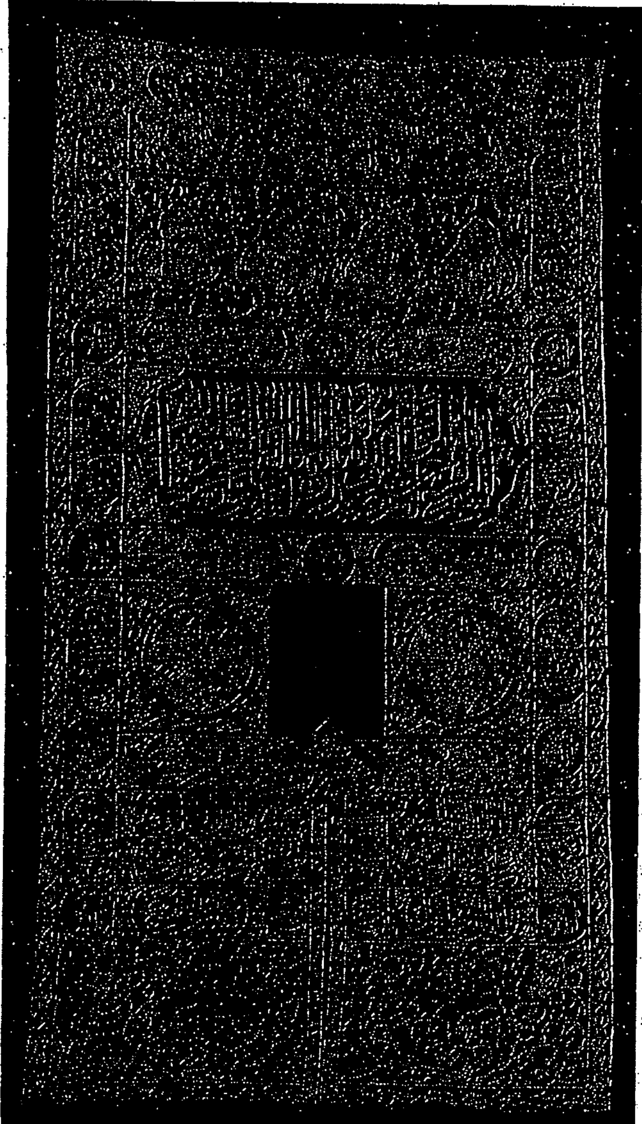

From Ibrahim Rif'at, "Mir'āt al-Ḥaramayn"

THE CURTAIN OF THE DOOR OF THE KA'BAH AT MAKKAH

Bearing koranic inscriptions which include sūrahs 1, 106 and 112

The prominent inscription above the centre is the first part of sūrah 48, verse 27

[Frontispiece

HISTORY OF THE ARABS

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE PRESENT

PHILIP K. HITTI
PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF SEMITIC LITERATURE
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TENTH EDITION

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PREFACE TO THE TENTH EDITION

THE year 1970 marks the thirty-third anniversary of the publication of *History of the Arabs* and witnesses its tenth edition. The initiative for its writing was taken by Mr. Daniel Macmillan, who, as early as 1927, wrote to the author suggesting a book comparable to Ameer Ali, *A Short History of the Saracens*, first published by Macmillan and Co. in 1900. The occurrence of the word "Saracens" in the title left no doubt about the obsolete character of the work.

In my youthful enthusiasm I signed a contract in 1927 agreeing to deliver the manuscript in three years. (A representative of Macmillan, who was then touring the Arab world, suggested an Arabic version of the book and I thought I could do that in a couple of subsequent years.) When the book at last appeared, in 1937, the New York publisher (before St. Martin's Press) asked my opinion as to the number of copies to be imported and when I offhand suggested a hundred, he shot back, "Who is going to buy that many?"

As a matter of fact the American public, even at its educated level, was then almost illiterate so far as the Arabs and Moslems were concerned. The rare courses in this field were limited to a few graduate schools and offered as subsidiary to Semitic studies and as contributory to philology or linguistics. Nowhere were such courses given for their own sake or as a key to further investigation of Arab history, Islam and Islamic culture. This was substantially the situation until the second World War. It was not until then that the American government and public were awakened to the fact that here are millions of Moslems and tens of thousands of Arabs with whom they had to deal and of whom they should have some understanding.

The demand, subsequent to the appearance of the first English edition, for translation rights—not only into Arabic but into varied Asian and European languages—left no doubt about the timeliness of the work and its capacity to meet the need. It is gratifying to note that since the publication of the ninth edition

Caliph Hārūn was not pleasing to his father, Yaḥya, as it was suspiciously immoral.[1]

The time at last came for the caliph to rid himself of this Persian tutelage. The Shī'ite Barmakids were getting too powerful for the strong-willed Hārūn (786–809), in whose caliphal firmament there could not be two suns. First the thirty-seven-year-old Ja'far was slain in 803; his severed head was impaled on one bridge of Baghdād and the two halves of his body on the other two bridges.[2] The usual reason given by historians is that the caliph had allowed him, as a boon companion, to marry in name only his favourite sister, al-'Abbāsah, but discovered later while on a holy pilgrimage that she had secretly given birth to a son whom she had concealed in Makkah.[3] The aged Yaḥya, together with his distinguished son al-Faḍl and his other two sons, were all apprehended and cast into prison. Both Yaḥya and al-Faḍl died in confinement. All the property of the family, said to have amounted to 30,676,000 (dinars) in cash exclusive of farms, palaces and furniture, was confiscated.[4] Thus the celebrated house founded by Khālid al-Barmaki fell, never to rise again.

[1] Ṭabari, vol. iii, pp. 674-6.
[2] *'Iqd*, vol. iii, p. 28; Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 680.
[3] Ṭabari, vol. iii, pp. 676-7; Mas'ūdi, vol. vi, pp. 387-94; *Fakhri*, p. 288. Cf. ibn-Khaldūn, vol. iii, pp. 223-4; *Kitāb al-'Uyūn*, pt. 3, pp. 306-8.
[4] *'Iqd*, vol. iii, p. 28.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GOLDEN PRIME OF THE 'ABBĀSIDS

Al-'Abbās

1. Al-Saffāḥ (750)
2. Al-Manṣūr (754)
3. Al-Mahdi (775)
4. Al-Hādi (785)
5. Al-Rashīd (786)
6. Al-Amīn (809)
7. Al-Ma'mūn (813)
8. Al-Mu'taṣim (833)
9. Al-Wāthiq (842)
10. Al-Mutawakkil (847)

THE 'Abbāsid dynasty, like others in Moslem history, attained its most brilliant period of political and intellectual life soon after its establishment. The Baghdād caliphate founded by al-Saffāḥ and al-Manṣūr reached its prime in the period between the reigns of the third caliph, al-Mahdi, and the ninth, al-Wāthiq, more particularly in the days of Hārūn al-Rashīd and his son al-Ma'mūn. It was chiefly because of these two luminous caliphs that the 'Abbāsid dynasty acquired a halo in popular imagination and became the most celebrated in the history of Islam. The dictum quoted by the anthologist al-Tha'ālibi[1] († 1038) that of the 'Abbāsid caliphs "the opener" was al-Manṣūr, "the middler" was al-Ma'mūn and "the closer" was al-Mu'taḍid (892–902) is therefore not far from the historical truth. After al-Wāthiq the state starts on its downward course until under the Caliph al-Musta'ṣim, the thirty-seventh of the line, it meets its final destruction at the hands of the Mongols in 1258. An idea of the degree of power and glory and progress attained by the 'Abbāsid caliphate at its highest and best may be gained from a scrutiny of its foreign relations, a study of court and aristocratic life in

[1] *Laṭā'if al-Ma'ārif*, ed. P. de Jong (Leyden, 1867), p. 71.

its capital, Baghdād, and a survey of the unparalleled intellectual awakening that culminated under the patronage of al-Ma'mūn.

Relations with the Franks

The ninth century opened with two imperial names standing supreme in world affairs: Charlemagne in the West and Hārūn al-Rashīd in the East. Of the two Hārūn was undoubtedly the more powerful and represented the higher culture. The mutual friendly relations into which these two contemporaries entered were, of course, prompted by self-interest; Charlemagne cultivated Hārūn as a possible ally against hostile Byzantium and Hārūn desired to use Charlemagne against his rivals and deadly foes, the neighbouring Umayyads of Spain, who had succeeded in establishing a mighty and prosperous state. This reciprocity of cordial feelings found expression, according to Western writers, in the exchange of a number of embassies and presents. A Frankish author who knew Charlemagne personally and is sometimes referred to as his secretary relates that the envoys of the great king of the West returned home with rich gifts from "the king of Persia, Aaron", which included fabrics, aromatics and an elephant.[1] This account is based on the *Annales royales*,[2] which further speaks of an intricate clock as among the gifts from Baghdād. But the account of the pipe organ sent to Charlemagne by Hārūn, like many other charming bits of history, is fictitious. Its story is apparently based on a mistranslation of the term *clepsydra* in the sources, which in reality meant a device for measuring time by water and referred to the clock presented. Likewise the assertion that the keys of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre were delivered by Hārūn's consent to Charlemagne has been discredited.[3]

The strange thing about this exchange of embassies and gifts, said to have taken place between 797 and 806, is the utter silence of Moslem authors regarding it. While reference is made to various other diplomatic exchanges and courtesies, none is made to this. The *'Iqd*[4] cites several cases of correspondence between Umayyad caliphs and Byzantine emperors and speaks of a delegation from "the king of India" which brought Hārūn

[1] Éginhard, *Vie de Charlemagne*, ed. and tr. L. Halphen (Paris, 1923), p. 47.
[2] "Annales regni Francorum", ed. G. H. Pertzii and F. Kurze in *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum*, vol. 43 (Hanover, 1895), pp. 114, 123-4.
[3] See below, pp. 507, 635-6. Cf. Louis Bréhier in *Chambre de Commerce de Marseille. Congrès français de Syrie. Séances et travaux*, fasc. 2 (1919), pp. 15-39.
[4] Vol. i, pp. 197-8.

valuable presents and was received with great pomp. Another source[1] states that Hārūn's son al-Ma'mūn received an especially rich gift from his contemporary "the king of the Romans", possibly Michael II.

With the Byzantines

The more-than-century-old struggle between the caliphate and the Byzantine empire was resumed by the third caliph, al-Mahdi (775–85), but the engagements were of less frequency and success. The internal conflicts that convulsed the Arab state and resulted in the transference of the capital to distant Baghdād had made it possible for Constantine V (741–75) to push the imperial border farther east along the entire boundary of Asia Minor and Armenia.[2] The Moslem line of frontier fortifications (*thughūr*) extending from Syria to Armenia retreated as the Byzantine line opposite advanced.

Al-Mahdi, the first 'Abbāsid caliph to resume the "holy war" against the Byzantines, initiated a brilliant and successful attack against the enemy capital itself. Hārūn, his young son and future successor, commanded the expedition. In 782[3] the Arab forces reached the Bosporus,[4] if not Constantinople itself; and Irene, who held the regency in the name of her son Constantine VI, was forced to sue for peace and conclude a singularly humiliating treaty involving the payment of a tribute of 70,000 to 90,000 dinars in semi-annual instalments.[5] It was in the course of this campaign that Hārūn so distinguished himself that his father gave him the honorific title al-Rashīd (follower of the right path) and designated him the second heir apparent to the throne, after his elder brother Mūsa al-Hādi.

This proved the last time that a hostile Arab army stood before the walls of the proud capital. In all there were four distinct expeditions which reached Byzantium; the first three were sent under the Umayyads by Mu'āwiyah and by Sulaymān.[6] Of the four only two involved real sieges of the city: one by Yazīd (49/669) and the other by Maslamah (98/716). Turkish tradition,

[1] Kutubi, *Fawāt*, vol. i, p. 307, ll. 12-13.
[2] A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, tr. S. Ragozin, vol. i (Madison, 1928), p. 291; Charles Diehl, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, tr. G. B. Ives (Princeton, 1925), p. 55.
[3] *Kitāb al-'Uyūn*, pt. 3, p. 278, dates the expedition 163 (A.D. 780), Ya'qūbi (vol. ii, pp. 478, 486) 164 and Ṭabari (vol. iii, pp. 503-4) 165.
[4] Theophanis, who wrote in 813, says (p. 456) that Hārūn advanced as far as Chrysopolis, on the site of modern Scutari.
[5] Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 504.
[6] See above, pp. 200 seq.

however, makes the sieges seven to nine in number, of which two are ascribed to Hārūn. In the *Arabian Nights* and other Arabic romances of chivalry the Moslem expeditions against Constantinople form the subject of themes highly coloured and developed during the period of the Crusades.

Irene (797–802), who had seized the throne and become "the first instance in Byzantine history of a woman who ruled with full authority of supreme power",[1] was succeeded by Nicephorus I[2] (802–11), who repudiated the terms of the treaty contracted by the empress and even demanded from the caliph, now al-Rashīd, the return of the tribute already paid. Inflamed with rage, al-Rashīd called for pen and ink and wrote on the back of the scornful epistle:

> In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate.
> From Hārūn, the commander of the believers, to Nicephorus, the dog of a Roman.
> Verily I have read thy letter, O son of an infidel mother. As for the answer it shall be for thine eye to see, not for thine ear to hear. Salam.[3]

True to his word, Hārūn started at once a series of campaigns directed from his favourite town of residence, al-Raqqah, situated beside the Euphrates and commanding the Syrian frontier. These expeditions ravaged Asia Minor and culminated in the capture of Heraclea (Ar. Hiraqlah) and Tyana (al-Ṭuwānah) in 806 and the imposition, in addition to the tribute, of an ignominious tax on the emperor himself and on each member of his household.[4] This event and date in the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd may be taken as marking the topmost point ever reached by 'Abbāsid power.

After 806 there was only one serious attempt at securing a footing beyond the Taurus, and that by al-Mu'taṣim in 838. Though al-Mu'taṣim's huge army, "equipped as no caliph's army before had ever been equipped",[5] penetrated into the heart

[1] Vasiliev, vol. i, p. 287.
[2] Niqfūr of Arabic sources. He was of Arab origin; possibly a descendant of Jabalah the Ghassānid; Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 695; Michel le Syrien, *Chronicle*, ed. J.-B. Chabot, vol. iii (Paris, 1905), p. 15. Irene, whom he dethroned, was the last of the Isaurian or Syrian dynasty (717–802) founded by Leo III (717–41), who with his successors headed the iconoclastic movement which bears traces of Moslem influence. Theophanes, p. 405, calls Leo "the Saracen-minded".
[3] Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 696.
[4] *Ibid.* pp. 696, 709-10; Ya'qūbi, vol. ii, p. 519, l. 14, p. 523, l. 2; Dīnawari, pp. 386-7; Mas'ūdi, vol. ii, pp. 337-52.
[5] Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 1236.

of "the land of the Romans" and temporarily occupied Amorium (Amorion, Ar. 'Ammūriyah), the birthplace of the founder of the then ruling dynasty,[1] the attempt on the whole was unsuccessful. The Arab forces expected to march upon Constantinople but returned on the receipt of alarming reports of a military conspiracy at home. The reigning emperor, Theophilus (829–42), so feared the loss of his capital that he dispatched envoys to Venice, to the Frankish king and to the Umayyad court in Spain soliciting aid. Theophilus had once before been threatened from the east when al-Ma'mūn, son of Hārūn, took the field in person but met his death (833) near Tarsus. After al-Mu'taṣim no serious offensive on the Arab side was ever undertaken. Those of his successors who sent armies across the border aimed at plunder rather than conquest. In no case did the collision assume significance or occur deep in the land. Yet throughout the ninth century the hostile contacts, though of minor importance, occurred with almost annual regularity on the eastern border-line. One Arab geographer[2] informs us that it was the practice then to make three raids each year: one in winter covering the end of February and the beginning of March, another in spring lasting thirty days from May 10, and a third in summer extending over a period of sixty days from July 10. Such raids served to keep the military forces in good trim and netted profitable spoils. But the original Arabian national motive, and to a large extent the religious impulse which figured in the early campaigns of Islam, had now become far less important factors. The internal weakening of the Moslem state was beginning to tell in its foreign relations. One of the petty dynasties, the Ḥamdānid in Aleppo, which arose about the middle of the tenth century at the expense of the caliphate, did take up the cudgels against Byzantium. But of that we shall hear later.

The glory that was Baghdād

History and legend unite in placing the most brilliant period of Baghdād during the caliphate of Hārūn al-Rashīd (786–809). Though less than half a century old, Baghdād had by that time grown from nothingness to a world centre of prodigious wealth and international significance, standing alone as the rival of Byzantium. Its splendour kept pace with the prosperity of the empire of which it was the capital. It was then

[1] Michel le Syrien, vol. iii, p. 72.
[2] Qudāmah, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, ed. de Goeje (Leyden, 1889), p. 259.

that Baghdād became "a city with no peer throughout the whole world".[1]

The royal palace with its many annexes for harems, eunuchs and special functionaries occupied one-third of the Round City. Particularly impressive was its audience chamber with its rugs, curtains and cushions, the best the Orient could produce. The caliph's cousin-wife, Zubaydah, who in tradition shares with her husband the halo of glory and distinction bestowed by later generations, would tolerate at her table no vessels not made of gold or silver and studded with gems. She set the fashion for the smart set and was the first to ornament her shoes with precious stones.[2] In one holy pilgrimage she is reported to have spent three million dinars, which included the expense of supplying Makkah with water from a spring twenty-five miles away.[3]

Zubaydah had a rival in the beauteous 'Ulayyah, daughter of al-Mahdi and half-sister of Hārūn, who to cover a blemish on her forehead devised a fillet set with jewels which, as the fillet *à la* 'Ulayyah, was soon adopted by the world of fashion as the ornament of the day.[4]

Especially on ceremonial occasions, such as the installation of the caliph, weddings, pilgrimages and receptions for foreign envoys, did the courtly wealth and magnificence find its fullest display. The marriage ceremony of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn to the eighteen-year-old Būrān,[5] daughter of his vizir, al-Ḥasan ibn-Sahl, was celebrated in 825 with such fabulous expenditure of money that it has lived in Arabic literature as one of the unforgettable extravaganzas of the age. At the nuptials a thousand pearls of unique size, we are told, were showered from a gold tray upon the couple who sat on a golden mat studded with pearls and sapphires. A two-hundred-rotl candle of ambergris turned the night into day. Balls of musk, each containing a ticket naming an estate or a slave or some such gift, were showered on the royal princes and dignitaries.[6] In 917 the Caliph al-Muqtadir received in his palace with great ceremony and pomp the envoys of the young Constantine VII, whose mission evidently

[1] Khaṭīb, vol. i, p. 119. [2] Mas'ūdi, vol. viii, pp. 298-9.
[3] Cf. ibn-Khallikān, vol. i, p. 337; Burckhardt, *Travels*, vol. i, p. 196.
[4] *Aghāni*, vol. ix, p. 83.
[5] She was ten years old when betrothed to al-Ma'mūn; ibn-Khallikān, vol. i, p. 166.
[6] Ṭabari, vol. iii, pp. 1081-4; Mas'ūdi, vol. vii, pp. 65-6; ibn-al-Athīr, vol. vi, p. 279; Tha'ālibi, *Laṭā'if*, pp. 73-4; ibn-Khaldūn, *Muqaddamah*, pp. 144-5.

involved the exchange and ransom of prisoners.[1] The caliphal array included 160,000 cavalry and footmen, 7000 black and white eunuchs and 700 chamberlains. In the parade a hundred lions marched, and in the caliphal palace hung 38,000 curtains, of which 12,500 were gilded, besides 22,000 rugs. The envoys were so struck with awe and admiration that they first mistook the chamberlain's office and then the vizir's for the royal audience chamber. Especially impressed were they with the Hall of the Tree (*dār al-shajarah*) which housed an artificial tree of gold and silver weighing 500,000 drams, in the branches of which were lodged birds of the same precious metals so constructed that they chirped by automatic devices. In the garden they marvelled at the artificially dwarfed palm trees which by skilled cultivation yielded dates of rare varieties.[2]

Like a magnet the princely munificence of Hārūn, the *beau idéal* of Islamic kingship, and of his immediate successors attracted to the capital poets, wits, musicians, singers, dancers, trainers of fighting dogs and cocks and others who could amuse, interest or entertain.[3] Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili, Siyāṭ and ibn-Jāmi' led the roster of musician-singers. The libertine poet abu-Nuwās, the boon companion of al-Rashīd and his comrade on many a nocturnal adventure, has depicted for us in unforgettable terms the colourful court life of this period of glory. The pages of *al-Aghāni* abound with illustrative anecdotes whose nucleus of truth is not hard to discern. According to one story the Caliph al-Amīn (809–13) one evening bestowed on his uncle Ibrāhīm ibn-al-Mahdi, a professional singer, the sum of 300,000 dinars for chanting a few verses of abu-Nuwās'. This raised the gratuities thus far received by Ibrāhīm from the caliph to 20,000,000 dirhams.[4] Al-Amīn, of whom ibn-al-Athīr[5] found nothing praiseworthy to record, had a number of special barges shaped like animals built for his parties on the Tigris. One of these vessels looked like a dolphin, another like a lion, a third like an eagle; the cost of one was 3,000,000 dirhams.[6] We read in the *Aghāni*[7] of a picturesque all-night ballet conducted under the Caliph al-Amīn's personal direction in which a large number of

[1] Mas'ūdi, *Tanbīh*, p. 193.
[2] Khaṭīb, vol. i, pp. 100-105; abu-al-Fidā', vol. ii, p. 73; Yāqūt, vol. ii, pp. 520-21.
[3] Balādhuri, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, ed. Max Achloessinger, vol. iv B (Jerusalem, 1938), p. 1. [4] *Aghāni*, vol. ix, p. 71. See below, p. 321. [5] Vol. vi, p. 207.
[6] *Ibid.* p. 206; Ṭabari, vol. iii, pp. 951-3. [7] Vol. xvi, pp. 138-9.

beautiful girl dancers performed in rhythmic unison to the soft harmony of music and were joined in their singing by all those who attended. Al-Mas'ūdi[1] relates that on the occasion of a dinner given by Ibrāhīm in honour of his brother al-Rashīd, the caliph was served with a dish of fish in which the slices looked exceedingly small. In explanation the host remarked that the slices were fishes' tongues, and the waiter added that the cost of the hundred and fifty tongues in the dish was over a thousand dirhams. Even when stripped of the adventitious glow cast by Oriental romance and fancy, enough of the splendour of court life in Baghdād remains to arouse our astonishment.

