After the expansion of the Islamic

State, Umar- I “al-Faruq” had to separate the judiciary from the general administration and appointed the first qadi in Egypt as early as AD 643/23 AH. After 661, a series of judges served in Egypt during the caliphates of Hisham and Walid II.

- **Diwan al-Jund:** The Diwan of Umar-I, assigning annuities to all Arabs and to the Muslim soldiers of other races, underwent a change in the hands of the Umayyads. The Umayyads meddled with the register, and the recipients regarded pensions as the subsistence allowance even without being in active service. Caliph Hisham reformed it and paid only to those who participated in the battle. On the pattern of the Byzantine system, the Umayyads reformed their army organization in general and divided it into five corps: the centre, two wings, vanguards, and rearguards, following the same formation while on the march or on a battlefield. Marwan II (740–50) abandoned the old division and introduced the *Kurdus* (cohort), a small compact body. The Umayyad troops were divided into three divisions: infantry, cavalry, and artillery.
- Other Diwans:
 - **The bureau of expenditure** (dīwān al-nafaqāt), which most likely indicates the survival of a Byzantine institution.
 - **The dīwān al-ṣadaqa** was a new foundation with the task of estimating the zakāt and ‘ushr levies.
 - **The dīwān al-mustaghallāt** administered state property in cities.
- **The dīwān al-ṭirāz** controlled the government workshops that made official banners, costumes, and some furniture.

6) Arabization of the bureaucracy

The Arabization of the bureaucracy and currency was the most consequential administrative reform undertaken by caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. Shortly after the overhaul of the Caliphate's currency, in 700AD, Abd al-Malik is generally credited with the replacement of Greek with Arabic as the language of the *dīwān* in Syria. The transition was carried out by his scribe Sulayman ibn Sa'd. Al-Hajjaj had initiated the Arabization of the Persian *dīwān* in Iraq, three years before. Though the official language was changed, Greek and Persian-speaking bureaucrats who were versed in Arabic kept their posts. Arabic ultimately became the sole official language of the Umayyad state, but the transition in faraway provinces, such as Khurasan, did not occur until the 740s. Indeed, The Arabization of the bureaucracy formed an important part of the Islamization measures that lent the Umayyad Caliphate, a more ideological and programmatic coloring it had previously lacked. In addition, the decree was the first step towards the reorganization and unification of the diverse tax-systems in the provinces, and a step towards a more definitely Muslim administration. Arabic was unfamiliar with the Syrian and Greek Christian and Persian Zoroastrian officials of the *dīwān*. The Marwanids stood in stark contrast to the Sufyanid caliphs and their governors in Iraq, who had entered these regions as youths and whose children were as acquainted with the native majority as with the Arab Muslim newcomers.

II. Reorganization of the army

The Umayyad army was mainly Arab, with its core consisting of those who had settled in urban Syria and the Arab tribes who originally served in the army of the Eastern Roman Empire in Syria. These were supported by tribes in the Syrian desert and in the frontier with the Byzantines, as well as Christian Syrian tribes. Soldiers were registered with the Army Ministry, the *Diwan Al-Jaysh*, and were salaried. The army was divided into *junds* based on regional fortified cities. The Umayyad Syrian forces specialised in close order infantry warfare and favoured using a kneeling spear wall formation in battle, probably because of their encounters with Roman armies. This was radically different from the original Bedouin style of mobile and individualistic fighting. Muawiya-I was one of the first to realize the full importance of having a navy; as long as the Byzantine fleet could sail the Mediterranean unopposed, the coastlines of Syria, Palestine and Egypt would never be safe. Muawiyah-I, along with Abdullah ibn Sa'd, the new governor of Egypt, successfully persuaded caliph Uthman to give them permission to construct a large fleet in the dockyards of Egypt and Syria. Thus, to stop Byzantine harassment from the sea during the Arab-Byzantine Wars, in 649 Muawiyah set up a navy, which was manned by Monophysite Christians, Copts, and Jacobite Syrian Christian sailors and Muslim troops. The first real naval engagement between the Muslim and the Byzantine navy was the so-called Battle of the Masts (*Dhat al-sawari*), or Battle of Phoenix, off the

Lycian coast in 655,] where the resulting Muslim victory opened up the Mediterranean.

Professional Army

The Syrian army became more of a standing army that was sent to various provinces at different times according to circumstances. These loyalist Syrian troops began to be deployed throughout the Caliphate to keep order, which came largely at the expense of the tribal nobility of Iraq. The latter's revolt under Ibn al-Ash'ath demonstrated to Abd al-Malik the unreliability of the Iraqi *muqātila* in securing the central government's interests in the province and its eastern dependencies. It was following the revolt's suppression that the military became primarily composed of the Syrian army. Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan shifted away from his predecessors' use of Arab tribal masses in favor of an organized army. Likewise, Arab noblemen who had derived their power solely through their tribal standing and personal relations with a caliph were gradually replaced with military men who had risen through the ranks. Furthermore, the system of military pay established by caliph Umar I, which paid stipends to veterans of the earlier Muslim conquests and their descendants, was ended, salaries being restricted to those in active service. The old system was considered a handicap on Marwanids executive authority and financial ability to reward loyalists in the army. Thus, a professional army was established whose salaries derived from tax proceeds.

Military pay system

The professional army was established during Abd al-Malik's reign whose salaries derived from tax proceeds. Consecrating this transformation was a fundamental change to the system of military pay, whereby salaries were restricted to those in active service. This marked an end to the system established by Caliph Umar I (reigned 634–644), which paid stipends to veterans of the earlier Muslim conquests and their descendants. Stipends were similarly stopped to the inhabitants of the Hejaz, including the Quraysh. The surplus from the agriculturally rich *Sawad* lands was redirected from the *muqātila* to the caliphal treasury in Damascus to pay the Syrian troops in the provinces, such as in Iraq. However, the dependence on the Syrian army, especially during Hisham's reign, increased and the army was scattered among the Caliphate's multiple and isolated war fronts, most of them distant from Syria. The growing strain and heavy losses inflicted on the Syrians by the Caliphate's external enemies and increasing factional divisions within the army contributed to the weakening and downfall of Umayyad rule in 750.

The Growth and expansion of Arab Empire

The Umayyads made a great contribution to the territorial expansion of the Arabic state. The Umayyad dynasty began in 661 and fell in 750AD, and at its zenith of power, the empire extended from the Atlantic all the way to India and

the western borders of China. The conquests of the early years of the empire are attributed to among the fastest empirical expansions the world has ever seen. The great expansion of Islam was always associated with the growing number of Islamic adherents and the expansion of Arabs that necessarily led to the expansion of Islamic religion in the Asian world. Undoubtly, the expansion of the Arab Empire in the years following the Prophet Muhammad's death led to the creation of caliphates occupying a vast, geographical area. Conversion to Islam was boosted by missionary activities, particularly those of Imams, who easily intermingled with local populace to propagate religious teachings. These early caliphates, coupled with Muslim economics and trading and the later expansion of the Ottoman Empire, resulted in Islam's spread outwards from Mecca towards both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and the creation of the Muslim world. Trading played an important role in the spread of Islam in several parts of the world, notably southeast Asia. Muslim dynasties were soon established and subsequent empires such as those of the Abbasids, Fatimids, Almoravids, Seljukids, and Ajurans, Adal and Warsangali in Somalia, Mughals in India, Safavids in Persia, and Ottomans in Anatolia were among the largest and most powerful in the world. The people of the Islamic world created numerous sophisticated centers of culture and science with far-reaching mercantile networks, travelers, scientists, hunters, mathematicians, doctors, and philosophers, all contributing to the Golden Age of Islam. Islamic expansion in South and East Asia fostered cosmopolitan and eclectic Muslim cultures in the Indian