Next to the royal master in high and luxurious living came the members of the 'Abbāsid family, the vizirs, officials, functionaries and other satellites of the imperial household. Members of the Hāshimite tribe, to which the 'Abbāsids belonged, received large regular stipends from the state treasury until the practice was discontinued by al-Mu'taṣim (833–42).[2] Al-Rashīd's mother, al-Khayzurān, is said to have had an income of 160,000,000 dirhams.[3] A certain Muḥammad ibn-Sulaymān, whose property was confiscated on his death by al-Rashīd, left 50,000,000 dirhams in cash and a daily income of 100,000 dirhams from his real estate.[4] The scale on which the Barmakids lived could not have been much lower than that of the caliphal household itself. As for the humdrum life of the ordinary citizen in Baghdād and the feelings that surged in the breast of the common man, we find little in the sources with the possible exception of the poetical works of the ascetic abu-al-'Atāhiyah.

When al-Ma'mūn in 819, after several years of civil war with his elder brother al-Amīn (who had been designated to the successorship by their father) and with his uncle Ibrāhīm ibn-al-Mahdi, who also claimed the throne, made his victorious entry into Baghdād a large part of the city lay in ruins. We hear no more of the Round City. As caliph, al-Ma'mūn took up his abode in the Ja'fari palace, originally built for Ja'far al-Barmaki on the east side of the river. But it was not long before the town rose again to eminence as a commercial and intellectual centre. The natural successor to a long line of distinguished metropolitan towns which flourished in the Tigris-Euphrates valley beginning with

[1] Vol. vi, pp. 349-50.
[2] Cf. Tha'ālibi, *Laṭā'if*, p. 16.
[3] Mas'ūdi, vol. vi, p. 289.
[4] *Ibid.*

Ur and Babylon and ending with Ctesiphon, the 'Abbāsid capital could not be easily suppressed. Its advantageous position as a shipping centre made all parts of the then charted world accessible to it. Along its miles of wharves lay hundreds of vessels, including ships of war and pleasure craft and varying from Chinese junks to native rafts of inflated sheepskins, not unlike those of our present day, which were floated down from al-Mawṣil. Into the bazaars of the city came porcelain, silk and musk from China; spices, minerals and dyes from India and the Malay Archipelago; rubies, lapis lazuli, fabrics and slaves from the lands of the Turks in Central Asia; honey, wax, furs and white slaves from Scandinavia and Russia; ivory, gold dust and black slaves from eastern Africa. Chinese wares had a special bazaar devoted to their sale. The provinces of the empire itself sent by caravan or sea their domestic products: rice, grain and linen from Egypt; glass, metal ware and fruits from Syria; brocade, pearls and weapons from Arabia; silks, perfumes and vegetables from Persia.[1] Communication between the east and west sides of the city was assured by three main pontoon bridges like the Baghdād bridges of today. Al-Khaṭīb[2] devotes a section of his history to the bridges of Baghdād and another to its canals (*anhār*). From Baghdād and other export centres Arab merchants shipped to the Far East, Europe and Africa fabrics, jewellery, metal mirrors, glass beads, spices, etc.[3] The hoards of Arab coins recently found in places as far north as Russia, Finland,[4] Sweden and Germany testify to the world-wide commercial activity of the Moslems of this and the later period. The adventures of Sindbād the Sailor, which form one of the best-known tales in *The Thousand and One Nights*, have long been recognized as based upon actual reports of voyages made by Moslem merchants.

Merchants played a leading part in the Baghdād community. Members of each craft and trade had their shops in the same market (*sūq*),[5] as in the present day. The monotony of street life was interrupted from time to time by the occasional passage of a wedding or circumcision procession. Professional men—physicians, lawyers, teachers, writers and the like—began to occupy a conspicuous place under the patronage of al-Ma'mūn.

[1] Consult Le Strange, *Eastern Caliphate*, *passim*. See below, pp. 343, 351.
[2] Vol. i, pp. 111-17.
[3] See below, pp. 345 *seq.*
[4] The museum at Helsinki contains many such coins.
[5] Ya'qūbi, *Buldān*, p. 246.

By the time al-Nadīm composed (988) his monumental *al-Fihrist*, a sort of catalogue of existing Arabic works, there were abundant manuscripts dealing even with such subjects as hypnotism, jugglery, sword-swallowing and glass-chewing.[1] Ibn-Khallikān[2] has fortunately left us a cross section of the daily routine of a member of the learned fraternity, Ḥunayn ibn-Isḥāq, which indicates that scholarship had a considerable market value in those days. We are first shown Ḥunayn, after his daily ride, at the public bath, where attendants poured water over him. On emerging he put on a lounging-robe, sipped a drink, ate a biscuit and lay down, sometimes falling asleep. The siesta over, he burned perfume to fumigate his person and ordered a dinner which generally consisted of soup, fattened chicken and bread. Then he resumed his sleep and on waking drank four rotls of old wine, to which he added quinces and Syrian apples if he felt the desire for fresh fruits.

Intellectual awakening

The victory of Moslem arms under al-Mahdi and al-Rashīd over the inveterate Byzantine enemy undoubtedly shed its lustre on this period, the luxurious scale of living made this period popular in history and in fiction, but what has rendered this age especially illustrious in world annals is the fact that it witnessed the most momentous intellectual awakening in the history of Islam and one of the most significant in the whole history of thought and culture. The awakening was due in a large measure to foreign influences, partly Indo-Persian and Syrian but mainly Hellenic, and was marked by translations into Arabic from Persian, Sanskrit, Syriac and Greek. Starting with very little science, philosophy or literature of his own, the Arabian Moslem, who brought with him from the desert a keen sense of intellectual curiosity, a voracious appetite for learning and many latent faculties, soon became, as we have learned before, the beneficiary and heir of the older and more cultured peoples whom he conquered or encountered. As in Syria he adopted the already existing Aramaic civilization, itself influenced by the later Greek, so did he in al-'Irāq adopt the same civilization influenced by the Persian. In three-quarters of a century after the establishment of Baghdād the Arabic-reading world was in possession of the chief philosophical works of Aristotle, of the leading Neo-Platonic commentators, and of most of the medical writings of Galen, as well

[1] P. 312.

[2] Vol. i, p. 298.

as of Persian and Indian scientific works.[1] In only a few decades Arab scholars assimilated what had taken the Greeks centuries to develop. In absorbing the main features of both Hellenic and Persian cultures Islam, to be sure, lost most of its own original character, which breathed the spirit of the desert and bore the stamp of Arabian nationalism, but it thereby took an important place in the medieval cultural unit which linked southern Europe with the Near East. This culture, it should be remembered, was fed by a single stream, a stream with sources in ancient Egypt, Babylonia, Phoenicia and Judaea, all flowing to Greece and now returning to the East in the form of Hellenism. We shall later see how this same stream was re-diverted into Europe by the Arabs in Spain and Sicily, whence it helped create the Renaissance of Europe.

India

India acted as an early source of inspiration, especially in wisdom literature and mathematics. About A.H. 154 (771) an Indian traveller introduced into Baghdād a treatise on astronomy, a *Siddhānta* (Ar. *Sindhind*), which by order of al-Manṣūr was translated by Muḥammad ibn-Ibrāhīm al-Fazāri († between 796 and 806), who subsequently became the first astronomer in Islam.[2] The stars had of course interested the Arabians since desert days, but no scientific study of them was undertaken until this time. Islam added its impetus to the study of astronomy as a means for fixing the direction in which prayer should be conducted Ka'bah-ward. The famous al-Khwārizmi († *ca.* 850) based his widely known astronomical tables (*zīj*) on al-Fazāri's work and syncretized the Indian and Greek systems of astronomy, at the same time adding his own contribution. Among other translations of astronomical works at this period were those from Persian into Arabic by al-Faḍl ibn-Nawbakht[3] († *ca.* 815), the chief librarian of al-Rashīd.[4]

This same Indian traveller had also brought a treatise on mathematics by means of which the numerals called in Europe

[1] Since the latter part of the nineteenth century the modern Arab Orient has been passing through a similar period of translation, mainly from French and English.

[2] Ṣā'id ibn-Aḥmad (al-Qāḍi al-Andalusi), *Ṭabaqāt al-Umam*, ed, L. Cheikho (Beirūt, 1912), pp. 49-50; Yāqūt, *Udabā'*, vol. vi, p. 268; Mas'ūdi, vol. viii, pp. 290-91.

[3] Pers. *nawbakht*, good luck. Many members of this family distinguished themselves in the science of the stars. Ṭabari, vol. iii, pp. 317, 318 (where the name occurs as Nībakht or Naybakht), 1364.

[4] *Fihrist*, p 274.

Arabic and by the Arabs Indian (*Hindi*) entered the Moslem world.[1] Later, in the ninth century, the Indians made another important contribution to Arabic mathematical science, the decimal system.

Persia

Except in the arts and *belles-lettres* Persia did not have much that was original to contribute. The esthetic temperament of its Iranian population was a sorely needed element in the cultural life of the Semitic Arabians. Next to the artistic, the literary—rather than the scientific or philosophical—was the influence most clearly felt from Persia. The earliest literary work in Arabic that has come down to us is *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah* (fables of Bidpai), a translation from Pahlawi (Middle Persian) which was itself a rendition from Sanskrit. The original work was brought to Persia from India, together with the game of chess, in the reign of Anūsharwān (531–78). What gives the Arabic version special significance is the fact that the Persian was lost, as was the Sanskrit original, though the material in an expanded form can still be found in the *Panchatantra*. The Arabic version therefore became the basis of all existing translations into some forty languages, including, besides European tongues, Hebrew, Turkish, Ethiopic and Malay. Even Icelandic has a translation. This book, intended to instruct princes in the laws of polity by means of animal fables, was done into Arabic by ibn-al-Muqaffa',[2] a Zoroastrian convert to Islām whose suspect orthodoxy brought about his death by fire *ca.* 757.

Ibn-al-Muqaffa''s translation was in itself a stylistic work of art, and ever since the 'Abbāsid age Arabic prose has borne the impress of Persian style in its extravagant elegance, colourful imagery and flowery expression. The ancient Arabic style with its virile, pointed and terse form of expression was replaced to a large extent by the polished and affected diction of the Sāsānid period. Such Arabic literary works as *al-Aghāni*, *al-'Iqd al-Farīd* and al-Ṭurṭūshi's *Sirāj al-Mulūk*[3] teem with references to earlier Indo-Persian sources, especially when dealing with etiquette, wisdom, polity and history. Arabic historiography, as we shall see, was modelled after Persian patterns.

[1] See below, pp. 573 *seq.*
[2] For printed editions of *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah* see Sylvester de Sacy's (Paris, 1816), reprinted in Būlāq, 1249; Khalīl al-Yāziji's 2nd ed. (Beirūt, 1888); L. Cheikho's (Beirūt, 1905). On ibn-al-Muqaffa' consult *Fihrist*, p. 118; ibn-Khallikān, vol. i, pp. 266-9.
[3] Published in Cairo, 1289, 1306, etc.

In 765 the Caliph al-Manṣūr, afflicted with a stomach disease which had baffled his physicians, summoned from Jundi-Shāpūr[1] the dean of its hospital, the Nestorian Jūrjīs[2] (George) ibn-Bakhtīshū' († *ca.* 771). Jundi-Shāpūr was noted for its academy of medicine and philosophy founded about 555 by the great Anūsharwān. The science of the institution was based on the ancient Greek tradition, but the language of instruction was Aramaic. Jūrjīs soon won the confidence of the caliph and became the court physician, though he retained his Christian faith. Invited by the caliph to embrace Islām his retort was that he preferred the company of his fathers, be they in heaven or in hell.[3] Ibn-Bakhtīshū' became in Baghdād the founder of a brilliant family which for six or seven generations, covering a period of two centuries and a half, with many ups and downs, exercised an almost continuous monopoly over the court medical practice. Scientific lore in those days, like jewellery-making and other forms of craftsmanship, was considered an exclusive family affair and transmitted from father to son. Jūrjīs' son Bakhtīshū' († 801) was chief physician of the Baghdād hospital under al-Rashīd. Bakhtīshū''s son Jibrīl (Gabriel), who successfully treated a favourite slave of al-Rashīd for hysterical paralysis by pretending to disrobe her in public, was appointed the caliph's private physician in 805.[4]

Hellenism

At the time of the Arab conquest of the Fertile Crescent the intellectual legacy of Greece was unquestionably the most precious treasure at hand. Hellenism consequently became the most vital of all foreign influences in Arab life. Edessa (al-Ruhā'), the principal centre of Christian Syrians; Ḥarrān, the headquarters of the heathen Syrians who in and after the ninth century claimed to be Ṣābians (Ar. Ṣābi'ah or Ṣābi'ūn);[5] Antioch, one of the many ancient Greek colonies; Alexandria, the meeting-place of Occidental and Oriental philosophy; and the numberless cloisters of Syria and Mesopotamia where not only ecclesiastical

[1] Ar. Jundaysābūr. The city, founded by the Sāsānid Shāpūr I, whence the name, which may mean "camp of Shāpūr", stood on the site of the modern village Shāhābād in Khūzistān, south-western Persia.
[2] Cf. *Fihrist*, p. 296; ibn-al-'Ibri, pp. 213-15. "Bakht", which ibn-abi-Uṣaybi'ah (vol. i, p. 125) takes for a Syriac word meaning "servant", is for Pahlawi *bōkht*, "hath delivered", making the family name mean "Jesus hath delivered".
[3] Ibn-al-'Ibri, p. 215, copied by ibn-abi-Uṣaybi'ah, vol. i, p. 125.
[4] Ibn-al-'Ibri, pp. 226-7; Qifṭi, pp. 134-5.
[5] See below, p. 357.

but scientific and philosophic studies were cultivated, all served as centres radiating Hellenistic stimuli. The various raids into "the land of the Romans", particularly under Hārūn, resulted in the introduction, among other objects of booty, of Greek manuscripts, chiefly from Amorium and Ancyra[1] (Ankara). Al-Ma'mūn is credited with the dispatch of emissaries as far as Constantinople, to the Emperor Leo the Armenian himself, in quest of Greek works. Even al-Manṣūr is said to have received in response to his request from the Byzantine emperor a number of books, including Euclid.[2] But the Arabians knew no Greek and had at first to depend upon translations made by their subjects, Jewish, heathen and more particularly Nestorian Christian. These Syrian Nestorians, who translated first into Syriac and then from Syriac into Arabic, thus became the strongest link between Hellenism and Islam and consequently the earliest Oriental purveyors of Greek culture to the world at large. Before Hellenism could find access to the Arab mind it had to pass through a Syriac version.

The apogee of Greek influence was reached under al-Ma'mūn. The rationalistic tendencies of this caliph and his espousal of the Mu'tazilite cause, which maintained that religious texts should agree with the judgments of reason, led him to seek justification for his position in the philosophical works of the Greeks. The way the *Fihrist*[3] expresses it is that Aristotle appeared to him in a dream and assured him that there was no real difference between reason and religious law. In pursuance of his policy al-Ma'mūn in 830 established in Baghdād his famous Bayt al-Ḥikmah (house of wisdom), a combination library, academy and translation bureau which in many respects proved the most important educational institution since the foundation of the Alexandrian Museum in the first half of the third century B.C. Down to this time sporadic translation work had been done independently by Christians, Jews and recent converts to Islam. Beginning with al-Ma'mūn and continuing under his immediate successors the work was centred mainly in the newly founded academy. The 'Abbāsid era of translation lasted about a century after 750. Since most of the translators were Aramaic-speaking many of the Greek works were first done into Aramaic (Syriac)

[1] Ar. Anqirah; Ya'qūbi, vol. i, p. 486.
[2] Ibn-Khaldūn, *Muqaddamah*, p. 401
[3] P. 243.

before their rendition into Arabic. In the case of many difficult passages in the original the translation was made word by word, and where no Arabic equivalent was found or known the Greek term was simply transliterated with some adaptation.[1]

The translators into Arabic did not interest themselves in Greek productions of the literary type. No close contact was therefore established between the Arab mind and Greek drama, Greek poetry and Greek history. In that field Persian influence remained paramount. Homer's Iliad was partially translated into Syriac by Thāwafīl (Theophilus) ibn-Tūma of al-Ruhā' († 785),[2] the Maronite astrologer of al-Mahdi, but evidently it was not carried through the second step into Arabic as in other cases. It was first Greek medicine as represented by Galen († *ca.* A.D. 200) and Paul of Aegina (fl. *ca.* A.D. 650),[3] Greek mathematics and allied sciences for which Euclid (fl. *ca.* 300 B.C.) and Ptolemy (fl. first half of second Christian century) stood, Greek philosophy as originated by Plato and Aristotle and expounded by later Neo-Platonists, that served as the starting-point of this voyage of intellectual discovery.

Translators

One of the pioneer translators from Greek was abu-Yaḥya ibn-al-Baṭrīq († between 796 and 806), who is credited with having translated for al-Manṣūr the major works of Galen and Hippocrates (fl. *ca.* 436 B.C.) and for another patron Ptolemy's *Quadripartitum*.[4] The *Elements* of Euclid and the *Almagest*, Arabic *al-Majisṭi* or *al-Mijisṭi* (originally from Gr. *megistē*, greatest), the great astronomical work of Ptolemy,[5] may have also been translated about the same time if a report in al-Mas'ūdi[6] is correct. But evidently all these early translations were not properly done and had to be revised or remade under al-Rashīd and al-Ma'mūn. Another early translator was the Syrian Christian Yūḥanna (Yaḥya) ibn-Māsawayh[7] († 857), a pupil of Jibrīl

[1] Hence such Arabic words as *arithmāṭīqi* (arithmetic), *jūmaṭrīya* (geometry), *jighrāfīyah* (geography), *mūsīqi* (music), *falsafah* (philosophy), *asṭurlāb* (astrolabe), *athīr* (ether), *iksīr* (elixir), *ibrīz* (pure gold), *maghnaṭīs* (magnet), *urghun* (organ). Consult abu-'Abdullāh al-Khwārizmi, *Mafātīḥ al-'Ulūm*, ed. G. van Vloten (Leyden, 1895), index; *Fihrist*, *passim*; *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, ed. Khayr-al-Dīn al-Zirikli (Cairo, 1928), *passim*.
[2] Ibn-al-'Ibri, pp. 41, 220.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 176.
[4] *Fihrist*, p. 273.
[5] Ya'qūbi, vol. i, pp. 150-51.
[6] Vol. viii, p. 291. Cf. below, pp. 314-15.
[7] Latin Mesuë (Mesua), or Mesuë Major (the Elder) to distinguish him from Mesuë the Younger (Māsawayh al-Māridīni), the Jacobite physician who flourished at the court of the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Ḥākim in Cairo and died in 1015.

ibn-Bakhtīshū' and a teacher of Ḥunayn ibn-Isḥāq, who is said to have translated for al-Rashīd certain manuscripts, mainly medical, which the caliph had brought back from Ancyra and Amorium.[1] Yūḥanna served also under the successors of al-Rashīd. Once when offended by a court favourite his retort was, "If the folly wherewith thou art afflicted were converted into intelligence and divided amongst a hundred beetles, each would then become more intelligent than Aristotle!"[2]

Ḥunayn ibn-Isḥāq

The sheikh of the translators, as the Arabs express it, was Ḥunayn ibn-Isḥāq (Joannitius, 809–73), one of the greatest scholars and noblest characters of the age. Ḥunayn was an 'Ibādi, i.e. a Nestorian Christian from al-Ḥīrah, and as a youth acted as dispenser to the physician ibn-Māsawayh. Taking as a challenge a chiding remark by the master that the people of al-Ḥīrah had no business with medicine and that he had better go and change money in the bazaar,[3] the lad left the service of ibn-Māsawayh in tears, but intent upon the study of Greek. He was then sent by the three scholarly sons of Mūsa ibn-Shākir, who were carrying on independent research work, into various Greek-speaking lands in quest of manuscripts, and later entered the service of Jibrīl ibn-Bakhtīshū', physician-in-ordinary to al-Ma'mūn. Subsequently this caliph appointed Ḥunayn superintendent of his library-academy, and in this capacity Ḥunayn had charge of all the scientific translation work, in which he enjoyed the collaboration of his son Isḥāq[4] and his nephew Ḥubaysh ibn-al-Ḥasan,[5] whom he trained. Of the numerous works ascribed to him some should undoubtedly be credited to these two assistants and to other students and members of his school, such as 'Īsa ibn-Yaḥya[6] and Mūsa ibn-Khālid.[7] In many cases Ḥunayn evidently did the initial translation from Greek into Syriac and his colleagues took the second step and translated from Syriac into Arabic.[8] Aristotle's *Hermeneutica*, for instance, was first done from Greek into Syriac by the father

[1] Ibn-al-'Ibri, p. 227; ibn-abi-Uṣaybi'ah, vol. i, pp. 175 *seq.*; Qifṭi, p. 380.
[2] *Fihrist*, p. 295.
[3] Ibn-al-'Ibri, p. 250; ibn-abi-Uṣaybi'ah, vol. i, p. 185.
[4] Ibn-Khallikān, vol. i, p. 116 = de Slane, vol. i, pp. 187-8.
[5] Nicknamed al-A'sam, because of a lame hand. Ibn-abi-Uṣaybi'ah, vol. i, pp. 187, 203; *Fihrist*, p. 297; ibn-al-'Ibri, p. 252.
[6] *Fihrist*, p. 297.
[7] He also translated from Persian into Arabic, *ibid.* p. 244, l. 28.
[8] *Fihrist*, p. 249

and then from Syriac into Arabic by the son Isḥāq, who was the better Arabist[1] and who became the greatest translator of Aristotle's works. Among other books in Arabic Ḥunayn is supposed to have prepared translations of Galen, Hippocrates and Dioscorides (fl. *ca.* A.D. 50) as well as of Plato's *Republic* (*Siyāsah*)[2] and Aristotle's *Categories* (*Maqūlāt*),[3] *Physics* (*Ṭabī'īyāt*) and *Magna Moralia* (*Khulqīyāt*).[4] Among these his chief work was the rendition into Syriac and Arabic of almost all of Galen's scientific output.[5] Seven books of Galen's anatomy, lost in the original Greek, have luckily been preserved in Arabic.[6] Ḥunayn's Arabic version of the Old Testament from the Greek Septuagint[7] did not survive.

Ḥunayn's ability as a translator may be attested by the report that when in the service of the sons of ibn-Shākir he and other translators received about 500 dinars (about £250) per month and that al-Ma'mūn paid him in gold the weight of the books he translated. But he reached the summit of his glory not only as a translator but as a practitioner when he was appointed by al-Mutawakkil (847–61) as his private physician. His patron, however, once committed him to jail for a year for refusing the offer of rich rewards to concoct a poison for an enemy. When brought again before the caliph and threatened with death his reply was, "I have skill only in what is beneficial, and have studied naught else".[8] Asked by the caliph, who then claimed that he was simply testing his physician's integrity, as to what prevented him from preparing the deadly poison, Ḥunayn replied:

> Two things: my religion and my profession. My religion decrees that we should do good even to our enemies, how much more to our friends. And my profession is instituted for the benefit of humanity and limited to their relief and cure. Besides, every physician is under oath never to give anyone a deadly medicine.[9]

Ḥunayn ibn-Isḥāq al-'Ibādi was judged by ibn-al-'Ibri and al-Qifṭi "a source of science and a mine of virtue", and by

[1] *Fihrist*, p. 298, copied by Qifṭi, p. 80.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 246, l. 5.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 248.
[4] Qifṭi, pp. 38, 42.
[5] Ibn-abi-Uṣaybi'ah, vol. i, pp. 188-9; Qifṭi, pp. 94-5.
[6] For a MS. of another work, *al-Ṣinā'ah al-Ṣaghīrah*, comprising ten of the sixteen canonical works of Galen and dated 572 (A.D. 1176), see Hitti, Faris and 'Abd-al-Malik, *Catalog of the Garrett Collection of Arabic Manuscripts* (Princeton, 1938), no. 1075.
[7] Qifṭi, p. 99.
[8] Ibn-abi-Uṣaybi'ah, vol. i, pp. 187-8; ibn-al-'Ibri, p. 251.
[9] Ibn-al-'Ibri, pp. 251-2.

Leclerc "la plus grande figure du IXᵉ siècle", and even "une des plus belles intelligences et un des plus beaux caractères que l'on rencontre dans l'histoire".[1]

Thābit ibn-Qurrah

Just as Ḥunayn stood at the head of the Nestorian group of translators, so did Thābit ibn-Qurrah[2] (*ca.* 836–901) lead another group, recruited from among the heathen Ṣābians[3] of Ḥarrān (ancient Carrhae). These Ṣābians were star-worshippers and as such had interested themselves in astronomy and mathematics from time immemorial. During the reign of al-Mutawakkil their native town became the seat of a school of philosophy and medicine which had been previously transferred from Alexandria to Antioch. In this milieu Thābit and his disciples flourished. They are credited with having translated the bulk of the Greek mathematical and astronomical works, including those of Archimedes († 212 B.C.) and of Apollonius of Perga (b. *ca.* 262 B.C.).[4] They also improved on earlier translations. The translation of Euclid by Ḥunayn, for example, was revised by Thābit.[5] Thābit found a patron in the Caliph al-Mu'taḍid (892–902), whose personal friend and table companion he soon became.[6]

In his great work Thābit was succeeded by his son Sinān († 943), his two grandsons Thābit († 973)[7] and Ibrāhīm († 946)[8] and one great-grandson, abu-al-Faraj,[9] all of whom distinguished themselves as translators and scientists. But the greatest Ṣābian name after Thābit's was that of al-Battāni († 929, the Albategnius or Albatenius of Latin authors), whose first name, abu-'Abdullāh Muḥammad (ibn-Jābir ibn-Sinān), indicates his conversion to Islam. Al-Battāni's fame, however, rests on his original work as an astronomer, as he was not a translator.

The Ḥarrānian school of mathematical and astronomical translators had as its forerunner al-Ḥajjāj ibn-Yūsuf ibn-Maṭar (fl. between 786 and 833), generally credited with making the first translation of Euclid's *Elements* and one of the first of Ptolemy's *Almagest*. Of the former work he evidently prepared two versions, one for al-Rashīd and the other for al-Ma'mūn,[10]

[1] L. Leclerc, *Histoire de la médecine arabe* (Paris, 1876), vol. i, p. 139.
[2] His *al-Dhakhīrah fi 'Ilm al-Ṭibb* was edited by G. Sobhy (Cairo, 1928).
[3] In reality pseudo-Ṣābians. See below, p. 358.
[4] *Fihrist*, p. 267.
[5] Ibn-Khallikān, vol. i, pp. 177, 298.
[6] Ibn-abi-Uṣaybi'ah, vol. i, p. 216.
[7] *Ibid.* pp. 224-6.
[8] *Ibid.* p. 226; Qifṭi, pp. 57-9; *Fihrist*, p. 272.
[9] Qifṭi, p. 428.
[10] *Fihrist*, p. 265.

before Ḥunayn prepared his. Al-Ḥajjāj's version of the notable astronomical work *Almagest* was made in 827–8 from an earlier Syriac version. The first attempt at the *Almagest* had been made as early as the days of Yaḥya ibn-Khālid ibn-Barmak,[1] al-Rashīd's vizir, but the result was not satisfactory. A later adaptation of this work was undertaken by abu-al-Wafā' Muḥammad al-Būzjāni al-Ḥāsib[2] (940–97 or 998), one of the greatest Moslem astronomers and mathematicians. Another late translator of mathematical and philosophical works was Qusṭa ibn-Lūqa († *ca.* 922), a Christian of Ba'labakk, whose list of original works in the *Fihrist*[3] numbers thirty-four.

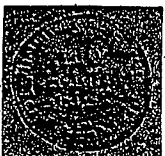
The latter part of the tenth century saw the rise of Jacobite, or Monophysite, translators represented by Yaḥya ibn-'Adi, who was born in Takrīt in 893 and died in Baghdād in 974, and abu-'Ali 'Īsa ibn-Zur'ah of Baghdād († 1008).[4] Yaḥya, who became the archbishop of his church, declared once to the author of the *Fihrist*[5] that he copied in a day and a night an average of a hundred leaves. The Jacobite authors busied themselves with the revision of existing editions of Aristotelian works or the preparation of fresh translations thereof. They were, moreover, the chief influence in introducing Neo-Platonic speculations and mysticism into the Arabic world.

Before the age of translation was brought to an end practically all the extant works of Aristotle, many of which were of course spurious, had become accessible to the Arabic reader. Ibn-abi-Uṣaybi'ah,[6] and after him al-Qifṭi,[7] cite no less than a hundred works attributed to "the philosopher of the Greeks". All this took place while Europe was almost totally ignorant of Greek thought and science. For while al-Rashīd and al-Ma'mūn were delving into Greek and Persian philosophy their contemporaries in the West, Charlemagne and his lords, were reportedly dabbling in the art of writing their names. Aristotle's logical *Organon*, which in Arabic included Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* as well as Porphyry's *Isagoge*, soon took its place side by side with Arabic grammar as the basis of humanistic studies in Islam. This position it has maintained to the present day.

[1] *Fihrist*, pp. 267-8. Cf. above, p. 311.
[2] Būzjān in Qūhistān was his birthplace; *ḥāsib* means "mathematician".
[3] P. 295. Cf. Qifṭi, pp. 262-3.
[4] *Fihrist*, p. 264; ibn-abi-Uṣaybi'ah, vol. i, pp. 235-6; Qifṭi, pp. 245-6.
[5] P. 264.
[6] Vol. i, pp. 57 *seq.*
[7] Pp. 34 *seq.*

Moslems accepted the idea of Neo-Platonic commentators that the teachings of Aristotle and Plato (Aflāṭūn) were substantially the same. Especially in Sufism, Moslem mysticism, did the influence of Neo-Platonism manifest itself. Through Avicenna (ibn-Sīna) and Averroës (ibn-Rushd), as we shall later see, Platonism and Aristotelianism found their way into Latin and exercised a determining influence upon medieval European scholasticism.

This long and fruitful age of translation under the early 'Abbāsids was followed by one of original contribution which we shall discuss in a later chapter. By the tenth century Arabic, which in pre-Islamic days was only a language of poetry and after Muḥammad mainly a language of revelation and religion, had become metamorphosed in a remarkable and unprecedented way into a pliant medium for expressing scientific thought and conveying philosophic ideas of the highest order. In the meantime it had established itself as the language of diplomacy and polite intercourse from Central Asia, through the whole length of Northern Africa, to Spain. Ever since that time the peoples of al-'Irāq, Syria and Palestine as well as of Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco have expressed their best thought in the tongue of the Arabians.



British Museum
From H. W. C. Davis, "Mediæval England" (Clarendon Press)

ANGLO-SAXON GOLD COIN IMITATING AN ARAB DINAR OF THE YEAR 157 (A.D. 774)

It bears on the obverse the *shahādah* and on the reverse OFFA REX inscribed upside down

CHAPTER XXV

THE 'ABBĀSID STATE

The 'Abbāsid caliph

AT the head of the state stood the caliph, who was, in theory at least, the fountainhead of all power. He could and did delegate the exercise of his civil authority to a vizir (*wazīr*), of his judicial power to a judge (*qāḍi*), of his military function to a general (*amīr*), but the caliph himself ever remained the final arbiter of all governmental affairs. In their imperial conduct and function the early caliphs of Baghdād followed the older Persian pattern. Taking advantage of the popular reaction against the ungodliness of the later Umayyads, the 'Abbāsids made their début with emphasis on the religious character and dignity of their office as an imāmate, an emphasis which in later years increased in inverse proportion to their actual power. With the eighth caliph, al-Mu'taṣim bi-Allāh (833–42), and continuing till the end of the dynasty, they began to assume honorific titles compounded with *Allāh*. In the period of decline their subjects started to shower on them such extravagant titles as *khalīfat Allāh* (God's caliph) and later *ẓill Allāh 'ala al-arḍ* (God's shadow on earth). These were evidently first bestowed on al-Mutawakkil (847–61),[1] and persisted until the last days of the Ottoman caliphate.

The ill-defined hereditary principle of succession instituted by the Umayyad caliphs was followed throughout the 'Abbāsid régime with the same evil results. The reigning caliph would designate as his successor that one of his sons whom he favoured or considered competent, or any of his kinsmen whom he regarded as best qualified. Al-Saffāḥ nominated his brother al-Manṣūr, who was succeeded by his son al-Mahdi.[2] Al-Mahdi was succeeded by his eldest son, al-Hādi, who was followed by his brother Hārūn al-Rashīd.[3] Hārūn designated his oldest son, al-Amīn, as his first successor, and his younger but more talented

[1] Mas'ūdi, vol. vii, p. 278.
[2] See Ya'qūbi, vol. ii, pp. 437 *seq.*, 472 *seq.*; *Fakhri*, p. 236.
[3] *Fakhri*, pp. 261-2; Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 523.

son, al-Ma'mūn, as his second successor. He divided the empire between the two, reserving for al-Ma'mūn the government of Khurāsān with Marw (Marv) for his capital.[1] After a bitter struggle which ended in the assassination of al-Amīn (September 813), al-Ma'mūn usurped the caliphate. Four years later, when he donned the green of the Shī'ah in preference to the black of the 'Abbāsids and designated an 'Alid, 'Ali al-Riḍa, as heir apparent, the enraged Baghdādis elected (July 817) al-Ma'mūn's uncle Ibrāhīm ibn-al-Mahdi as caliph. Not until 819, six years after the death of his predecessor, did al-Ma'mūn succeed in effecting an entry into the capital of the empire. Shortly before his death al-Ma'mūn, ignoring his son al-'Abbās, designated his brother al-Mu'taṣim as his successor, thus almost precipitating a revolt on the part of the army, with whom the son was a special favourite. Al-Mu'taṣim was followed by his son al-Wāthiq († 847), with whom the period of 'Abbāsid glory ended. Of the first twenty-four caliphs, whose reign covered almost two centuries and a half (750–991), only six were immediately succeeded by a son.

Attached to the person of the caliph was the chamberlain (*ḥājib*), whose duty consisted in introducing accredited envoys and dignitaries into the caliphal presence and whose influence naturally became great. There was also the executioner, an outstanding figure in the Baghdād court. Vaulted underground chambers used for torture appear for the first time in Arab history. The court astrologer, like the executioner an importation from Persia, became an adjunct of the 'Abbāsid throne.

Vizir

Next to the caliph stood the vizir (*wazīr*), whose office was influenced by the Persian tradition.[2] The vizir acted as the caliph's *alter ego* and grew in power as his chief indulged increasingly in the pleasures of the harem. In the diploma appointing his vizir the Caliph al-Nāṣir (1180–1225) has given a perfect expression to the theory of "divine right" of kingship working by proxy:

Muḥammad ibn-Barz al-Qummi is our representative throughout the land and amongst our subjects. Therefore he who obeys him obeys us; and he who obeys us obeys God, and God shall cause him who obeys Him to enter Paradise. As for one who, on the other hand, disobeys our vizir, he disobeys us; and he who disobeys us disobeys God, and God shall cause him who disobeys Him to enter hell-fire.[1]

[1] Ya'qūbi, vol. ii, pp. 500 *seq.*; *Fakhri*, p. 292; Mas'ūdi, *Tanbīh*, p. 345.

[2] Cf. ibn-al-'Abbās, *Āthār al-Uwal fi Tartīb al-Duwal* (Cairo, 1295), p. 62, S. D. Goitein in *Islamic Culture*, vol. xvi (1942), pp. 255-63, 380-92.

As in the case of the Barmakids the vizir was often all-powerful, appointing and deposing governors and judges, theoretically, of course, with the consent of the caliph, and even transmitting his own office according to the hereditary principle. It was customary for the vizir to confiscate the property of the governor who fell from grace, as it was customary for the governor himself to appropriate the estates of inferior officials and private citizens and for the caliph in his turn to mete out the same penalty to the deposed vizir.[2] Indeed, the forfeiture of possessions was often accompanied by loss of life. Finally a special "bureau of confiscation"[3] was instituted as a regular governmental department. In the days of the Caliph al-Mu'taḍid the vizir received a monthly salary of a thousand dinars. Al-Māwardi[4] and other legal theorists distinguish between two varieties of vizirate: a *tafwīḍ* (with full authority, unlimited) and a *tanfīdh* (with executive power only, limited). The unlimited vizir exercised all the powers of sovereignty with the exception of the appointment of his successor; the limited vizir took no initiative but confined his duties to the execution of the caliph's orders and the following of his instructions. After the time of al-Muqtadir (908–32) the vizir was supplanted by the *amīr al-umarā'*, commander of the commanders, an office which was subsequently held by the Buwayhids.

Bureau of taxes

The vizir, in reality grand vizir, presided over the council, whose membership included the various heads of the departments of state. Sometimes those heads were also designated vizirs, but their rank was always subordinate to that of the real vizir. Under the 'Abbāsids the governmental machinery became much more complicated than heretofore, though greater order was brought into state affairs, especially in the system of taxation and the administration of justice. Since finances constituted the main concern of the government the bureau of taxes (*dīwān al-kharāj*), or department of finance (*bayt al-māl*), remained, as under the Umayyads, the most important unit; its chief, often

[1] *Fakhri*, p. 205.

[2] Ibn-al-Athīr, vol. vi, pp. 19-20.

[3] Cf. Hilāl al-Ṣābi', *Tuḥfat al-Umarā' fi Ta'rīkh al-Wuzarā'*, ed. H. F. Amedroz (Beirūt, 1904), p. 306.

[4] Pp. 33-47.

referred to as "master of taxes", continued to be an outstanding figure in the government of the caliph.

The sources of revenue for the state included zakāh, the only legal tax obligatory on every Moslem. Zakāh was imposed on arable lands, herds, gold and silver, commercial wares and other forms of property capable of augmentation through natural increase or by investment. Moslems, as we learned before, paid no poll tax. The official tax-gatherer looked after lands, herds and the like, but personal effects, including gold and silver, were left to the individual's private conscience. All money collected from believers was disbursed from the central treasury for the benefit of believers: the poor, the orphan, the stranger, volunteers for the holy war and slaves and captives to be ransomed. The other main sources of public income were tribute from foreign enemies, truce money, capitation tax from non-Moslem subjects (*jizyah*), land tax (*kharāj*)[1] and tithes levied upon merchandise owned by non-Moslems and imported into Moslem territory. Of these items the land tax was always the largest and constituted the main source of income from unbelievers. All this revenue was at this time referred to as *fay'* (cf. Koran 59 : 7) and applied by the caliph to the payment of the troops, the maintenance of mosques, roads and bridges and for the general good of the Moslem community.[2]

The varying reports of the state revenue that have come down to us from the 'Abbāsid period testify to great prosperity during the first century of the régime, which made it possible for the caliphs to live on the grand scale described above, and to a steady decline in revenue during each succeeding century. Three such reports have been preserved for us: the oldest, in ibn-Khaldūn, showing the income under al-Ma'mūn; the second, in Qudāmah, for the revenue a few years later, possibly under al-Mu'taṣim; and the third, in ibn-Khurdādhbih, indicating the proceeds in the first half of the third Moslem century. According to ibn-Khaldūn[3] the

[1] By this time the differentiation between *jizyah* and *kharāj* had been clearly made. See above, p. 171. In later times the *jizyah* corresponded to *al-badal al-'askari* (scutage), which the Ottomans exacted from their non-Moslem subjects for exemption from military service.