subcontinent, Malaysia, Indonesia, and China. However, the concept of Islamic expansion is surrounded by numerous myths and historical misconceptions, and what was traditionally regarded as the rise of the new Islamic culture, in reality, was the expansion of the Islamic empire which did not deprive new Islamic states of religious freedom. In terms of Byzantium, Islamic expansion posed a serious competitive challenge to Byzantium; moreover, Islamic faith-inspired Arab peoples to conquer and siege the lands that had previously belonged to Byzantium. Nevertheless, Arab-Islamic conquests did not weaken, but on the contrary, strengthened the political and social order in new lands. In this context, it would be appropriate to suggest that Islamic contests have tested ability to withstand political and military oppression, and where Arab peoples sought to prove their religious and political superiority, the state used the benefits of its political stability as the means of restructuring and improving its social organization and economic prosperity.

III. Economy

Foreign trade expanded, and educated Jews and Christians, many of them Greek, found employment in the Umayyad caliphal courts, where they studied and practiced medicine, alchemy, and philosophy. Travel and communication with nearby peoples had encouraged new advancements in agriculture. The Umayyads had new methods of irrigation, fertilization, and crop rotation. They thrived on trade by the silk roads which passed through their

lands. Their rulers maintained the roads because they provided routes for their military to travel. They had some of the first banks. They had also gotten the compass from the Chinese and 'lateen' sails from South Asian and Indian mariners to engage in maritime trade. The Byzantine and Sassanid Empires relied on money economies before the Muslim conquest, and that system remained in effect during the Umayyad period. Byzantine copper coins were used until 658, while Byzantine gold coins were still in use until the monetary reforms 700. In addition to this, the Umayyad government began to mint its own coins in Damascus, which were initially similar to pre-existing coins but evolved in an independent direction. These were the first coins minted by a Muslim government in history. Gold coins were called *dinars* while silver coins were called *dirhams*.

Monetary reforms

The Umayyad period is associated with the introduction of a single currency throughout the Muslim dominion. This allowed the government to manage the monetary system independent of external resources and influences, which, in turn, gave birth to a rudimentary form of banking (Goitein, 1967). The basis for banking during this period led to the formation of more complex lending systems during the Abbasid Caliphate. Instruments such as cheques (which come from the Arabic term *sakk*) and letters of credit (known as *hawala*) began to emerge in the late 9th century.

Institution of Islamic currency

A major component of the Marwanid centralization and Islamization measures was the institution of an Islamic currency. The Byzantine gold solidus was discontinued in Syria and Egypt, the likely impetus being the Byzantines' addition of an image of Christ on their coins in 691/92, which violated Muslim prohibitions on images of prophets. The development towards an independent Islamic currency, was, however, a gradual process that had begun already at the time of caliph Umar I onwards, even though Umar I himself minted very few. It was not until the caliphate of Muawiya I that the Muslims began producing coins in larger quantities. The process was, in general, gradual and many different leaders of the Muslims contributed to its development. Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan decided to begin reforming the coins towards the end of the Second Fitna, perhaps as a response to the coins minted by the Zubayrids or perhaps as a part of his own vision for the Muslim *dawla* since the coins were only one of several reforms that he undertook. In fact, Abdallah ibn az-Zubayr and his brother, Mus'ab, were mentioned by some historians as the first to mint silver dirhams with various Islamic inscriptions in Arabic during the second fitna. To replace the Byzantine coins, Abd al-Malik introduced an Islamic gold currency, the dinar, in 693. Initially, the new coinage contained depictions of the caliph as the spiritual leader of the Muslim community and its supreme military commander. This image proved no less acceptable to Muslim officialdom and was replaced in 696 or 697 with image-less coinage inscribed with Qur'anic

quotes and other Muslim religious formulas. In 698, similar changes were made to the silver dirhams issued by the Muslims in the former Sasanian Persian lands in the eastern Caliphate.