[2] Māwardi, pp. 366 *seq.*

[3] *Muqaddamah*, pp. 150-51. Cf. Huart, *Histoire des Arabes*, vol. i, p. 376; Alfred von Kremer, *Culturgeschichte des Orients unter den Chalifen*, vol. i (Vienna, 1875), pp. 356 *seq.* It is obvious that ibn-Khaldūn's list, like the other two, is neither clear nor accurate.

annual land tax paid by al-Sawād (lower 'Irāq, ancient Babylonia) in cash, other than what was paid in kind, amounted in the days of al-Ma'mūn to 27,800,000 dirhams; by Khurāsān, 28,000,000; by Egypt, 23,040,000; by Syria-Palestine,[1] 14,724,000; and by all the provinces of the empire, 331,929,008 dirhams exclusive of taxes in kind. From Qudāmah's[2] balance-sheet it may be gathered that the income in both cash and kind from al-Sawād was equivalent to 130,200,000 dirhams;[3] from Khurāsān, 37,000,000; from Egypt, including Alexandria, 37,500,000; from Syria-Palestine, including Ḥimṣ, 15,860,000; and from the whole empire, 388,291,350 dirhams, which includes taxes in kind. Ibn-Khurdādhbih[4] lists a number of items from which we may calculate that the tax of al-Sawād in cash and kind was the equivalent of 78,319,340 dirhams;[5] of Khurāsān and dependencies, 44,846,000; of Syria-Palestine,[6] 29,850,000; and of the whole empire, 299,265,340.[7] As for the expenditures, we have no sufficient data in the scattered references to warrant definite conclusions. But we are told that when al-Manṣūr died the central treasury contained 600,000,000 dirhams and 14,000,000 dinars;[8] when al-Rashīd died it had over 900,000,000,[9] and at the death of al-Muktafi (908) the public treasures including jewellery, furniture and real estate amounted to 100,000,000 dinars.[10]

Other governmental bureaux

Besides the bureau of taxes the 'Abbāsid government had an audit or accounts office (*dīwān al-zimām*) introduced by al-Mahdi; a board of correspondence or chancery office (*dīwān al-tawqī'*) which handled all official letters, political documents and imperial mandates and diplomas; a board for the inspection of grievances; a police department and a postal department.

The board for the inspection of grievances (*dīwān al-naẓar fi al-maẓālim*) was a kind of court of appeal or supreme court intended to set aright cases of miscarriage of justice in the

[1] Qinnasrīn, Damascus, the Jordan and Palestine, the taxes of which are given as 1,227,000 dinars.

[2] *Kharāj*, pp. 237-52.

[3] In cash alone 8,095,800 dirhams; Qudāmah, pp. 249, 239. As a matter of fact he gives different figures in different places and on his lists the totals do not tally with the itemized statements.

[4] *Passim.*

[5] In cash alone about 8,456,840 dirhams; ibn-Khurdādhbih, pp. 5 *seq.*

[6] Qinnasrīn and other frontier towns, Ḥimṣ, Damascus, the Jordan and Palestine.

[7] Zaydān, *Tamaddun*, vol. ii, p. 61. Cf. Huart, vol. i, p. 376.

[8] Mas'ūdi, vol. vi, p. 233.

[9] Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 764.

[10] Tha'ālibi, *Laṭā'if*, p. 72.

administrative and political departments. Its origin goes back to the Umayyad days, for al-Māwardi[1] tells us that 'Abd-al-Malik was the first caliph to devote a special day for the direct hearing by himself of appeals and complaints made by his subjects. 'Umar II zealously followed the precedent.[2] This practice was evidently introduced by al-Mahdi into the 'Abbāsid régime. His successors al-Hādi, Hārūn, al-Ma'mūn and those who followed received such complaints in public audience; al-Muhtadi (869–70) was the last to keep up the custom. The Norman king Roger II (1130–54) introduced this institution into Sicily, where it struck root in European soil.[3]

The police department (*dīwān al-shurṭah*) was headed by a high official designated *ṣāḥib al-shurṭah*, who acted as chief of police and the royal bodyguard and in later times occasionally held the rank of vizir. Each large city had its own special police who also held military rank and were as a rule well paid. The chief of municipal police was called *muḥtasib*, for he acted as overseer of markets and morals. It was his duty to see that proper weights and measures were used in trade, that legitimate debts were paid (though he had no judicial power), that approved morals were maintained and that acts forbidden by law, such as gambling, usury and public sale of wine, were not committed. Al-Māwardi[4] enumerates, among other interesting duties of this prefect of police, the maintenance of the recognized standards of public morality between the two sexes and the chastisement of those who dyed their grey beards black with a view to gaining the favour of the ladies.

A significant feature of the 'Abbāsid government was the postal department,[5] of which the chief was called *ṣāḥib al-barīd*. Among the Umayyads Mu'āwiyah, as we have already learned, was the first to interest himself in the postal service, 'Abd-al-Malik extended it throughout the empire and al-Walīd made use of it for his building operations. Historians credit Hārūn with

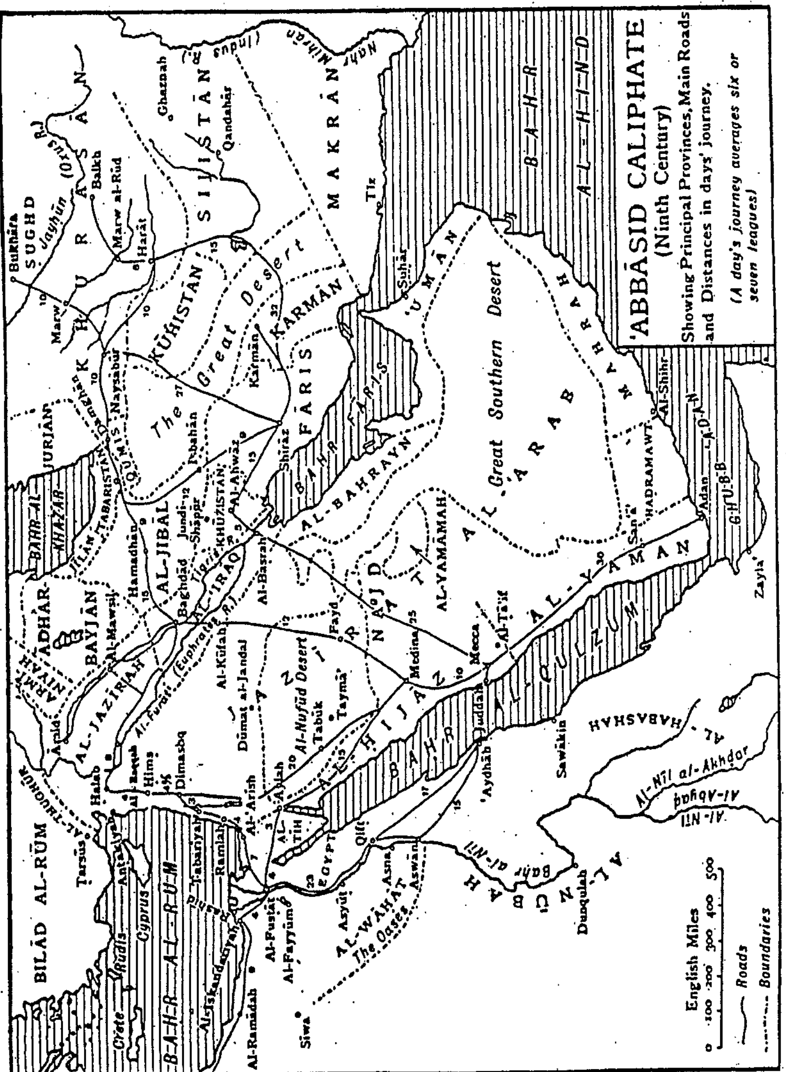
[1] P. 131. Cf. ibn-al-Athīr, vol. i, p. 46.
[2] Māwardi, p. 131. Cf. Ya'qūbi, vol. ii, p. 367. Consult al-Bayhaqi, *al-Maḥāsin w-al-Masāwi'*, ed. F. Schwally (Giessen, 1902), pp. 525 *seq.*
[3] M. Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia*, ed. Nallino, vol. iii (Catania, 1937–9), p. 452; von Kremer, *Culturgeschichte*, vol. i, p. 420.
[4] Pp. 417-18, 431.
[5] *Dīwān al-barīd*, bureau of post. Ar. *barīd* is probably a Semitic word, not related to Latin *veredus*, Pers. *birdan*, a swift horse, Ar. *birdhawn*, horse of burden. Cf. Esth. 8 : 10; Iṣfahāni, *Ta'rīkh*, p. 39.

having organized the service on a new basis through his Barmakid counsellor Yaḥya. Though primarily designed to serve the interests of the state, the postal institution did in a limited way handle private correspondence.[1] Each provincial capital was provided with a post office. Routes connected the imperial capital with the leading centres of the empire[2] and systems of relays covered these routes. In all there must have been hundreds of such relay routes. In Persia the relays consisted of mules and horses; in Syria and Arabia camels were used.[3] The *barīd* was also employed for the conveyance of newly appointed governors to their respective provinces and for the transportation of troops with their baggage.[4] The public could make use of it on the payment of a substantial sum.

Pigeons were trained and used as letter-carriers. The first recorded instance relates to the news of the capture of the rebel Bābik (Bābak), chief of the Khurrami[5] sect, carried to al-Mu'taṣim by this method in 837.[6]

The postal headquarters in Baghdād had itineraries of the whole empire indicating the various stations and the intervening distances. These itineraries assisted travellers, merchants and pilgrims and laid the basis of later geographical research. Early Arab students of geography made use of such postal directories in the composition of their works. One of the leaders among them, ibn-Khurdādhbih († *ca.* 912), whose *al-Masālik w-al-Mamālik*, based on material in the state archives, proved an important source for historical topography, was himself *ṣāḥib al-barīd* for the Caliph al-Mu'tamid in al-Jibāl (ancient Media). This elaborate road system which radiated from the imperial capital was an inheritance from the earlier Persian empire. In it the most famous of the trunk roads was the Khurāsān highway, which stretched north-east through Hamadhān, al-Rayy, Naysābūr, Ṭūs, Marw, Bukhāra, Samarqand, and connected Baghdād with the frontier towns of the Jaxartes and the borders of China. From the principal cities along this highway cross-roads branched off north and south. To the present day the Persian post roads

[1] Mas'ūdi, vol. vi, p. 93, ll. 5-6.
[2] Ibn-Khurdādhbih, *passim*.
[3] Cf. ibn-al-Athīr, vol. vi, p. 49, ll. 11-12.
[4] *Ibid.* vol. iv, pp. 373-4.
[5] So called from a district in Persia where the sect evidently arose as a result of the execution of the famous abu-Muslim al-Khurāsāni. Some of them denied that abu-Muslim was dead and foretold his return to spread justice in the world. Mas'ūdi, vol. vi, p. 186; Baghdādi, ed. Hitti, pp. 162 *seq.*; *Fihrist*, p. 342.
[6] Mas'ūdi, vol. vii, pp. 126-7.



centring in Ṭihrān (Teheran), near ancient al-Rayy, follow the same old tracks. Another main road led from Baghdād down the Tigris through Wāsiṭ and al-Baṣrah to al-Ahwāz in Khūzistān and thence to Shīrāz in Fāris. Likewise this road sent off east and west branches which connected its towns with other centres of population and ultimately with the Khurāsān trunk. These roads were frequented by pilgrims, who from Baghdād could take the pilgrim route to Makkah through al-Kūfah or al-Baṣrah. For the benefit of pilgrims and travellers caravanserais, hospices and cisterns dotted the main roads. Such khāns along the Khurāsān road were built as early as the days of 'Umar II.[1] A third highway linked Baghdād with al-Mawṣil, Āmid (Diyār Bakr) and the frontier fortresses. On the north-west Baghdād was connected with Damascus and other Syrian towns through al-Anbār and al-Raqqah.

The postmaster-general had another important function besides looking after the imperial mail and supervising the various postal establishments; he was the chief of an espionage system to which the whole postal service was subordinated. As such his full title was *ṣāḥib al-barīd w-al-akhbār*,[2] controller of the post and intelligence service. In this capacity he acted as an inspector-general and direct confidential agent of the central government. The provincial postmaster reported to him or to the caliph directly on the conduct and activities of the government officials in his province, not excluding the governor himself. Such a report, submitted to al-Mutawakkil against a governor of Baghdād who brought back with him from a pilgrimage to Makkah a beautiful slave girl "with whom he amuses himself from noon till night to the neglect of the affairs of the state", has come down to us in a late source.[3] Al-Manṣūr employed in his espionage system merchants, pedlars and travellers who acted as detectives; al-Rashīd and other caliphs did the same.[4] Al-Ma'mūn is said to have had in his intelligence service in Baghdād some 1700 aged women. Especially was "the land of the Romans" covered with 'Abbāsid spies of both sexes disguised as traders, travellers and physicians.

[1] Ibn-al-Athīr, vol. v, p. 44; Nawawi, *Tahdhīb*, p. 468, l. 16.
[2] Qudāmah, p. 184.
[3] Atlīdi, *I'lām al-Nās* (Cairo, 1297), p. 161.
[4] Cf. *Aghāni*, vol. xv, p. 36, l. 14; Miskawayh, ed. de Goeje and de Jong, pp. 234, 466, 498, 512, 514, 567.

Judicial administration

The dispensing of justice, always considered in Moslem communities a religious duty, was entrusted by the 'Abbāsid caliph or his vizir to a member of the *faqīh* (theologian) class, who thus became a *qāḍi*,[1] or if in Baghdād a *qāḍi al-quḍāh* (chief judge). The first to receive the title of *qāḍi al-quḍāh* was the famous abu-Yūsuf († *ca.* 798), who served under al-Mahdi and his two sons al-Hādi and Hārūn.[2] The judge, according to the theory of Moslem law, had to be male, adult, in full possession of his mental faculties, a free citizen, Moslem in faith, irreproachable in character, sound of sight and hearing and well versed in the prescriptions of law,[3] all of which was of course canon law. Non-Moslems, as noted before, were in matters of civil right under the jurisdiction of their own ecclesiastical heads or magistrates. Al-Māwardi[4] distinguishes between two types of judgeship: one in which the authority is general and absolute (*'āmmah muṭlaqah*) and the other in which the authority is special and limited (*khāṣṣah*). The chief duties of the qāḍi of the first class consisted in deciding cases, acting as guardian for orphans, lunatics and minors, administering pious foundations, imposing punishments on violators of the religious law, appointing judicial deputies (sing. *nā'ib*) in the various provinces and presiding under certain conditions at the Friday congregational prayers. In the early history of the institution the provincial judges held their appointment from the governors, but in the fourth Moslem century those judges were usually deputies of the chief qāḍi in Baghdād. Under al-Ma'mūn the pay of the judge of Egypt is said by a late authority[5] to have reached 4000 dirhams a month. The judge of the second class, one with special and limited authority, had his power restricted in accordance with the diploma of appointment from the caliph, vizir or governor.[6]

Military organization

The Arab caliphate never maintained a large standing army in the strict sense of the term, well organized, under strict discipline and subject to regular instruction and drill. The caliphal bodyguard (*ḥaras*) were almost the only regular troops and formed the nucleus around which clustered bands under

[1] Transliterated in at least thirteen different ways, six of which occur in official British documents: *qadi, qazi, kazi, cadi, al-kali, kathi.*
[2] Ibn-Khallikān, vol. iii, p. 334 = de Slane, vol. iv, p. 273.
[3] Māwardi, pp. 107-11.
[4] Pp. 117-25.
[5] Suyūṭi, *Ḥusn*, vol. ii, p. 100, l. 4.
[6] Consult Richard Gottheil in *Revue des études ethnographiques* (1908), pp. 385-93.

their own chiefs, besides mercenaries and adventurers, and general levies of which the units were tribes or districts. The regulars (*jund*) who were permanently on active service were referred to as *murtaziqah* (regularly paid), for they were in the pay of the government. Others were designated *mutaṭawwi'ah*[1] (volunteers) and received rations only while on duty. The volunteer ranks were recruited from among the Bedouins as well as from the peasants and townspeople. Members of the bodyguard received higher pay and were equipped with better armour and uniforms. In the reign of the first 'Abbāsid caliph the average pay of the foot soldier was, besides the usual rations and allowances, about 960 dirhams a year,[2] the horseman receiving double that amount. Under al-Ma'mūn, when the empire reached its height, the 'Irāq army is said to have numbered 125,000, of whom the infantry received only 240 dirhams a year[3] and the cavalry twice as much. And when it is remembered that al-Manṣūr paid his master builder at the founding of Baghdād the equivalent of about a dirham a day and the ordinary labourer about a third of a dirham,[4] it becomes clear how comparatively well paid the military career was.

The regulars under the early 'Abbāsids were composed of infantry (*ḥarbīyah*)[5] armed with spears, swords and shields, of archers (*rāmiyah*) and of cavalry (*fursān*) wearing helmets and breast-plates and equipped with long lances and battle-axes. Al-Mutawakkil introduced the practice of wearing the sword in the Persian fashion round the waist in preference to the old Arabian way of carrying it over the shoulder.[6] Each corps of archers had attached to it a body of naphtha-throwers (*naffāṭūn*) who wore fireproof suits and hurled incendiary material at the enemy.[7] Engineers in charge of the siege machinery, including catapults, mangonels and battering-rams, accompanied the army. One such engineer, ibn-Ṣābir al-Manjanīqi, who flourished

[1] Or *muṭṭawwi'ah*, Ṭabari, vol. iii, pp. 1008 *seq.*; ibn-Khaldūn, vol. iii, p. 260.
[2] Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 41, ll. 17-18, copied by ibn-al-Athīr, vol. v, p. 322, ll. 14-15.
[3] When al-Ma'mūn was fighting his brother he had to restore the standard 960 dirhams, which sum was likewise paid by his brother. Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 830, ll. 7-8, p. 867, l. 14.
[4] Khaṭīb, vol. i, p. 70; Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 326.
[5] Mentioned by Ṭabari, vol. iii, pp. 998 *seq.*; ibn-Khaldūn, vol. iii, p. 238, l. 17, p. 245, ll. 23, 26.
[6] Ibn-Khaldūn, vol. iii, p. 275.
[7] *Aghāni*, vol. xvii, p. 45; ibn-Khaldūn, vol. iii, p. 260, l. 20.

later under al-Nāṣir (1180–1225), left an unfinished book which treats of the art of warfare in all its details.[1] Field hospitals and ambulances in the shape of litters carried by camels accompanied the army when in the field. As usual, Hārūn is the caliph credited with introducing these features and pressing science into the service of warfare.

During the 'Abbāsid régime, which, as we have seen before, owed its rise to Persian rather than Arab arms, the Arabian element lost its military, as it did its political, predominance. Under the first caliphs the bodyguard, the strong arm of the military machine, was largely composed of Khurāsāni troops. The Arab soldiery formed two divisions: one of North Arabians, Muḍarite, and the other of South Arabians, Yamanite. New converts to Islam attached themselves to some Arabian tribe as clients and thus formed a part of the military organization of that tribe. Al-Mu'taṣim added a new division made up of Turks, originally his slaves, from Farghānah and other regions of Central Asia.[2] This new imperial bodyguard soon became the terror of the whole capital, and in 836 the caliph had to build a new town, Sāmarra, to which he transferred his seat of government. After the death of al-Muntaṣir (861–2) these Turks began to play the part of a prætorian guard and exercise a determining influence on affairs of the state.