IV. Architecture and Arts

The advent of the Umayyads as a dynasty governing the Muslim world for almost a century, with an entrenched sense of power established with a hereditary character, soon required architectural forms that would display the new political reality. As soon as the new dynasty could be sure of its situation and overcome any instability, it initiated an extensive programme of construction activities, amongst which palaces and residences for the caliphs, their families and representatives immediately appeared. The Umayyad period marks the inception of Islamic art. Throughout the Levant, Egypt, and North Africa, the Umayyads constructed grand congregational mosques and desert palaces, as well as various garrison cities (*amsar*) to fortify their frontiers such as Fustat, Kairouan, Kufa, Basra and Mansura. Many of these buildings feature Byzantine stylistic and architectural features, such as Roman mosaics and Corinthian columns. The Umayyad Empire's first caliph, Muawiyah, moved the capital from Medina to Damascus, which allowed for considerable contact with territories formerly part of the Byzantine Empire and its late classical culture. The busy early years of the Umayyad dynasty did not seem to facilitate artistic innovation or even any

expression at all. Subsequent generations, however, were swept up in deluge of artistic experimentation, evinced in its unique coinage, metal work, paintings, mosaics, grand palaces, and religious architectural marvels such as the Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque of Damascus. Their most famous constructions include the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem and the Umayyad Mosque at Damascus, and other constructions include Hisham's Palace, Qusayr' Amra, the Great Mosque of Kairouan and the Great Mosque of Aleppo. Some of these buildings, such as the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus, reflect the diversity of the empire, as thousands of Greek, Persian, Coptic, Indian and Persian craftsmen were conscripted to construct them.

- **Building and expanding Mosques**

- i. **Foundation of the Dome of the Rock**

The Dome of the Rock represents one of the Umayyad dynasties earliest surviving monuments, as well as one of its greatest architectural achievements. Built by Abd al-Malik in 691, it was erected on a pre-Islamic, byzantine plan of a domed rotunda and ambulatories, while also embracing mosaic and stone carving designs derived from Sassanian Persia. The building is located in Jerusalem above a rock, known as the Sakkra, a site that is considered sacred to Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Abd al-Malik used state money to build the Dome of the Rock and in his Book of the Geography, Al-Muqaddasi reported that seven times the revenue of Egypt was used to build the Dome. The building

was meant to show Islamic domination over Jerusalem, and that Islam had surpassed Christianity and Judaism. Indeed, it may have been built to overshadow the Christian Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, and it is decorated with verses from the Qur'an, some of which directly rebut Christian beliefs. The Dome of the Rock remains a unique monument of Islamic culture in almost all respects, including as a work of art and as a cultural and pious document.

ii. **Umayyad Mosque** (Grand Mosque of Damascus)

The Grand Mosque of Damascus, also known as the Umayyad Mosque, is one of the largest and oldest mosques in the world. Located in one of the holiest sites in the old city of Damascus, it is of great architectural importance. The mosque founded by al-Walid I in Damascus and, was the greatest architectural achievement of his rule. The main reason for building it was the fact that the *musalla* (Muslim prayer room) could not cope with the fast-growing Muslim community and no sufficient free spaces were available elsewhere in the urban space of Damascus for a large congregational mosque. Under al-Walid I's predecessors, Muslim residents had worshipped in a small *musalla* attached to the 4th century cathedral of John the Baptist. Initially, the Muslim conquest of Damascus in 636AD did not affect the church, as the building was shared by Muslim and Christian worshippers. It remained a church although the Muslims built a mud brick structure against the southern wall so that they could pray. The construction started in 705 and al-Walid's architects replaced the demolished space

with a large prayer hall and a courtyard bordered on all sides by a closed portico with double arcades. The tomb of Saladin stands in a small garden adjoining the north wall of the mosque. The mosque was completed in 711 and it was said that the field army of Damascus, numbering some 45,000 soldiers, were taxed a quarter of their salaries for nine years to pay for its construction. The scale and grandeur of the great mosque made it a symbol of the political supremacy and moral prestige of Islam.