In Roman-Byzantine fashion every ten men of the army under al-Ma'mūn, al-Musta'īn and other 'Abbāsid caliphs were commanded by an *'arīf* (corresponding to the decurion), every fifty by a *khalīfah*, and every hundred by a *qā'id* (corresponding to the centurion).[3] At the head of a corps of 10,000, comprising ten battalions, stood the *amīr* (general). A body of a hundred men formed a company or squadron and several such companies constituted a cohort (*kurdūs*). Von Kremer[4] has reconstructed for us a realistic picture of an Arab army of those days on the march.

Throughout its first century the 'Abbāsid caliphate depended for its very existence on a strong and contented soldiery, which was used not only for suppressing revolts in Syria, Persia and

[1] Ibn-Khallikān, vol. iii, p. 397. [2] Mas'ūdi, vol. vii, p. 118.
[3] Ibn-Khaldūn, vol. iii, p. 299, l. 7. Cf. Mas'ūdi, vol. vi, p. 452; Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 1799.
[4] *Culturgeschichte*, vol. i, pp. 227-9 = S. Khuda Bukhsh, *The Orient under the Caliphs* (Calcutta 1920), pp. 333-5.

Central Asia but for waging aggressive war against the Byzantines. "Two things", in the opinion of a modern scholar,[1] "rendered the Saracens of the tenth century dangerous foes,—their numbers and their extraordinary powers of locomotion." But that was not all. In the treatise on military tactics attributed to the Emperor Leo VI the Wise[2] (886–912) we are told: "Of all the [barbarous] nations they [the Saracens] are the best advised and most prudent in their military operations". The following passage from the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus[3] (913–59) describes the impression left by the Arabs on their Byzantine foes: "They are powerful and warlike, so that if only a thousand of them occupy a camp it is impossible to dislodge them. They do not ride horses but camels." From statements in these and other Byzantine sources such as the work on military tactics composed by the Emperor Nicephorus Phocas (963–9) it is evident that cold and rainy weather was distasteful to the Arab warriors, that once their line was broken in action they usually lacked the necessary discipline to restore it and that their foot was in general a mere rabble of plunderers ineffective as a fighting machine. Yet it is evident that the Byzantines looked upon the Arabs, whom they called infidels and barbarous, as their most formidable enemy. In the course of the tenth century, however, this enemy grew less and less dangerous until by its end the Byzantines were habitually taking the offensive and threatening even Damascus and Baghdād.

The decline of the 'Abbāsid military power began with the introduction by al-Mutawakkil of the foreign units, which contributed to the destruction of the necessary conditions for the upkeep of the morale and *esprit de corps*. Later on al-Muqtadir (908–32) initiated the policy of farming out provinces to governors or military commanders who were to pay their troops from local state funds and not from the depleted imperial treasury. Under the Buwayhid régime soldiers received grants in the form of lands instead of pay in cash. This sowed the seeds of a feudal military system which was further developed under the Saljūqs. It then became customary for governors and generals to receive as grants towns or districts over which they

[1] Oman, *Art of War*, 2nd ed., vol. i, p. 209.
[2] "Tactica", Constitutio xviii, § 123, in Migne, *Patrologia Græca*, vol. cvii.
[3] "De administrando imperio", caput xv, in Migne, *Patrologia Græca*, vol. cxiii.

ruled with absolute power, paying the Saljūq sultan a yearly tribute and, in time of war, marching under his banner with a fixed number of troops equipped and supported by themselves.

The governor

The Umayyad partition of the empire into provinces under governors (sing. *amīr* or *'āmil*), a division based on earlier Byzantine and Persian models, was not radically changed under the 'Abbāsids. The 'Abbāsid list of provinces varied from time to time and the political classification may not always have tallied with the geographical as preserved in al-Iṣṭakhri, ibn-Ḥawqal, ibn-al-Faqīh and similar works; but the following seem to have been the chief provinces under the early caliphs of Baghdād: (1) Africa west of the Libyan Desert together with Sicily; (2) Egypt; (3) Syria and Palestine, which were sometimes separated; (4) al-Ḥijāz and al-Yamāmah (Central Arabia); (5) al-Yaman or Southern Arabia;[1] (6) al-Baḥrayn and 'Umān, with al-Baṣrah in al-'Irāq for its capital; (7) al-Sawād, or al-'Irāq (Lower Mesopotamia), whose leading cities after Baghdād were al-Kūfah and Wāsiṭ; (8) al-Jazīrah (i.e. the island, rather the peninsula, ancient Assyria), whose capital was al-Mawṣil (Mosul); (9) Ādharbayjān, of which Ardabīl, Tibrīz and Marāghah were the leading towns; (10) al-Jibāl (the mountains, ancient Media), later called al-'Irāq al-'Ajami (the Persian 'Irāq),[2] of which the principal cities were Hamadhān (ancient Ecbatana), al-Rayy and Iṣbahān (Iṣfahān, Ispahān); (11) Khūzistān, with al-Ahwāz and Tustar[3] as chief towns; (12) Fāris, of which Shīrāz was the capital; (13) Karmān, whose present capital bears the same name; (14) Mukrān, which included modern Baluchistan and extended to the highlands overlooking the Indus valley; (15) Sijistān or Sīstān, whose capital was Zaranj; (16-20) Qūhistān, Qūmis, Ṭabaristān, Jurjān and Armenia; (21) Khurāsān, which included what has now become the north-western part of Afghanistan and whose leading cities were Naysābūr, Marw, Harāt (Herat) and Balkh; (22) Khwārizm, whose early capital was Kāth; (23) al-Ṣughd (ancient Sogdiana) between the Oxus and Jaxartes, having two famous cities, Bukhāra and Samarqand; (24, etc.) Farghānah, al-Shāsh

[1] These five provinces were often referred to as *aqālīm al-maghrib*, the occidental provinces, in contradistinction to the rest referred to as *aqālīm al-mashriq*, the oriental provinces.

[2] In contrast to al-'Irāq al-'Arabi (the Arabian 'Irāq), i.e. Lower Mesopotamia.

[3] Called Shustar or Shushtar by the Persians.

(modern Tāshkand) and other Turkish lands.[1] The Ottoman Turkish vilayets in Western Asia, it may be noticed, correspond geographically to the old Arab provinces.

In spite of all efforts on the part of the imperial capital, decentralization was the unavoidable consequence of such a far-flung domain with difficult means of intercommunication. In all local affairs the governor's authority tended to become supreme and his office hereditary. In theory he held his position during the pleasure of the vizir, who recommended his appointment to the caliph, and went out of office when that vizir was removed. As in the case of the vizirate al-Māwardi[2] distinguishes between two varieties of governorship: one, *imārah 'āmmah* (general amīrate), in which the incumbent held supreme direction of military affairs, right of nomination and control of the judiciary, levying of taxes, maintenance of public security, safeguarding the state religion against innovation, administration of police and presiding at public prayers on Friday; and the other of the more restricted type (*khāṣṣah*, special), in which the governor had no jurisdiction over judges and taxes. But all this classification was largely theoretical, as the authority of the provincial governor increased in direct proportion to the personal ability of the governor, the weakness of the caliph and the distance from the federal capital. The local income from each province was in almost every case applied to meet the governmental expenses of that province. If the expenses were less than the local income the governor remitted the balance to the caliphal treasury. The administration of justice was in the hands of a provincial qāḍi assisted by a number of deputies stationed in the various sub-divisions of the provinces.

[1] Compare list of provinces as given here with lists in Le Strange, *Eastern Caliphate*, pp. 1-9; Zaydān, *Tamaddun*, vol. ii, pp. 37-44; von Kremer, *Culturgeschichte*, vol. i, p. 184.

[2] Pp. 47-54.

CHAPTER XXVI

'ABBĀSID SOCIETY

THE primitive tribal system, the basic pattern of Arabian social organization, entirely broke down under the 'Abbāsids, who owed their throne to foreign elements. Even the caliphs in such matters as the choice of wives and mothers for their children set no value on Arabian blood. Among the 'Abbāsids only three caliphs were sons of free mothers: abu-al-'Abbās, al-Mahdi and al-Amīn,[1] of whom the last enjoyed the unique distinction of having both parents from the Prophet's family.[2] Among the Umayyads the twelfth caliph, Yazīd III, was the first whose mother was a non-Arab. But she was at least supposedly a descendant of the last Persian emperor, Yazdagird, and was captured by Qutaybah in Sogdiana and presented by al-Ḥajjāj to the Caliph al-Walīd. Among the 'Abbāsids al-Manṣūr's mother was a Berber slave; al-Ma'mūn's a Persian slave; al-Wāthiq's and al-Muhtadi's were Greek; al-Muntaṣir's was a Greco-Abyssinian; al-Musta'īn's a Slav (*ṣaqlabīyah*); al-Muktafi's as well as al-Muqtadir's were Turkish slaves; and al-Mustaḍī''s Armenian.[3] Hārūn's mother, another foreign slave, was the famous al-Khayzurān—the first woman to exercise any appreciable influence in 'Abbāsid caliphal affairs.[4]

In bringing about this fusion of the Arabians with their subject peoples polygamy, concubinage and the slave trade proved effective methods. As the pure Arabian element receded into the background non-Arabs, half-breeds and sons of freed women began to take their place. Soon the Arabian aristocracy was superseded by a hierarchy of officials representing diverse nationalities, at first preponderantly Persian and later Turkish.

[1] Tha'ālibi, *Laṭā'if*, p. 75.
[2] Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 937, ll. 12-13.
[3] See Tha'ālibi, pp. 75-7; Mas'ūdi, *passim*.
[4] For the part she was suspected of having played in the death of her son, the Caliph al-Hādi, and the succession of her other and favourite son, al-Rashid, consult Ṭabari, vol. iii, pp. 569 *seq.*, copied by ibn-al-Athīr, vol. vi, pp. 67 *seq.* Cf. Mas'ūdi, vol. vi, pp. 282-3.

A bard gave expression to the proud Arabian sentiment when he sang:

> Sons of concubines have become
> So numerous amongst us;
> Lead me, O God, to a land
> Where I shall see no bastards.[1]

Unfortunately Arab historians had their interest too much centred in the caliph's affairs and political happenings to leave us an adequate picture of the social and economic life of the common people in those days. But from sporadic, incidental passages in their works, from mainly literary sources and from ordinary life in the conservative Moslem Orient of today, it is not impossible to reconstruct an outline of that picture.

Home life

The early 'Abbāsid woman enjoyed the same measure of liberty as her Umayyad sister; but toward the end of the tenth century, under the Buwayhids, the system of strict seclusion and absolute segregation of the sexes had become general. Not only do we read of women in the high circles of that early period achieving distinction and exercising influence in state affairs—such as al-Khayzurān, al-Mahdi's wife and al-Rashīd's mother; 'Ulayyah, daughter of al-Mahdi; Zubaydah, al-Rashīd's wife and al-Amīn's mother; and Būrān, al-Ma'mūn's wife—but of Arab maidens going to war and commanding troops, composing poetry and competing with men in literary pursuits or enlivening society with their wit, musical talent and vocal accomplishments. Such was 'Ubaydah al-Ṭunbūrīyah (i.e. the pandore-lady), who won national fame in the days of al-Mu'taṣim as a beauty, a singer and a musician.[2]

In the period of decline, characterized by excessive concubinage, laxity of sex morality and indulgence in luxury, the position of woman sank to the low level we find in the *Arabian Nights*. There woman is represented as the personification of cunning and intrigue and as the repository of all base sentiments and unworthy thoughts. In an extraordinary letter of condolence to a friend who had lost his daughter, abu-Bakr al-Khwārizmi († *ca.* 993 or 1002), the first author to leave a collection of literary correspondence, asserts: "We are in an age in which if one of us . . . should marry his daughter to a grave he would acquire thereby the best of sons-in-law".[3]

[1] Mubarrad, p. 302.
[2] *Aghāni*, vol. xix, pp. 134-7.
[3] *Rasā'il* (Constantinople, 1297), p. 20.

Marriage has been regarded almost universally in Islam as a positive duty, the neglect of which is subject to severe reproach, and the gift of children, especially if sons, a boon from God. A wife's first duty consisted in the service of her husband, the care of the children and the management of household affairs; any spare time would be occupied with spinning and weaving. The fashionable head-dress for women, introduced by 'Ulayyah, half-sister of al-Rashīd, was evidently a dome-shaped cap, round the bottom of which was a circlet that could be adorned with jewels. Among other objects of feminine adornment were anklets (sing. *khalkhāl*) and bracelets (*asāwir*).

Men's clothing has varied but little since those days. The common head-gear was the black high-peaked hat, *qalansuwah*, made of felt or wool and introduced by al-Manṣūr.[1] Wide trousers (*sarāwīl*) of Persian origin,[2] shirt, vest and jacket (*quftān*),[3] with outer mantle (*'abā'* or *jubbah*[4]), completed the wardrobe of a gentleman.[5] The theologians, following the instructions of abu-Yūsuf, al-Rashīd's distinguished judge, wore distinctive black turbans and mantles (sing. *ṭaylasān*).[6]

Judging by the erotic expressions of the poets of the age the early Arabian ideals of feminine beauty seem not to have suffered much change. Al-Nuwayri devotes a goodly portion of a volume[7] to quotations descriptive of such physical charms. The woman's stature should be like the bamboo (*khayzurān*) among plants, her face as round as the full moon, her hair darker than the night, her cheeks white and rosy with a mole not unlike a drop of ambergris upon a plate of alabaster, her eyes intensely black without any adventitious antimony (*kuḥl*) and large like those of a wild deer, her eyelids drowsy or languid (*saqīm*), her

[1] Above, p. 294. The red fez, *ṭarbūsh*, still worn in Moslem lands, is a modern article.

[2] Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. iii, p. 9; R. P. A. Dozy, *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms des vêtements* (Amsterdam, 1845), pp. 203-4.

[3] Dozy, pp. 162-3.

[4] This Arabic word has worked its way from Spanish, where we find it in a late tenth-century dictionary, into the rest of the Romance languages and thence into English and the other Germanic languages as well as the Slavonic. In English it has left an interesting survival in the word "gibbet", meaning "gallows".

[5] This style of dress is still followed by the older generation in Lebanon and Syria.

[6] Ibn-Khallikān, vol. iii, p. 334 = de Slane, vol. iv, p. 273; *Aghāni*, vol. v, p. 109, ll. 23-4, vol. vi, p. 69, l. 23; ibn-abi-Uṣaybi'ah, vol. ii, p. 4, l. 23.

[7] *Nihāyah*, vol. ii, pp. 18 *seq.* For an illustration of the wealth of the Arabic language in terms describing women see ibn-Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *Akhbār al-Nisā'* (Cairo, 1319), pp. 119 *seq.*

mouth small with teeth-like pearls set in coral, her bosom pomegranate-like, her hips wide and her fingers tapering, with the extremities dyed with vermilion henna (*ḥinnā'*).

The most conspicuous piece of furniture now came to be the *dīwān*, a sofa extending along three sides of the room. Raised seats in the form of chairs were introduced under the earlier dynasty, but cushions laid on small square mattresses (from Ar. *maṭraḥ*) on the floor where one could comfortably squat remained popular. Hand-woven carpets covered the floor. Food was served on large round trays of brass set on a low table in front of the *dīwān* or the floor cushions. In the homes of the well-to-do the trays were of silver and the table of wood inlaid with ebony, mother-of-pearl or tortoise-shell—not unlike those still manufactured in Damascus. Those same people who had once enjoyed scorpions, beetles and weasels as a luxury,[1] who thought rice a venomous food[2] and used flattened bread for writing material,[3] by this time had their gastronomic tastes whetted for the delicacies of the civilized world, including such Persian dishes as the greatly desired stew, *sikbāj*, and the rich sweets, *fālūdhaj*. Their chickens were now fed on shelled nuts, almonds and milk. In summer, houses were cooled by ice.[4] Non-alcoholic drinks in the form of sherbet,[5] consisting of water sweetened with sugar and flavoured with extracts of violets, bananas, roses or mulberries, were served, but of course not exclusively. Coffee did not attain vogue until the fifteenth century and tobacco was unknown before the discovery of the New World.[6] A ninth- to tenth-century author[7] has left us a work intended to give an exposition of the sentiments and manners of a man or culture (*ẓarīf*), a gentleman, in that period. He is one in possession of polite behaviour (*adab*), manly virtue (*murū'ah*) and elegant manners

[1] Ibn-Khaldūn, *Muqaddamah*, p. 170.

[2] Ibn-al-Faqīh, pp. 187-8.

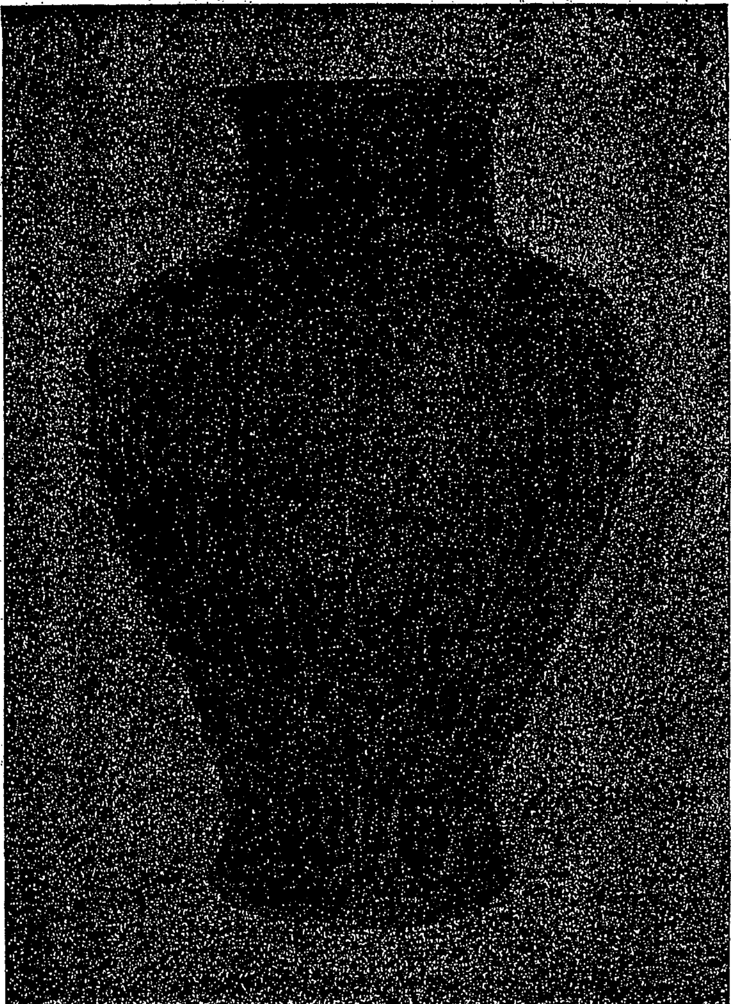
[3] Ibn-Khaldūn, p. 144. Cf. above, p. 156.

[4] Ibn-abi-Uṣaybi'ah, vol. i, pp. 139-40. Pp. 82-3 quote from an earlier source a prescription which "can solidify water even in June or July".

[5] From Ar. *sharbah*, drink. Eng. "syrup" comes from a cognate word *sharāb*.

[6] Introduced into South Arabia in the fourteenth century, coffee became domesticated in Makkah early in the fifteenth, and in the first decade of the sixteenth century was first known in Cairo through Sufis from al-Yaman, who used it at the Azhar Mosque to produce the necessary wakefulness for nightly devotions. See above, p. 19. Inhaling of smoke from burning herbs for medical purposes or perhaps for pleasure had been practised before America's discovery.

[7] Al-Washshā', *Kitāb al-Muwashsha*, ed. R. Brünnow (Leyden, 1886), pp. 1, 12, 33, 37, 124, 125, 129-31, 142.


By courtesy of Fahim Kouchakji

A TWELFTH- OR THIRTEENTH-CENTURY VASE FROM AL-RAQQAH, ONCE PART-TIME CAPITAL OF HĀRŪN AL-RASHĪD

It is of turquoise greenish-blue colour, forty-nine centimetres high

(*ẓarf*), who abstains from joking, holds fellowship with the right comrades, has high standards of veracity, is scrupulous in the fulfilment of his promises, keeps a secret, wears unsoiled and unpatched clothes, and at the table takes small mouthfuls, converses or laughs but little, chews his food slowly, licks not his fingers, avoids garlic and onions and refrains from using the toothpick in toilet rooms, baths, public meetings and on the streets.

Alcoholic drinks were often indulged in both in company and in private. Judging by the countless stories of revelry in such works as the *Aghānī* and the *Arabian Nights* and by the numerous songs and poems in praise of wine (*khamrīyāt*) by the debauched abu-Nuwās († *ca.* 810), the one-day caliph, ibn-al-Mu'tazz († 908), and similar bards, prohibition, one of the distinctive features of Moslem religion, did no more prohibit then than did the eighteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States. Even caliphs, vizirs, princes and judges paid no heed to the religious injunction.[1] Scholars, poets, singers and musicians were especially desired as boon companions. This practice, which was of Persian origin,[2] became an established institution under the early 'Abbāsids and developed professionals under al-Rashīd. Other than this caliph, al-Hādi, al-Amīn, al-Ma'mūn, al-Mu'taṣim, al-Wāthiq and al-Mutawakkil were given to drink; al-Manṣūr and al-Muhtadi were opposed to it. Indeed al-Nawāji[3] despairs of finding room in his book for all the caliphs, vizirs and secretaries addicted to the use of the forbidden beverage. *Khamr*, made of dates, was the favourite. Ibn-Khaldūn argues that such personages as al-Rashīd and al-Ma'mūn used only *nabīdh*,[4] prepared by soaking grapes, raisins or dates in water and allowing the juice to ferment slightly. Such drink was judged legal under certain conditions by at least one school of Moslem jurisprudence, the Ḥanafite. Muḥammad himself drank it, especially before it was three days old.[5]

[1] See Nuwayri, *Nihāyah*, vol. iv, pp. 92 *seq.*

[2] Jāḥiẓ, *Tāj*, pp. 23, 72; Nawāji, *Ḥalbah*, p. 26. [3] P. 99, ll. 24-7.

[4] *Muqaddamah*, p. 16. *Khamr* is the term used in the Koran (5 : 92-3) for the prohibited drink. What provides opportunity for the exercise of ingenuity on the part of interpreters is firstly the fact that at the time of the Prophet there was not in al-Madīnah any *khamr* of grapes, the beverage of its inhabitants being prepared from dates; and secondly that these juices do not ferment until a certain time lapses unless they are treated by special methods. Consult *'Iqd*, vol. iii, pp. 405-14.

[5] *Mishkāh*, vol. ii, pp. 172-3; ibn-Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Cairo, 1313), vol. i, pp. 240, 287, 320; Bukhāri, vol. vi, p. 232.

Convivial parties featuring "the daughter of the vine" and song were not uncommon. At these drinking-bouts (sing. *majlis al-shirāb*[1]) the host and guests perfumed their beards with civet or rose-water and wore special garments of bright colours (*thiyāb al-munādamah*). The room was made fragrant by ambergris or aloes-wood burning in a censer. The songstresses who participated in such gatherings were mostly slaves of loose character, as illustrated by many stories,[2] who constituted the gravest menace to the morals of the youth of the age.[3] The description of a certain home in al-Kūfah during the reign of al-Manṣūr sounds more like that of a *café chantant*, with Sallāmah al-Zarqā' (the blue-eyed) as its prima donna.[4] The laity had access to wine in the Christian monasteries and the special bars conducted mainly by Jews. Christians and Jews were the "bootleggers" of the time.

Baths

"Cleanliness is a part of faith"—so runs a Prophetic tradition that is still on every lip in Moslem lands. Arabia had no baths that we hear of before Muḥammad. He himself is represented as prejudiced against them and as having permitted men to enter them for purposes of cleanliness only, each wearing a cloth. In the time we are studying, however, public baths (sing. *ḥammām*) had become popular not only for ceremonial ablutions and for their salutary effects, but also as resorts of amusement and mere luxury. Women were allowed their use on specially reserved days. Baghdād, according to al-Khaṭīb,[5] boasted in the days of al-Muqtadir (908–32) some 27,000 public baths, and in other times even 60,000,[6] all of which—like most figures in Arabic sources—seem highly exaggerated. Al-Ya'qūbi[7] makes the number 10,000 not long after the foundation of Baghdād. The Moorish traveller ibn-Baṭṭūṭah,[8] who visited Baghdād in 1327, found in each of the thirteen quarters composing its west side two or three baths of the most elaborate kind, each supplied with hot and cold running water.

Then as now the bath-house comprised several chambers with mosaic pavements and marble-lined inner walls clustering round a large central chamber. This innermost chamber, crowned by

[1] Nawāji, p. 38. [2] *Aghāni*, vol. xi, pp. 98-9, vol. xviii, pp. 182-9.
[3] Washshā', pp. 92 *seq.*
[4] *Aghāni*, vol. xiii, pp. 128 *seq.* Cf. Nuwayri, vol. v, pp. 72 *seq.*
[5] *Ta'rīkh*, vol. i, pp. 118-19. [6] *Ibid.* p. 117.
[7] *Buldān*, p. 250, ll. 9-10, cf. p. 254, ll. 8-9. [8] Vol. ii, pp. 105-7.

a dome studded with small round glazed apertures for the admission of light, was heated by steam rising from a central jet of water in the middle of a basin. The outer rooms were used for lounging and for enjoying drinks and refreshments.

Pastimes

Sports, like the fine arts, have throughout history been an appendage more of Indo-European than Semitic civilization. Engaging in them involves physical exertion for its own sake, which could not very well become a desideratum for the son of Arabia with his utilitarian temperament and the warmness of the climate.

Under the caliphate certain indoor games became popular. Reference has already been made to a sort of club-house in Makkah under the Umayyads provided with facilities for playing chess, backgammon and dice. As with several other innovations, al-Rashīd is credited with being the first 'Abbāsid caliph to have played and encouraged chess.[1] Chess (Ar. *shiṭranj*, ultimately from Sanskrit), originally an Indian game,[2] soon became the favourite indoor pastime of the aristocracy, displacing dice. This caliph is supposed to have included among his presents to Charlemagne a chess-board, just as in the Crusading period the Old Man of the Mountain presented another to St. Louis. Among other games played with a board was backgammon (*nard*, trick-track), also of Indian origin.[3]

Notable in the list of outdoor sports were archery, polo (*jūkān*, from Pers. *chawgān*,[4] bent stick), ball and mallets (*ṣawlajān*, pall-mall, a sort of croquet or hockey), fencing, javelin-throwing (*jarīd*), horse-racing and above all hunting. Among the qualifications of a prospective boon companion al-Jāḥiẓ[5] lists ability in archery, hunting, playing ball and chess—in all of which the companion may equal his royal master with no fear of affronting him. Among the caliphs particularly fond of polo was al-Mu'taṣim, whose Turkish general, al-Afshīn, once refused to play against him because he did not want to be against the commander of the believers even in a game.[6] References are made to a ball game in which a broad piece of wood (*ṭabṭāb*) was used.[7] Could

[1] Mas'ūdi, vol. viii, p. 296. [2] *Ibid.* vol. i, pp. 159-61. [3] *Ibid.* pp. 157-8.
[4] Cf. "chicane", name given to an old game in Languedoc and elsewhere played on foot with a mallet and a ball of hard wood.
[5] *Tāj*, p. 72. For other qualifications consult Nawāji, pp. 25 *seq.*
[6] Ibn-al-'Abbās, *Āthār al-Uwal*, p. 130.
[7] Mas'ūdi, vol. viii, p. 296, l. 2. Cf. *Āthār*, p. 129, ll. 3-4.

this be tennis in its rudimentary form?[1] Al-Mas'ūdi[2] has preserved for us the description of a horse-race at al-Raqqah in which a courser of al-Rashīd's won first place, to the enthusiastic delight of the caliph, who witnessed the event. In the *'Iqd*[3] we find a number of poems in description and honour of prize-winning horses. Betting, as we learn from this same source, enlivened such races.

In the 'Abbāsid period, as in the earlier one, hunting was the favourite outdoor pastime of caliphs and princes. Al-Amīn was particularly fond of hunting lions,[4] and a brother of his met his death pursuing wild boars.[5] Both abu-Muslim al-Khurāsāni and al-Mu'taṣim were fond of hunting with the cheetah. The number of early Arabic books dealing with hunting, trapping and falconry testify to the keen interest in these sports.

Falconry and hawking were introduced into Arabia from Persia, as the Arabic vocabulary relating to these sports indicates. They became particularly favoured in the later period of the caliphate[6] and in that of the Crusades.[7] Hunting with the falcon (*bāz*) or sparrow-hawk (*bāshiq*) is still practised in Persia, al-'Irāq, Dayr al-Zūr and the 'Alawite region of Syria in practically the same manner as described in the *Arabian Nights*. For gazelles or antelopes, hares, partridges, wild geese, ducks and *qaṭa* (a species of grouse), hawks and falcons were employed and assisted in the case of big game by dogs. The first thing for a Moslem hunter to do after seizing his prey would be to cut its throat; otherwise its flesh would be unlawful.[8] Under certain conditions the hunting-party would form a circuit (*ḥalqah*) surrounding and closing in on the spot in which the game happened to abound. Al-Mu'taṣim built a horseshoe-shaped wall touching the Tigris at its two extremities and used his

[1] The word "tennis", generally supposed to have come from the French verb *tenez* = take heed, is probably from "Tinnīs", the Arabic name of an Egyptian city in the Delta noted in the Middle Ages for its linen fabrics, which may have been used for making tennis balls. See Malcolm D. Whitman, *Tennis: Origins and Mysteries* (New York, 1932), pp. 24-32.

[2] Vol. vi, pp. 348-9.

[3] Vol. i, pp. 63-5.

[4] Mas'ūdi, vol. vi, pp. 432-3.

[5] *Aghāni*, vol. ix, p. 97, ll. 27-9.

[6] *Fihrist*, p. 315, and ibn-Khallikān, vol. ii, p. 172, vol. iii, p. 209, mention a number of Arabic books on hunting and falconry.

[7] For one of the earliest treatments of this subject in Arabic see Usāmah ibn-Munqidh, *Kitāb al-I'tibār*, ed. Hitti (Princeton, 1930), pp. 191-226; tr. Hitti, *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior* (New York, 1929, reprint Beirūt, 1964 pp. 221-54.

[8] Koran 2 : 168, 5 : 4, 16 : 116.

circuit of men to drive the game inside, thus shutting it in between the wall and the river.[1] Al-Musta'ṣim also used the circuit technique in his chase, as did the Saljūqs.[2] Among other late caliphs al-Mustanjid (1160–70) organized a number of regular hunting-parties. Certain caliphs and rulers kept wild beasts such as lions and tigers for striking awe into the hearts of their subjects and visitors;[3] others had dogs and monkeys for pets. A son of al-Muqtadir's vizir, who resided in Cairo and held a high position in its government, had for a hobby the collecting of serpents, scorpions and other venomous animals, which he kept under good care in a special building near his palace.[4]

Slaves

At the head of the social register stood the caliph and his family, the government officials, the scions of the Hāshimite clan and the satellites of all these groups. In this last class we may include the soldiers and bodyguards, the favoured friends and boon companions, as well as the clients and servants.

The servants were almost all slaves recruited from non-Moslem peoples and captured by force, taken prisoner in time of war or purchased in time of peace. Some were negroes, others were Turks and still others were white. The white slaves (*mamālīk*) were mainly Greeks and Slavs, Armenians and Berbers. Certain slaves were eunuchs (*khiṣyān*) attached to the service of the harem. Others, termed *ghilmān*, who might also be eunuchs, were the recipients of special favours from their masters, wore rich and attractive uniforms and often beautified and perfumed their bodies in effeminate fashion. We read of *ghilmān* in the reign of al-Rashīd;[5] but it was evidently al-Amīn who, following Persian precedent, established in the Arabic world the *ghilmān* institution for the practice of unnatural sexual relations.[6] A judge under al-Ma'mūn used four hundred such youths.[7] Poets like abu-Nuwās did not disdain to give public expression to their perverted passions and to address amorous pieces of their composition to "beardless young boys".

The maidens (*jawārī*) among slaves were also used as singers, dancers and concubines, and some of them exerted appreciable influence over their caliph masters. Such was dhāt-al-Khāl (she

[1] *Fakhri*, pp. 73-4.

[2] *Āthār al-Uwal*, p. 135.

[3] *Fakhri*, p. 30; *'Iqd*, vol. i, p. 198, ll. 4 *seq.*

[4] Kutubi, vol. i, pp. 134-5.

[5] Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 669; same in ibn-al-Athīr, vol. vi, p. 120.

[6] Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 950, copied by ibn-al-Athīr, vol. vi, p. 205.

[7] Mas'ūdi, vol. vii, p. 47.

of the mole), whom al-Rashīd had bought for 70,000 dirhams and in a fit of jealousy bestowed on one of his male servants. Having taken an oath to grant her request on a certain day, no matter what the request might be, al-Rashīd is said to have appointed her husband governor over Fāris for seven years.[1] In order to wean him from another singing-girl to whom he became attached, al-Rashīd's wife Zubaydah presented her husband with ten maidens, one of whom became the mother of al-Ma'mūn and another of al-Mu'taṣim.[2] The legendary story of Tawaddud, the beautiful and talented slave girl in *The Thousand and One Nights* (nights 437–62) whom al-Rashīd was willing to purchase for 100,000 dinars after she had passed with flying colours a searching test before his savants in medicine, law, astronomy, philosophy, music and mathematics—to say nothing of rhetoric, grammar, poetry, history and the Koran—illustrates how highly cultured some of these maids must have been. Al-Amīn's contribution consisted in promoting a corps of female pages, the members of which bobbed their hair, dressed like boys and wore silk turbans. The innovation soon became popular with both the higher and the lower classes of society.[3] An eye-witness reports that when on a Palm Sunday he called on al-Ma'mūn he found in his presence twenty Greek maidens, all bedecked and adorned, dancing with gold crosses on their necks and olive branches and palm leaves in their hands. The distribution of 3000 dinars among the dancers brought the affair to a grand finale.[4]

An idea of the prevalence of slavery may be obtained from the high figures used in enumerating those in the caliphal household. The palace of al-Muqtadir (908–32), we are told, housed 11,000 Greek and Sudanese eunuchs.[5] Al-Mutawakkil, according to a report, had 4000 concubines, all of whom shared his nuptial bed.[6] On one occasion this caliph received as a present two hundred slaves from one of his generals.[7] It was customary for governors and generals to send presents, including girls received or exacted from among their subjects, to the caliph or vizir;[8]

[1] *Aghānī*, vol. xv, p. 80, quoted by Nuwayri, vol. v, pp. 889.
[2] *Aghānī*, vol. xvi, p. 137.
[3] Mas'ūdi, vol. viii, p. 299.
[4] *Aghānī*, vol. xix, pp. 138-9.
[5] *Fakhri*, p. 352.
[6] Mas'ūdi, vol. vii, p. 276.
[7] *Ibid.* vol. vii, p. 281.
[8] Ibn-al-Athīr, vol. vii, pp. 211-12; Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 627, copied by ibn-al-Athīr, vol. vi, p. 86.

failure to do so was interpreted as a sign of rebellion. Al-Ma'mūn devised the scheme of sending some of his trusted slaves as presents, expecting them to act as spies on the suspect recipients or to do away with them in case of necessity.[1]

Economic life: commerce

The commonalty was composed of an upper class bordering on the aristocracy and comprised littérateurs and belletrists, learned men, artists, merchants, craftsmen and professionals, and of a lower class forming the majority of the nation and made up of farmers, herdsmen and country folk who represented the native population and now enjoyed the status of dhimmis. In the following chapter we shall treat of the intellectual class at some length. Suffice it to note here that the general stage of culture in the period of 'Abbāsid primacy was by no means low.

The wide extent of the empire and the high level which civilization attained involved extensive international trade. The early merchants were Christians, Jews[2] and Zoroastrians, but these were later largely superseded by Moslems and Arabs, who did not disdain trade as they did agriculture. Such ports as Baghdād, al-Baṣrah, Sīrāf,[3] Cairo and Alexandria soon developed into centres of active land and maritime commerce.

Eastward, Moslem traders ventured as far as China, which according to Arab tradition was reached from al-Baṣrah as early as the days of the second 'Abbāsid caliph, al-Manṣūr.[4] The earliest Arabic source treating of the subject of Arab and Persian maritime communication with India and China is a report of voyages by Sulaymān al-Tājir (the merchant) and other Moslem traders in the third Moslem century.[5] This trade was based on silk, the earliest of China's magnificent gifts to the West, and usually followed what has been styled "the great silk way"[6] going through Samarqand and Chinese Turkestan, a region less traversed today by civilized man than almost any other part of the habitable world. Goods were generally transported by relays; few caravans went the whole distance. But diplomatic relations were certainly established before the time of Arab traders.

[1] *'Iqd*, vol. i, p. 196.
[2] Consult ibn-Khurdādhbih, pp. 153-4.
[3] A town in Persia on the Persian Gulf. The people of Sīrāf and 'Umān (Mas'ūdi, vol. i, pp. 281-2) were among the best-known mariners of the early 'Abbāsid period.
[4] Cf. Marshall Broomhall, *Islam in China* (London, 1910), pp. 5-36.
[5] *Silsilat al-Tawārīkh* [*sic*], ed. Langlès (Paris, 1811); tr. G. Ferrand, *Voyage du marchand arabe Sulaymân en Inde et en Chine* (Paris, 1922).
[6] Thomas F. Carter, *The Invention of Printing in China and its Spread Westward* (New York, 1925), pp. 85 *seq.*

Legend makes Sa'd ibn-abi-Waqqāṣ, the conqueror of Persia, the envoy sent by the Prophet to China. Sa'd's "grave" is still revered in Canton. Certain inscriptions on the old Chinese monuments relating to Islam in China are clearly forgeries prompted by religious pride.[1] By the mid-eighth century several embassies had been exchanged. In the Chinese records of that century the *amīr al-mu'minīn* is called *hanmi-mo-mo-ni*; abu-al-'Abbās, the first 'Abbāsid caliph, *A-bo-lo-ba*; and Hārūn, *A-lun*. In the time of these caliphs a number of Moslems settled in China. At first such Moslems appear under the name *Ta-shih*[2] and later under the title *Hui-Hui* (Muḥammadans).[3] The first European mention of Saracens in China appears to be that of Marco Polo.[4] It was also Moslem traders who carried Islam into the islands that in 1949 formed the United States of Indonesia.

Westward, Moslem merchants reached Morocco and Spain. A thousand years before de Lesseps an Arab caliph, Hārūn, entertained the idea of digging a canal through the Isthmus of Suez.[5] Arab Mediterranean trade, however, never rose to great prominence. The Black Sea was likewise inhospitable to it, though in the tenth century brisk land trade is noticed with the peoples of the Volga regions to the north. But the Caspian Sea, because of its proximity to the Persian centres and the prosperous cities of Samarqand and Bukhāra with their hinterland, was the scene of some commercial intercourse. Moslem merchants carried with them dates, sugar, cotton and woollen fabrics, steel tools and glassware; they imported, among other commodities, spices, camphor and silk from farther Asia, and ivory, ebony and negro slaves from Africa.

An idea of the fortunes amassed by the Rothschilds and Rockefellers of the age may be gained from the case of the Baghdād jeweller ibn-al-Jaṣṣāṣ, who remained wealthy after al-Muqtadir had confiscated 16,000,000 dinars of his property, and became the first of a family of distinguished jewel merchants.[6] Certain Baṣrah merchants whose ships carried goods to distant parts of the world had an annual income of more than a

[1] See Paul Pelliot in *Journal asiatique* (1913), vol. ii, pp. 177-91.
[2] From Pahlawi *Tājik*, modern *Tāzi*, Arab. The term is evidently a Persianized form of Ṭayyi', an Arab tribe.
[3] Consult Isaac Mason in *Journal of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. lx (1929), pp. 42-78.
[4] For Moslem settlements in Korea (al-Shīla) see ibn-Khurdādhbih, pp. 70, 170.
[5] Mas'ūdi, vol. iv, pp. 98-9. [6] Kutubi, vol. i, p. 177.

million dirhams each. An uneducated miller of al-B[illegible]h and Baghdād could afford to distribute as daily alms among the poor a hundred dinars, and was later appointed by al-Mu'taṣim as his vizir.[1] In Sīrāf the home of the average merchant cost over ten thousand dinars, some over thirty thousand dinars; and many maritime traders were worth 4,000,000 dinars each.[2] Some of these Sīrāf merchants "spent their lives on the water", and al-Iṣṭakhri[3] heard of one who had spent forty years on board ship.