iii. Rebuilding the sacred Kaaba in Mecca

During the Second Fitna (683–692), in September 683, the independent caliph Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr conquered Mecca from the Umayyad forces of Yazid I. During the **First Siege** of Mecca in the Second Fitna, the Kaaba caught fire and was severely damaged by Yazid I's army. Ibn al-Zubayr rebuilt it to include the *hatīm*. He did so based on a tradition - found in several hadith collections - that the *hatīm* (also known as the *Hijr Ismail*, a semi-circular low wall opposite, but not connected to, the north-west wall of the Kaaba.) was a remnant of the foundations of the Abrahamic Kaaba, and that Prophet Muhammad himself had wished to rebuild it so as to include it. The Kaaba was bombarded with stones in the **Second Siege** of Mecca in 692, in which the Umayyad army was led by al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. The fall of the city and the death of Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr allowed the Umayyads under Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan to finally reunite all the Islamic possessions and end the long civil war. In 693, Abd al-Malik had the remnants of al-Zubayr's Kaaba razed and

rebuilt it on the foundations set by the Quraysh. The Kaaba returned to the cube shape it had taken during Prophet Muhammad's time. The basic shape and structure of the Kaaba have not changed since then.

iv. Redevelopment of Prophet's Mosque in Medina

In 706 (or 707 AD), al-Walid I instructed Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz to significantly enlarge the Prophet's Mosque in Medina. Its redevelopment entailed the demolition of the living quarters of Prophet Muhammad's wives and the expansion of the structure to incorporate the graves of Prophet Muhammad and the first two caliphs, Abu Bakr and Umar I. An ornate enclosure was built around the graves and fitted with a concave *mihrab* (prayer niche), four minarets and a pentagonal-shaped entrance. Al-Walid lavished large sums for the mosque's reconstruction and supplied Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz with mosaics and Greek and Coptic craftsmen. The building of a large-scale mosque in Medina, the original center of the Caliphate, was an acknowledgement by al-Walid I of his own roots and those of Islam itself, and possibly an attempt to appease Medinese resentment at the loss of their city's political importance to Syria under the Umayyads.

• Urbanism and building new cities

The Umayyad legacy in urbanism is an undoubtedly important contribution. The revived urbanism in the lands occupied by the Arabs is very striking, according to some

historians. Clearly the Arabs' attitude to cities was much closer to that of the classical Greco-Romans than that of the northern barbarians. It is clear that development of the Islamic city was built upon the urban traditions that the first Muslims encountered in the conquered lands, the Byzantine urbs (the much-altered Hellenistic/Roman polis) and Sasanian shahr. One may suggest that the Arabs brought with them another urban tradition, the South Arabian hajar. The Umayyads considered themselves inheritors who would continue to rule the empires they conquered and the dynasties governing them, establishing clear signs of legitimisation of this continuity through symbols and representations that permitted them to sustain such endeavours in the face of attacks by their rivals and detractors. The building of architectural works was one of the means to which they turned immediately, establishing through their construction and ornamental programmes the foundations of Islamic art. By constructing a new city, they were demonstrating their status, their wealth, and their aim to live on in the memory of their subjects, as founding a city is always a way of enduring in the memory of its present and future inhabitants, although in many cases the life of these cities turned out to be extremely ephemeral, lasting for a very short time. Among the new cities constructed by the Umayyads Rasafa, Ramlah and Tunis (the city).

- **Building palaces and family residences**

The Umayyads built several palaces and family residences. They would spend the winter mostly in Damascus and

Sinnabra near Lake Tiberias, then to Jabiya in the Golan Heights and Dayr Murran, a monastery village on the slopes of Mount Qasyoun overlooking the Ghouta orchards of Damascus. In the heat of summer, they would typically go to Baalbek in the Beqaa Valley before heading back to Damascus in early autumn. The Damascus residence for the Umayyad caliphs was the *Khadra* Palace commissioned by Mu'awiya I and purchased by Abd al-Malik from Khalid ibn Yazid at the beginning of his reign.

● Patronage of the Arts

During the Umayyad Empire, Islamic art was in its formative stages. It is forbidden to draw Allah, the Prophets, or living creature (not plants). At first, even though Arabic became the official language and Islam the principal religion of the diverse lands unified under Umayyad rule, artists continued to work in their established manner. The main artistic influence came from the late antique classical naturalistic tradition, which had been prevalent on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. Islamic architecture and art were developed during the Umayyad Empire. A number of their sacred constructions were situated in areas that had symbolic significance. The buildings also had unique designs that have continued to influence Islamic architecture up to date. The Umayyad period was important in the development of Islamic architecture. While earlier architectural traditions continued, the requirements of the new religion and customs of the new Arab rulers necessitated a different usage of space. In the case of

religious buildings, the Umayyads often constructed their monuments on sites of historical or symbolic significance.