Industry

No commercial activity could have reached such dimensions had it not rested on extensive home industry and agriculture. Hand industry flourished in various parts of the empire. In Western Asia it centred chiefly in the manufacture of rugs, tapestry, silk, cotton and woollen fabrics, satin, brocade (*dībāj*), sofa (from Ar. *ṣuffah*) and cushion covers, as well as other articles of furniture and kitchen utensils. The many looms of Persia and al-'Irāq turned out carpets and textiles maintained at a high standard by distinctive marks. Al-Musta'īn's mother had a rug specially ordered for her at a cost of 130,000,000 dirhams, bearing figures of all sorts of birds in gold which had rubies and other precious stones for eyes.[4] A quarter in Baghdād named after 'Attāb, an Umayyad prince who was its most distinguished resident, gave its name to a striped fabric, '*attābi*,[5] first manufactured there in the twelfth century. The fabric was imitated by the Arabs in Spain and under the trade name *tabi* became popular in France, Italy and other lands of Europe. The term survives in "tabby", applied to streaked or marked cats. Al-Kūfah produced the silk and partly silk kerchiefs for the head that are still worn under the name *kūfīyah*. Tawwaj, Fasa and other towns of Fāris boasted a number of high-class factories where carpets, embroideries, brocades and robes of honour—a mark of distinction in the East—were manufactured first for the use of the royalty.[6] Such products were known as *ṭirāz* (from Pers.) and bore the name or cipher of the sultan or caliph embroidered on them. In Tustar and al-Sūs in Khūzistān[7] (ancient Susiana) were a number of factories famous for the

[1] *Fakhri*, pp. 321-2.
[2] Iṣṭakhri, pp. 127, 139; ibn-Ḥawqal, p. 198; Maqdisi, p. 426.
[3] P. 138. [4] Ibshīhi, vol. i, p. 144.
[5] Mentioned in Maqdisi, p. 323, l. 20; ibn-Ḥawqal, p. 261, l. 13; Yāqūt, *Buldān*, vol. i, p. 822, l. 22 (where it is misspelt).
[6] Iṣṭakhri, p. 153 Cf. Maqdisi, pp. 442-3. [7] Maqdisi, pp. 402, 407-9.

embroidery of damask[1] figured with gold and for curtains made of spun silk (*khazz*). Their camel- and goat-hair fabrics as well as their spun-silk cloaks were widely known. Shīrāz yielded striped woollen cloaks, also gauzes and brocades. Under the name of "taffeta" European ladies of the Middle Ages bought in their native shops the Persian silken cloth *tāftah*. Khurāsān and Armenia were famous for their spreads, hangings and sofa and cushion covers. In Central Asia, that great emporium of the early Middle Ages, Bukhāra was especially noted for its prayer-rugs. A complete conception of the development of industry and trade in Transoxiana may be gained from the list of exports from the various towns given by al-Maqdisi:[2] soap, carpets, copper lamps, pewter ware, felt cloaks, furs, amber, honey, falcons, scissors, needles, knives, swords, bows, meats, Slavonic and Turkish slaves, etc. Tables, sofas, lamps, chandeliers, vases, earthenware and kitchen utensils were also made in Syria and Egypt. The Egyptian fabrics termed *dimyāṭi* (after Dimyāṭ), *dabīqi* (after Dabīq) and *tinnīsi* (after Tinnīs)[3] were world-renowned and imitated in Persia. The ancient industrial arts of Pharaonic days survived in an attenuated form in the manufactures of the Copts.

The glass of Sidon, Tyre and other Syrian towns, a survival of the ancient Phoenician industry which after the Egyptian was the oldest glass industry in history, was proverbial for its clarity and thinness.[4] In its enamelled and variegated varieties Syrian glass as a result of the Crusades became the forerunner of the stained glass in the cathedrals of Europe. Glass and metal vases of Syrian workmanship were in great demand as articles of utility and luxury. Sconces of glass bearing enamelled inscriptions in various colours hung in mosques and palaces. Damascus was the centre of an extensive mosaic and *qāshāni* industry. *Qāshāni*[5] (colloquial *qīshāni*, *qāshi*), a name derived from Kāshān[6] in Media, was given to square or hexagonal glazed tiles, sometimes figured with conventional flowers and used in exterior and

[1] This fabric was originally made in Damascus, whence the name.
[2] Pp. 323-6.
[3] Yāqūt, vol. ii, pp. 603, 548, vol. i, p. 882; Maqdisi, pp. 201, 433, ll. 16-17, 443, l. 5. See below, p. 631.
[4] Tha'ālibi, *Laṭā'if*, p. 95.
[5] Mentioned in ibn-Baṭṭūṭah, vol. i, p. 415, vol. ii, pp. 46, 130, 225, 297, vol. iii, p. 79.
[6] Ar. Qāshān; Yāqūt, *Buldān*, vol. iv, p. 15.

interior decoration of buildings. The predominant colours were indigo blue, turquoise blue, green and less often red and yellow. The art, as ancient as the Elamites and Assyrians, survived in Damascus until the latter part of the eighteenth century.

Worthy of special note is the manufacture of writing-paper, introduced in the middle of the eighth century into Samarqand from China.[1] The paper of Samarqand, which was captured by the Moslems in 704, was considered matchless.[2] Before the close of that century Baghdād saw its first paper-mill. Gradually others for making paper followed: Egypt had its factory about 900 or earlier, Morocco about 1100, Spain about 1150; and various kinds of paper, white and coloured, were produced. Al-Mu'taṣim, credited with opening new soap and glass factories in Baghdād, Sāmarra and other towns, is said to have encouraged the paper industry. The oldest Arabic paper manuscript that has come down to us is one on tradition entitled *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, by abu-'Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn-Sallām († 837), dated dhu-al-Qa'dah, A.H. 252 (November 13–December 12, 866) and preserved in the Leyden University Library.[3] The oldest by a Christian author is a theological treatise by abu-Qurrah[4] († *ca.* 820) dated Rabī' I, A.H. 264 (Nov. 11–Dec. 10, 877) and preserved in the British Museum. From Moslem Spain and from Italy, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the manufacture of paper finally worked its way into Christian Europe, where with the later discovery of printing from movable type (1450–55) it made possible the measure of popular education which Europe and America now enjoy.

The jeweller's art also had its day. Pearls, sapphires, rubies, emeralds and diamonds were favourites with the royalty; turquoise, carnelian and onyx with the lower classes. One of the best-known gems in Arab history is the big ruby, once owned by several Persian monarchs, on which Hārūn inscribed his name after acquiring it for 40,000 dinars.[5] The ruby was so large and brilliant that "if it were put in the night-time in a dark room it would shine like a lamp". Hārūn's sister, as we learned

[1] Consult Friedrich Hirth, *Chinesische Studien* (Munich and Leipzig, 1890), vol. i, pp. 259-71. See below, p. 414. Paper money, also of Chinese origin, was printed (1294) in Chinese and Arabic at Tibrīz, one of the earliest places in the Moslem world with a record of block printing.
[2] Thaʻālibi, p. 126; Maqdisi, p. 326, ll. 3-4.
[3] William Wright, *The Palaeographical Society, Oriental Series* (London, 1875–83), pl. vi.
[4] Theodorus abu Ḳurra, *De Cultu Imaginum*, ed. and tr. I. Arendzen (Bonn, 1897).
[5] Mas'ūdi, vol. vii, p. 376. Cf. *Fakhri*, pp. 352-3; Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 602, l. 12.

before, wore jewels on her head-dress and his wife had them on her shoes. Yaḥya ibn-Khālid the Barmakid once offered 7,000,000 dirhams to a Baghdād merchant for a jewel-box made of precious stones, but the offer was refused.[1] Al-Muktafi is said to have left 20,000,000 dinars' worth of jewels and perfumes.[2] At a gorgeous royal banquet given by al-Mutawakkil, and considered together with al-Ma'mūn's wedding "two occasions that have no third in Islam",[3] tables and trays of gold studded with gems were used. Even ibn-Khaldūn, who claims that the ʻAbbāsids could not have indulged in luxurious modes of living, accepts the extraordinary display of gold and jewellery at al-Ma'mūn's marriage ceremony.[4] According to al-Masʻūdi,[5] al-Muʻtazz (866–9), the thirteenth ʻAbbāsid caliph, was the first to appear on horseback in gilded armour on a golden saddle, all caliphs before him having used silver decorations. One of the last caliphs to possess much jewellery was al-Muqtadir (908–32), who confiscated the property of the founder of the richest jewellery house in Baghdād[6] and came into possession of the famous red ruby of Hārūn, as well as the equally famous "unique pearl" weighing three *mithqāls* (miskal) and other gems, all of which he squandered.[7]

The leading mineral resources of the empire which made the jeweller's industry possible included gold and silver from Khurāsān, which also yielded marble and mercury;[8] rubies, lapis lazuli and azurite from Transoxiana;[9] lead and silver from Karmān;[10] pearls from al-Baḥrayn;[11] turquoise from Naysābūr, whose mine in the latter half of the tenth century was farmed out for 758,720 dirhams a year;[12] carnelian from Ṣanʻā';[13] and iron from Mt. Lebanon.[14] Other mineral resources included kaolin and marble from Tibrīz, antimony from the vicinity of Iṣbahān,[15] bitumen and naphtha from Georgia, marble and sulphur from

[1] Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 703. [2] Thaʻālibi, p. 72. [3] *Ibid.* pp. 72-3.
[4] *Muqaddamah*, p. 15, ll. 20 *seq.*, pp. 144-5.
[5] Vol. vii, pp. 401-2, quoted by ibn-Khaldūn, *Muqaddamah*, p. 15.
[6] Above, p. 344.
[7] *Fakhri*, p. 353. The "unique pearl" is also mentioned by ibn-Ḥawqal, p. 38, l. 7. Cf. Maqdisi, p. 101, l. 16. [8] Maqdisi, p. 326.
[9] *Ibid.* p. 303. "Lazuli", as well as "azure", comes through Latin from Ar. *lāzaward* and ultimately from Pers. *lāzhuward*.
[10] Ibn-al-Faqīh, p. 206. [11] Maqdisi, p. 101. [12] *Ibid.* p. 341, n.
[13] *Ibid.* p. 101. [14] *Ibid.* p. 184, l. 3.
[15] Iṣṭakhri, p. 203; Thaʻālibi, *Laṭā'if*, p. 110. Ar. *kuḥl*, perhaps "galena", consult H. E. Stapleton *et al.* in *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. viii (1927), p. 352.

Syria-Palestine,[1] asbestos from Transoxiana[2] and mercury, pitch and tar from Farghānah.[3]

Agriculture received great impetus under the early ʻAbbāsids because their capital itself lay in a most favoured spot, the alluvial plain commonly known under the name of al-Sawād; because they realized that farming was the chief source of the state income; and because the tilling of the land was almost wholly in the hands of the native inhabitants, whose status was somewhat improved under the new régime. Deserted farms and ruined villages in different parts of the empire were gradually rehabilitated and restored. The lower region of the Tigris-Euphrates valley, the richest in the whole empire after Egypt and the traditional site of the garden of Eden, was the object of special attention on the part of the central government. Canals from the Euphrates, either old and now re-opened or else entirely new, formed a "veritable network".[4] The first great canal, called Nahr ʻĪsa after a relative of al-Manṣūr who had re-excavated it, connected the Euphrates at al-Anbār in the north-west with the Tigris at Baghdād. One of the main branches of the Nahr ʻĪsa was the Ṣarāh. The second great transverse canal was the Nahr Ṣarṣar, which entered the Tigris above al-Madā'in. The third was the Nahr al-Malik ("river of the king"), which flowed into the Tigris below al-Madā'in.[5] Lower down the two rivers came the Nahr Kūtha and the Great Ṣarāh,[6] which threw off a number of irrigation channels. Another canal, the Dujayl (diminutive of Dijlah, the Tigris), which originally connected the Tigris with the Euphrates, had become silted up by the tenth century, and the name was given to a new channel, a loop canal, which started from the Tigris below al-Qādisīyah and rejoined it farther south after sending off a number of branches.[7] Other less important canals included the Nahr al-Ṣilah dug in Wāsiṭ by al-Mahdi.[8] Arab geographers speak of caliphs "digging" or "opening" "rivers", when in most cases the process involved was one of re-digging or re-opening canals that had existed since

Agriculture

[1] Maqdisi, p. 184. [2] *Ibid.* p. 303, ll. 13-15. [3] Ibn-Ḥawqal, p. 362.
[4] Iṣṭakhri, p. 85, l. 3; ibn-Ḥawqal, p. 166, l. 2.
[5] For these canals see Iṣṭakhri, pp. 84-5; same in ibn-Ḥawqal, pp. 165-6; Maqdisi, p. 124; Khaṭīb, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. i, pp. 91, 111 *seq.*; Guy Le Strange, "Description of Mesopotamia and Baghdād, written about the year 900 A.D. by Ibn-Serapion" (Suhrāb), *Journal, Royal Asiatic Society* (1895), pp. 255-315.
[6] Yāqūt, vol. iii, pp. 377-8. [7] Iṣṭakhri, pp. 77-8; Yāqūt, vol. ii, p. 555.
[8] Balādhuri, p. 291 = Hitti, p. 451; Qudāmah, p. 241.

Babylonian days. In al-'Irāq as well as Egypt the task consisted mainly in keeping the ancient systems in order. Even before the first World War, when the Ottoman government commissioned Sir William Willcocks to study the irrigation problem of al-'Irāq, his report stressed the necessity of clearing the old watercourses rather than constructing new ones.[1] It should be noted, however, that the face of the alluvial Sawād has greatly changed since 'Abbāsid days and that both the Tigris and the Euphrates have considerably shifted their courses in historical times.

The staple crops of al-'Irāq consisted of barley and wheat, rice, dates, sesame, cotton and flax. Especially fertile was the alluvial plain to the south, al-Sawād, where quantities of fruit and vegetables, both of the cold and the hot regions, were grown. Nuts, oranges, egg-plants, sugar-cane, lupines and such flowers as roses and violets were produced in abundance.

Khurāsān vied with al-'Irāq and Egypt as a rich agricultural country. A review of the revenue sheets discussed above[2] would indicate that it yielded one of the largest kharājs of the empire. Politically it embraced, at least for some time, Transoxiana and Sijistān, and was therefore a great source of man-power as well. No wonder, then, that we hear it referred to in the presence of al-Ma'mūn as "the whole empire".[3]

The land round Bukhāra, in the judgment of Arab geographers, was, especially under the Sāmānids in the 900's, a veritable garden.[4] Here, between Samarqand and Bukhāra, lay the Wādi al-Ṣughd (the valley of Sogdiana), one of the "four earthly paradises", the other three being the Shi'b Bawwān (gap of Bavvān in Fāris), the gardens of the Ubullah Canal, extending from al-Baṣrah to the south-east,[5] and the orchards (*ghūṭah*) of Damascus.[6] In these gardens flourished several varieties of fruits, vegetables and flowers, such as dates, apples, apricots,[7] peaches, plums, lemons, oranges, figs, grapes, olives, almonds, pomegranates, egg-plants, radishes, cucumbers, roses and basil (*rayḥān*). Water-melons were exported from Khwārizm to the

[1] William Willcocks, *Irrigation of Mesopotamia* (London, 1917), pp. xvii *seq.*, 11 *seq.*
[2] P. 321.
[3] Ya'qūbi, vol. ii, p. 555, l. 4.
[4] Iṣṭakhri, pp. 305 *seq.*, copied by ibn-Ḥawqal, pp. 355 *seq.*
[5] Iṣṭakhri, p. 81; same in ibn-Ḥawqal, p. 160; Maqdisi, pp. 117-18.
[6] Yāqūt, vol. i, p. 751, vol. iii, p. 394; cf. vol. i, p. 97, ll. 15-16.
[7] For etymology see below, p. 528, n. 6. The plant itself was a native of China.

courts of al-Ma'mūn and al-Wāthiq in lead moulds packed with ice; such fruit would sell in Baghdād for seven hundred dirhams each.[1] In fact most of the fruit trees and vegetables grown at present in Western Asia were known at the time, with the exception of mangoes, potatoes, tomatoes and similar plants introduced in recent times from the New World and distant European colonies. The orange tree, allied to the citron and lemon, had its native habitat in India or Malay, whence it spread at this time into Western Asia, the adjoining lands of the Mediterranean basin and eventually through the Arabs in Spain into Europe.[2] The sugar-cane plantations of Fāris and al-Ahwāz,[3] with their noted refineries, were about this time followed by similar ones on the Syrian coast, from which place the Crusaders later introduced the cane and the sugar[4] into Europe. Thus did this sweet commodity, probably of Bengalese origin, which has since become an indispensable ingredient in the daily food of civilized man, work its way westward.

Horticulture was not limited to fruits and vegetables. The cultivation of flowers was also promoted, not only in small home gardens round fountains musical with jetting, splashing water, but on a large scale for commercial purposes. The preparation of perfumes or essences from roses, water-lilies, oranges, violets and the like flourished in Damascus, Shīrāz, Jūr and other towns. The whole district of Jūr, or Fīrūzābād, in Fāris was noted for its attar (Ar. *'iṭr*) of red roses.[5] Rose-water from Jūr was exported as far as China eastward and al-Maghrib westward.[6] Fāris included in its kharāj 30,000 bottles of the essence of red roses, which were sent annually to the caliph in Baghdād.[7] Sābūr (Pers. Shāpūr) and its valley produced ten world-famous varieties of perfumed oils, or unguents, extracted from the violet, water-lily, narcissus, palm flower, iris, white lily, myrtle, sweet marjoram, lemon and orange flowers.[8] Among

[1] Tha'ālibi, p. 129.
[2] This is the bitter variety, Ar. *abu-ṣufayr*. Eng. "orange" comes through Sp. from Ar. *nāranj*, from Pers. *nārang*. "Lemon" is Ar. *laymūn*, Pers. *līmūn* (see below, p. 665).
[3] Tha'ālibi, p. 107.
[4] Ar. *sukkar*; "candy" comes from Ar. *qandah*, *qandi*, which is Pers. *qand*. "Cane" is also of Semitic origin corresponding to Ar. *qanāh*, reed, but was separately introduced into European languages.
[5] In Syria red roses are still called *ward jūri*.
[6] Ibn-Ḥawqal, p. 213; Iṣṭakhri, pp. 152-3.
[7] Tha'ālibi, pp. 109-10.
[8] Maqdisi, p. 443.

these the violet extract was the most popular in the Moslem world, as the following words put in the mouth of the Prophet would indicate: "The excellence of the extract of violets above all other extracts is as the excellence of me above all the rest of creation".[1]

Among flowers the rose seems to have been the favourite. In the opinion of the cultured slave girl Tawaddud, whose ideas may be taken as an index of popular opinion between the tenth and twelfth centuries, roses and violets are the best scents; pomegranate and citron the best fruits; and endive the best vegetable.[2] The popular esteem in which the rose is held found expression in a tradition ascribed to Muḥammad: "The white rose was created from my sweat on the night of the nocturnal journey [*mi'rāj*], the red rose from the sweat of Gabriel and the yellow rose from that of al-Burāq".[3] With the words "I am the king of sultans and the rose is the king of the sweet-scented flowers; each of us therefore is worthy of the other", al-Mutawakkil is said to have so monopolized the cultivation of roses for his own enjoyment that in his time that flower could be seen nowhere except in his palace.[4]

The rose and the violet had a rival in the myrtle. "Adam was hurled down from Paradise with three things", claims a Prophetic tradition: "a myrtle tree, which is the chief of sweet-scented plants in the world; an ear of wheat, which is the chief food of the world; and a date, which is the chief of the fruits of this world."[5] Other highly desired flowers were the narcissus, gillyflower, jasmine, poppy and safflower.

As an index of interest in agriculture mention might be made of the several books on plants, including translations from Greek, listed in the *Fihrist*,[6] the few books on attar[7] and the spurious work of ibn-Waḥshīyah entitled *al-Filāḥah al-Nabaṭīyah*.