V. The Society

▪ Social organization

The Umayyad Caliphate had several social classes. The Muslim Arabs were at the top of the society and saw it as their duty to rule over the conquered areas. The caliphs were at the top because they were the religious leaders. Then the doctors, merchants, and teachers (professionals). Since the caliph and professionals were Arab Muslims, they were at the top. Then the people of the book came next. These people were the Christians, Jews, and non-Arab Muslims. On the bottom were the slaves as usual. The Arab Muslims held themselves in higher esteem than Muslim non-Arabs and generally did not mix with other Muslims. The Umayyad Caliphate had four main social classes:

- Muslim Arabs
- Muslim non-Arabs (clients of the Muslim Arabs)
- *Dhimmis* (non-Muslim free persons such as Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians)
- Slaves

As Islam spread, more and more of the Muslim population consisted of non-Arabs. This caused social unrest, as the new converts were not given the same rights as Muslim

Arabs. Also, as conversions increased, tax revenues (peasant tax) from non-Muslims decreased to dangerous lows. These issues continued to worsen until they helped cause the **Abbasid Revolt** in the 740s. Some of the major activities and events that occurred in the society during the Umayyad Dynasty were the second and the third Fitnas. For instance, the second Fitna led to a major division among Muslims. Consequently, the Shia Muslims who supported Ali's family continued to rebel against the Umayyad regime. These tensions culminated into the third Fitna. The third Fitna had a devastating effect on the Umayyad Empire. In particular, the Abbasids overthrew the Umayyad Empire during the third Fitna.

▪ Spread of Islam (*Dawah*)

In the years following the Prophet Muhammad's death, the expansion of Islam was carried out by his successor caliphates, including the Umayyads, who increased the territory of the Islamic state and sought converts from both polytheistic and monotheistic religions. In tandem with the Arabization of the bureaucracy and currency, Abd al-Malik began the export of papyri containing the Muslim statement of belief in Greek to spread Islamic teachings in the Byzantine realm. This was a further testament to the ideological expansion of the Byzantine–Muslim struggle. The increasingly Muslim character of the state under Marwanids was partly a reflection of Islam's influence in the lives of the caliphs and the chief enforcers of their policies, such as al-Hajjaj and Abd al-Malik, both of whom belonged

to the first generation of rulers born and raised as Muslims. Having spent most of their lives in the Hejaz, the theological and legal center of Islam where Arabic was spoken exclusively and administrative offices were held solely by Arab Muslims, Abd al-Malik and his viceroy only understood. According to several scholars and historians, it was during the time of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz that Islam took roots and was accepted by a large segment of the population of Persia and Egypt. When the officials in these provinces complained that because of conversions to Islam, the *jizya* (poll-tax) revenues of the state had experienced a steep decline, Umar II wrote back saying that he had accepted the Caliphate to invite people to Islam and not to become a tax collector. The infusion of non-Arabs in large number into the fold of Islam shifted the center of gravity of the empire from Medina and Damascus to Persia and Egypt. Although Umar II halted further eastward expansion, the establishment of Islam in several cities in Transoxiana, precluded Umar's withdrawal of Arab troops from there. Following the example of the Prophet, Umar II sent out emissaries to China and Tibet, inviting their rulers to accept Islam.

▪ Conversions to Islam

Historians distinguish between two separate strands of converts of the time:

- One is animists and polytheists of tribal societies of the Arabian Peninsula and the Fertile crescent. For the

polytheistic and pagan societies, apart from the religious and spiritual reasons each individual may have had, conversion to Islam represented the response of a tribal, pastoral population to the need for a larger framework for political and economic integration, a more stable state, and a more imaginative and encompassing moral vision to cope with the problems of a tumultuous society.

■ The other is the monotheistic populations of the Middle Eastern agrarian and urbanized societies. For sedentary and often already monotheistic societies, Islam was substituted for a Byzantine or Sassanian political identity and for a Christian, Jewish or Zoroastrian religious affiliation.

Initially, conversion was neither required nor necessarily wished for; the Arab conquerors did not require the conversion as much as the subordination of non-Muslim peoples. At the outset, they were hostile to conversions because new Muslims diluted the economic and status advantages of the Arabs. Only in subsequent centuries, with the development of the religious doctrine of Islam and with that the understanding of the Muslim *Ummah* (Nation), did mass conversion take place. The new understanding by the religious and political leadership led in many cases to a weakening or breakdown of the social and religious structures of parallel religious communities such as Christians and Jews. With the weakening of many churches, for example, and with the favoring of Islam and the migration of substantial Muslim Turkish populations into the

areas of Anatolia and the Balkans, the social and cultural relevance of Islam were enhanced, and a large number of peoples were converted. The Arab-Muslim conquests followed a general pattern of nomadic conquests of settled regions, whereby conquering peoples became the new military elite and reached a compromise with the old elites by allowing them to retain local political, religious, and financial authority. Peasants, workers, and merchants paid taxes, while members of the old and new elites collected them.

▪ **Public services and social welfare**

Welfare programs included financial relief for the poor and servants to assist the handicapped, though this initiative was limited to Syria. Al-Walid I was the first caliph to institute programs for social welfare, aiding the poor and handicapped in Al-Sham (Syria). From the beginning of his rule, al-Walid I inaugurated public works and social welfare programs on a scale unprecedented in the Caliphate's history. The efforts were financed by treasure accrued from the conquests and tax revenue. In addition, war spoils from the conquests allowed the caliph to finance impressive public works. Umar II followed the same social policy, in addition his social reforms included abolishing home tax, marriage tax, stamp tax and many other taxes as well. Umar II also insisted on like treatment of Arab and non-Arab (*mawali*) Muslims, and on the removal of obstacles to the conversion of non-Arabs to Islam. Throughout their reign, al-Walid I and Umar II and some of their successors do built

waystations and dug wells along the roads in Syria and installed street lighting in the cities. They invested in land reclamation projects, entailing irrigation networks and canals, which boosted agricultural production. Umar II urged all the officials to listen the complaints of the people and during any occasion, he used to announce that if any subject had seen any officer mistreating others, he should report him to the leader and will be given a reward ranging from 100 to 300 dirhams.

▪ Social reforms

The most significant reform of Umar II was affecting the Equality (**equalization measures**) of Arabs and *mawali* (non-Arab Muslims). This was mainly relevant to the non-Arab troops in the Muslim army, who had not been entitled to the same shares in spoils, lands and salaries given to Arab soldiers. The policy also applied to Muslim society at large. Under previous Umayyad rulers, Arab Muslims had certain financial privileges over non-Arab Muslims. Non-Arab converts to Islam were still expected to pay the *jizya* (poll tax) that they paid before becoming Muslims. Umar II put into practice a new system that exempted all Muslims, regardless of their heritage, from the *jizya* tax. It was said that to stave off potential blowback from opponents of the equalization measures, Umar II expanded the “Islamization” drive that had been steadily strengthening under his Marwanid predecessors. The drive included measures to distinguish Muslims from non-Muslims and the inauguration of an Islamic iconoclasm. He also put a stop to the ritual

cursing of Caliph Ali, the cousin and brother-in-law of Prophet Muhammad, in Friday prayer sermons. The ritual had begun under Ali's opponent and future founder of the Umayyad Caliphate Mu'awiya I during the First Muslim Civil War.

VI. Other Achievements

Official collection of hadith

Umar II is credited with having ordered the first official collection of *hadith* (sayings and actions attributed to the Islamic prophet Muhammad), fearing that some of it might be lost. Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn Amr ibn Hazm and Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri are among those who compiled hadiths at Umar II's behest. After his appointment Umar II set up a committee of the jurist in Madina headed by Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr and it included Urwah ibn Zubayr, Ubaidullah bin Abdullah bin Utbah, Abu Bakr bin Abdur-Rahman bin al-Harith bin Hisham, Abu Bakr bin Sulaiman bin Abu Hathmah, Sulaiman bin Yasar, Salim bin Abdullah, Abdullah bin Amir bin Rabee'ah and Kharijah bin Zaid bin Thabit, in Madina to advise on legal matters. The work of Malik ibn Anas and successive jurists is also based on the work of this early committee in Madina. Malik ibn Anas also refers to these *Fuqaha* (scholars) of Madina.

- **Non-Muslim groups in the Umayyad Caliphate**

- Non-Muslim groups in the Umayyad Caliphate, which included Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and pagans, were called *dhimmis*. They were given a legally protected status as second-class citizens as long as they accepted and acknowledged the political supremacy of the ruling Muslims, i.e., paid a tax, known as *jizya*, which the Muslims did not have to pay, who would instead pay the voluntary zakat tax. If they converted to Islam, they would cease paying *jizya* and would instead pay zakat.

Zoroastrians

- Although the Umayyads were harsh when it came to defeating their Zoroastrian adversaries, they did offer protection and relative religious tolerance to the Zoroastrians who accepted their authority. As a matter of fact, Umar I was reported to have said in one of his letters commanding not to "destroy a synagogue or a church or temple of fire worshippers (meaning the Zoroastrians) as long as they have reconciled with and agreed upon with the Muslims". In fact, Zoroastrians (fire worshippers) in the northern parts of Iran were hardly penetrated by the "believers", winning virtually complete autonomy in return for tribute-tax or *jizyah*. In addition, Zoroastrians continued to exist in large numbers in northern and western Iran and elsewhere for centuries after the rise of Islam, and indeed, much of the canon of Zoroastrian religious texts was elaborated and written down during the Islamic period.

Christians and Jews

- Christians – as well as Jews- continued to produce great theological thinkers within their communities, but as time wore on, many of the intellectuals converted to Islam, leading to a lack of great thinkers in the non-Muslim communities. Important Christian writers from the Umayyad period include the theologian John of Damascus, bishop Cosmas of Maiuma, Pope Benjamin I of Alexandria and Isaac of Nineveh. Although non-Muslims could not hold the highest public offices in the empire, they held many bureaucratic positions within the government. An important example of Christian employment in the Umayyad government is that of Sarjun ibn Mansur who was a Melkite Christian official of the early Umayyad Caliphate. The son of a prominent Byzantine official of Damascus, he was a favourite of the early Umayyad caliphs Mu'awiya I and Yazid I and served as the head of the fiscal administration for Syria from the mid-7th century until the year 700, when Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan dismissed him as part of his efforts to Arabicize the administration of the Caliphate. According to the Muslim historians al-Baladhuri and al-Tabari, Sarjun was a *mawla* of the first Umayyad caliph, Mu'awiya I, serving as his secretary and the person in charge of his business".
- Muawiya I's marriage to Maysun bint Bahdal (Yazid' Is mother) was politically motivated, as she was the daughter of the chief of the Kalb tribe, which was a large Syriac Orthodox Christian Arab tribe in Syria. The Kalb tribe had remained largely neutral when the Muslims first went into Syria. After the plague that killed much of the Muslim army in Syria, by marrying Maysun, Muawiyah used the Syriac Orthodox Christians against the Byzantines. Historians commented that

Christians, Jews, Samaritans and Manichaeans were all treated well by Muawiyah I. Muawiyah even restored Edessa's cathedral after it had been toppled by an earthquake. Savagely though Muawiyah I prosecuted his wars against the Romans, yet his subjects, no longer trampled by rival armies, no longer divided by hostile watchtowers, knew only peace at last. Justice flourished in his time, and there was great peace in the regions under his control. He allowed everyone to live as they wanted.

Umayyads

The First Muslim Dynasty

(The Marwanids)

الأمويون
(المروانيون)

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