Dhimmis: Christians

The agricultural class, who constituted the bulk of the population of the empire and its chief source of revenue, were the original inhabitants of the land, now reduced to the position of

[1] Suyūṭi, *Ḥusn*, vol. ii, p. 242.
[2] *Alf Laylah wa-Laylah* (*Thousand and One Nights*), no. 453. Cf. nos. 864, 865.
[3] Suyūṭi, *Ḥusn*, vol. ii, p. 236.
[4] Nawāji, p. 235; Suyūṭi, vol. ii, p. 236.
[5] Suyūṭi, vol. ii, p. 245. Consult Edward W. Lane, *The Thousand and One Nights*, vol. i (London, 1839), pp. 219 *seq*. (in n. 22 to ch. iii).
[6] P. 78, ll. 12, 23, p. 79, l. 3, p. 83, l. 16, p. 252, ll. 9-10.
[7] *Fihrist*, p. 317.

dhimmis. The Arab considered it below his dignity to engage in agricultural pursuits. Originally Scripturaries, viz. Christians, Jews and Ṣābians, the dhimmis had their status widened, as we learned before, to include Zoroastrians, Manichaeans, Ḥarrān Ṣābians and others—all of whom were now treated on a par with those with whom a compact for religious tolerance had been made. In country places and on their farms these dhimmis clung to their ancient cultural patterns and preserved their native languages: Aramaic and Syriac in Syria and al-'Irāq, Iranian in Persia and Coptic in Egypt. Many of those who embraced Islam moved to the cities.

Even in cities Christians and Jews often held important financial, clerical and professional positions. This often led to open jealousy on the part of the Moslem populace and found expression in official enactments. But most of this discriminating legislation remained "ink on paper" and was not consistently enforced.

The first caliph, as we have seen, to order Christians and Jews to don distinctive dress and to exclude them from public offices was the pious Umayyad, 'Umar II, whose pact has often been erroneously ascribed to 'Umar I. Among the 'Abbāsids Hārūn was evidently the first to re-enact some of the old measures. In 807 he ordered all churches in border-lands, together with those erected subsequent to the Moslem conquest, demolished and commanded members of the tolerated sects to wear the prescribed garb.[1] The stringent regulations against dhimmis culminated in the time of al-Mutawakkil, who in 850 and 854 decreed that Christians and Jews should affix wooden images of devils to their houses, level their graves even with the ground, wear outer garments of honey-colour, i.e. yellow, put two honey-coloured patches on the wear of their slaves, one sewn on the back and the other on the front, and ride only on mules and asses with wooden saddles marked by two pomegranate-like balls on the cantle.[2] It was on account of this distinctive dress that the dhimmi acquired the epithet "spotted".[3] One other grave disability under which the dhimmis laboured was a ruling of the Moslem jurists of the period that the testimony of a

[1] Ṭabari, vol. iii, pp. 712-13; ibn-al-Athīr, vol. vi, p. 141.
[2] Ṭabari, vol. iii, pp. 1389-93, 1419.
[3] Cf. Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, vol. i, p. 79, ll. 27-8.

Christian or a Jew could not be accepted against a Moslem; for the Jews and Christians had once corrupted the text of their scripture, as the Koran charges,[1] and therefore could no more be trusted. The last caliph to renew in an aggravated form the hostile measures against dhimmis was the Fāṭimid al-Ḥākim (996–1021).

That in spite of these restrictions the Christians under the caliphs enjoyed on the whole a large measure of toleration may be inferred from several episodes. A number of religious debates similar to those staged in the presence of Mu'āwiyah and 'Abd-al-Malik were held in the presence of the 'Abbāsids. The text of an apology for Christianity delivered in 781 by Timothy, patriarch of the Nestorians, before al-Mahdi has come down to us,[2] as has also the famous treatise by al-Kindi[3] professing to be a contemporary account of a controversy held about 819 before al-Ma'mūn on the comparative merits of Islam and Christianity. The religious discussions of 'Ali al-Ṭabari († *ca.* 854) in his *Kitāb al-Dīn w-al-Dawlah*,[4] a semi-official defence and exposition of Islam written at the court with the assistance of al-Mutawakkil, is temperate, singularly free from heat and passion and abounds in references to the Bible, evidently the Syriac version or its early Arabic translation. At the time al-Nadīm wrote his *Fihrist* (988) both the Old and New Testaments were already in existence in Arabic in more than one version.[5] In fact we are told that a certain Aḥmad ibn-'Abdullāh ibn-Salām had translated the Bible into Arabic as early as the days of Hārūn.[6] There is evidence to show that even in the latter part of the seventh century parts of the Bible had been rendered into Arabic either from Syriac or from the Greek Septuagint. Al-Ṭabari[7] notes under A.H. 61 that 'Abdullāh, son of the conqueror of Egypt, had read the Book of Daniel. But the first important Arabic translation of the Old Testament was that of Sa'īd al-Fayyūmi (Saadia Gaon, 882–942) of Egypt, which has remained to this day the version for all Arabic-speaking Jews. These translations aroused the interest of Moslems in the controversial points, and we find al-Jāḥiẓ († 869) among the many

[1] Sūrs. 2:70, 5:16-18.
[2] A. Mingana in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 12 (Manchester, 1928), pp. 137-298.
[3] *Risālat 'Abd-al-Masīḥ* (London, 1870), 2nd ed. (London, 1885).
[4] Ed. A. Mingana (Cairo, 1923); tr. Mingana, *The Book of Religion and Empire* (Manchester, 1922).
[5] *Fihrist*, p. 23.
[6] *Ibid.* p. 22. This may have been a partial translation.
[7] Vol. ii, p. 399.

who penned answers to Christians. We even read of Christian vizirs in the latter half of the ninth century, such as 'Abdūn ibn-Ṣā'id, in whose honour a judge in Baghdād rose up in public, thus receiving the disapproval of the spectators.[1] Al-Muttaqi (940–44) had a Christian vizir,[2] as did one of the Buwayhids.[3] Al-Mu'taḍid (892–902) had a Christian as head of the war office.[4] Such Christian high officials received the usual marks of honour, for we find certain Moslems objecting to kissing their hands. Most of the personal physicians of the caliphs, as will be remembered, were members of the Nestorian church. A recently published charter of protection granted to the Nestorians in 1138 by al-Muktafi[5] throws fresh light on the cordial relations between official Islam and official Christianity in that period.

Nestorians

The Christian subjects of the 'Abbāsid caliphs belonged for the most part to the two Syrian churches considered heterodox and commonly called Jacobite and Nestorian, with the Nestorians predominant in al-'Irāq. The Nestorian patriarch or catholicos (corrupted into Ar. *jāthilīq*, *jāthalīq*) had the right of residence in Baghdād, a privilege which the Jacobites had always sought in vain. Round the patriarchate styled Dayr al-Rūm[6] (the monastery of the Romans, i.e. Christians) there grew in Baghdād a Christian quarter called Dār (abode of) al-Rūm. Under the catholicos' jurisdiction there flourished seven metropolitans, including those of al-Baṣrah, al-Mawṣil and Naṣībīn (Nisibis), each with two or three bishops under him. The patriarch-elect received his investiture from the caliph, by whom he was recognized as the official head of all Christians in the empire. In 912–13 the catholicos succeeded in making the caliph prevent the Jacobite patriarch, whose seat was Antioch, from transferring his residence to Baghdād.[7] The main political charge against the Jacobites was that they sympathized with the Byzantines. But the Jacobites had a monastery in Baghdād[8] and a metro-

[1] Yāqūt, *Udabā'*, vol. ii, p. 259.
[2] Al-Tanūkhi, *al-Faraj ba'd al-Shiddah* (Cairo, 1904), vol. ii, p. 149.
[3] Naṣr ibn-Hārūn was the Buwayhid vizir. See Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-Umam*, ed. Margoliouth, vol. ii (Cairo and Oxford, 1915), pp. 408, 412.
[4] Ṣābi', *Wuzarā'*, p. 95.
[5] A. Mingana in *Bulletin John Rylands Library*, vol. 10 (1926), pp. 127-33.
[6] Yāqūt, *Buldān*, vol. ii, p. 662.
[7] On the Monophysite and Jacobite patriarchs see Assemani (al-Sam'āni), *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol. ii (Rome, 1721).
[8] Yāqūt, vol. ii, p. 662, l. 18.

politan seat in Takrīt, not far from the capital. In all, Yāqūt[1] lists half a dozen monasteries in east Baghdād, apart from those on the west side.

The Copts of Egypt, as we have noted before, belonged to the Jacobite communion. The Nubian church was likewise Jacobite and acknowledged the primacy of the patriarch of Alexandria. Along the narrow coast west of Egypt, Christianity had a following among the Berbers, but the majority of the inland population had their local cults corresponding to their tribal divisions,

One of the most remarkable features of Christianity under the caliphs was its possession of enough vitality to make it an aggressive church, sending its missionaries as far as India and China. Al-Nadīm[2] reports an interesting interview which he himself held with one such missionary returned from China, whom he met in the Christian quarter[3] of Baghdād. The famous stela at Sian Fu, China, erected in 781 to commemorate the names and labours of sixty-seven Nestorian missionaries,[4] together with the affiliation of the Christian church in India, that of the "Christians of St. Thomas" in Malabar on the south-west coast, with the patriarchate in Baghdād, bear witness to the evangelistic zeal of the East Syrian Church under the Moslems. It is also recognized that the existing characters of Mongol and Manchu are lineal descendants of the original Uighurian forms, which were certainly derived from the Syriac alphabet as used by the Nestorians.

Jews

As one of the "protected" peoples the Jews fared on the whole even better than the Christians, and that in spite of several unfavourable references in the Koran.[5] They were fewer and did not therefore present such a problem. In 985 al-Maqdisi[6] found most of the money-changers and bankers in Syria to be Jews, and most of the clerks and physicians Christians. Under several caliphs, particularly al-Mu'taḍid (892–902), we read of more than one Jew in the capital and the provinces assuming responsible state positions. In Baghdād itself the Jews maintained a

[1] Under *dayr*.
[2] *Dār al-Rūm*, which Flügel, the editor, in his notes erroneously makes Constantinople.
[3] P. 349.
[4] Consult P. Y. Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China* (Tokyo, 1937), pp. 10 *seq.*
[5] Sūrs. 2 : 70-73; 5 : 16, 66-9.
[6] P. 183.

good-sized colony[1] which continued to flourish until the fall of the city. Benjamin of Tudela,[2] who visited the colony about 1169, found it in possession of ten rabbinical schools and twenty-three[3] synagogues; the principal one, adorned with variegated marble, was richly ornamented with gold and silver. Benjamin depicts in glowing colours the high esteem in which the head of the Babylonian Jews was held as a descendant of David and head of the community (Aram. *rēsh gālūtha*, prince of captivity[4] or exilarch), in fact as chief of all Jews owing allegiance to the Baghdād caliphate. Just as the catholicos exercised a certain measure of jurisdiction over all Christians in the empire, so did the exilarch over his co-religionists. The "prince of captivity" seems to have lived in affluence and owned gardens, houses and rich plantations. On his way to an audience with the caliph he appeared dressed in embroidered silk, wore a white turban gleaming with gems and was accompanied by a retinue of horsemen. Ahead of him marched a herald calling out: "Make way before our lord the son of David!"

Ṣābians

The Mandeans,[5] the genuine Ṣābians[6] of Arabic writers, were a Judaeo-Christian sect who also called themselves *Naṣoraiē d'Yaḥya*, the Naṣoreans[7] (i.e. the observants) of St. John, and therefore became erroneously known to the modern world as the Christians of St. John (the Baptist). The Mandeans practised the rite of baptism after birth, before marriage and on various other occasions. They inhabited the lower plains of Babylonia, and as a sect they go back to the first century after Christ. Palestine was perhaps the original home of this and other baptist communities. Their language, Mandaic, is a dialect of Aramaic and its script bears close resemblance to the Nabataean and Palmyrene. Mentioned thrice in the Koran, these Babylonian Ṣābians acquired a dhimmi status and were classified by

[1] Yāqūt, vol. iv, p. 1045.
[2] *The Itinerary of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela*, tr. and ed. A. Asher, vol. i (London and Berlin, 1840), pp. 100-105.
[3] Other contemporaneous travellers make the number only three, which is more credible.
[4] Some of the Baghdād Jews might well have been the descendants of those carried into exile by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 and 586 B.C.
[5] This word is derived from Aramaic *yada'*, to know; the sect was Gnostic.
[6] Ar. *Ṣābi'ah*, or *Ṣābi'ūn*, sing. *Ṣābi'* from Mandaic (Aram.) *Ṣābī'*, immerser; no etymological connection with *Saba'*, the name of the great people in south-western Arabia.
[7] Wrongly rendered Nazarenes, i.e. Christians.

Moslems as a "protected" sect. According to the *Fihrist*[1] they included the *mughtasilah* (those who wash themselves), who occupied the marshes of lower al-'Irāq. The community still survives to the number of five thousand in the swampy lands near al-Baṣrah. Living in the neighbourhood of rivers is necessitated by the fact that immersion in flowing water is an essential, and certainly the most characteristic, feature of their religious practice. In modern Baghdād the Ṣābians are represented by the so-called 'Amārah silversmiths, makers of the *mīnā'* [2] work.

Quite distinct from these Babylonian Ṣābians were the pseudo-Ṣābians of Ḥarrān.[3] Arab writers confuse the two. The Ḥarrān Ṣābians were in reality star-worshippers who under the Moslems adopted the name "Ṣābians" to secure the advantages of toleration accorded by the Koran. This name has stuck to them ever since, and the curious sect continued to flourish close to the headquarters of the caliphate until the middle of the thirteenth century, when the Mongols destroyed their last temple. Undoubtedly the intellectual merits and scientific services of some of its illustrious men helped to gain Moslem protection.[4] Reference has already been made to Thābit ibn-Qurrah and other great Ḥarrānian astronomers. Thābit's son Sinān was forced by the Caliph al-Qāhir to embrace Islam.[5] Among other Ṣābian luminaries were abu-Isḥāq ibn-Hilāl al-Ṣābi', secretary of both al-Muṭī' (946–74) and al-Ṭā'i' (974–91); al-Battāni, the astronomer; ibn-Waḥshīyah (fl. *ca.* 900), pseudo-author of the book on Nabataean agriculture; and possibly Jābir ibn-Ḥayyān, the alchemist. The last three professed Islam.[6]

Magians and other dualists

The Zoroastrians (*Majūs*), mentioned only once in the Koran (22 : 17), could not have been included among the Scripturaries in Muḥammad's mind. But in the ḥadīth and by Moslem legists they are treated as such; the term "Ṣābians" was interpreted to cover them. Practical politics and expediency, as we learned before, made it necessary that the dhimmi status be accorded such a large body of population as that which occupied Iran. After the conquest Zoroastrianism, which was the state religion,

[1] P. 340, l. 26; Mas'ūdi, vol. ii, p. 112. [2] From Pers. *mīno*, heavenly.
[3] Mas'ūdi, vol. iv, pp. 61-71, devotes a section to them.
[4] *Fihrist*, p. 272, l. 11.
[5] *Ibid.* p. 302, quoted by ibn-abi-Uṣaybi'ah, vol. i, pp. 220-21.
[6] For more on the Ṣābians consult D. Chwolsohn, *Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1856).

continued to exist and its fire-temples remained standing not only in all the Iranian provinces but in al-'Irāq, India and places east of Persia.[1] The Zoroastrians in India are still represented by the Parsis,[2] whose ancestors emigrated from Persia early in the eighth century. Zoroastrianism yielded a number of distinguished converts to Islam, the earliest among whom was ibn-al-Muqaffa'. Certain phases of early Islamic theology were either a reaction against dualism or an imitation of its attitudes.

The Manichaeans, at first mistaken by the Moslems for Christians or Zoroastrians, obtained later the status of a tolerated community. The Persian Mani († A.D. 273 or 274) and his teaching seem to have held a special fascination for the followers of Muḥammad, for we see that both al-Mahdi and al-Hādi issued strict measures against the tendency in that direction. Even the last Umayyad caliph, whose tutor was put to death as a *zindīq*, was suspected of Manichaeism.[3] In 780 al-Mahdi crucified a number of crypto-Manichaeans in Aleppo,[4] and during the last two years of his reign instituted an inquisition against them in Baghdād.[5] Al-Hādi continued the persecution begun by his predecessor.[6] Al-Rashīd likewise appointed a special officer to conduct an inquisition against such dualists.[7] But many Manichaeans and even communistic Mazdakites[8] seem to have survived. And although the Koran[9] entitles idol worshippers to no consideration, practical Islam connived at minor communities in Northern Africa and Central Asia which were too insignificant to attract public attention, and found it impossible to exterminate paganism in India.

The Islamization of the empire

The so-called "Moslem conquests" which were effected mainly under the orthodox caliphs were in reality, as noted

[1] Mas'ūdi, vol. iv, p. 86.
[2] Name derived from Pārs (Fārs), modern Fāris. See above, p. 157, n. 2.
[3] *Fihrist*, pp. 337-8. Early Arab writers applied the term *zindīq* (from Pahlawi *zandīk*) to any Moslem whose religious ideas partook of the dogmatic conceptions of the Persians in general and the Manichaeans in particular. In later usage *zindīq* came to mean any person with liberal views, a free-thinker. Cf. E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. i (New York, 1902), pp. 159-60. Cf. above, p. 84, n. 2.
[4] Ṭabari, vol. iii, p. 499. [5] *Ibid.* pp. 519-20, 588. [6] *Ibid.* pp. 548-51.
[7] Arabic sources including *Fihrist*, pp. 327 *seq.*, Shahrastāni, pp. 188 *seq.*, and Ya'qūbi, vol. i, pp. 180-82, are among the oldest and best we have on Manichaeism. For a modern treatment consult A. V. Williams Jackson, *Researches in Manichaeism* (New York, 1932).
[8] See Ṭabari, vol. i, pp. 885-6, 897; Shahrastāni, pp. 192 *seq.*; Browne, vol. i, pp. 166-72. [9] Sūrs. 4 : 116-20, 21 : 98-100, 66 : 9.

before, the conquest of Arab arms and Arab nationals. They netted the military and political subjugation of Persia, the Fertile Crescent and north-eastern Africa. During the first century of 'Abbāsid rule the conquests entered upon their second stage, the victory of Islam as a religion. It was in the course of this stage that the bulk of the population of the empire was converted to the new religion. Many conversions were, to be sure, concurrent with the early military conquests, but such a country as Syria continued to present the aspect of a Christian land throughout the whole Umayyad period. The situation now, however, began perceptibly to change. The intolerant legislation of al-Rashīd and al-Mutawakkil undoubtedly contributed its quota of fresh converts. Cases of individual and collective forcible conversion added to their numbers; five thousand of the Christian banu-Tanūkh whom al-Mahdi saw near Aleppo responded to his orders and embraced Islam.[1] But the process of conversion in its normal working was more gradual and peaceful, though also inescapable. Self-interest dictated it. To escape the payment of the humiliating tribute and other disabilities, to secure social prestige or political influence, to enjoy a larger measure of freedom and security, these were the strong motives in operation.

Persia remained unconverted to Islam until well into the third century after its inclusion in the Arab empire. It counts among its population today some 9000 Zoroastrians. The population of northern al-'Irāq early in the tenth century was still, in the opinion of ibn-al-Faqīh,[2] "Moslem in name but Christian in character". Mt. Lebanon has maintained until the present day a Christian majority. Egypt, which had embraced Christianity but very lightly in the fourth century, proved one of the easiest countries to Islamize. Its Copts today form but a small minority. The Nubian kingdom, which had been Christianized in the middle of the sixth century, was still Christian in the twelfth century[3] and even in the latter part of the fourteenth.[4] The conversion to Islam of the Berbers and North Africans, whose

[1] Ibn-al-'Ibri, *Chronicon Syriacum*, ed. and tr. P. J. Bruns and G. G. Kirsch (Leipzig, 1789), vol. ii (text), p. 133 = vol. i, pp. 134-5.
[2] *Buldān*, p. 315, l. 9.
[3] Al-Idrīsi, *Ṣifat al-Maghrib*, ed. and tr. R. Dozy and M. J. de Goeje (Leyden, 1864-66), p. 27 (text) = p. 32 (tr.).
[4] Ibn-Baṭṭūṭah, vol. iv, pp. 396.

church, as we have before noted, had produced several illustrious champions of Christian orthodoxy, was begun with no marked success by 'Uqbah after the founding of al-Qayrawān in 670 as a permanent base of military operation and centre of Islamic influence. It was carried out in the following century according to a new plan of enlisting the Berbers in the Moslem army and thus winning them over by the new prospects of booty. The Berbers formed the nucleus of the armed forces which completed the conquest of West Africa and effected the subjugation of Spain. But even in their case we find three centuries after the Arab conquest some forty bishoprics left[1] of the church which once comprised five hundred. Here the final triumph of Islam was not achieved till the twelfth century, though certain Kabyls (from Ar. *qabā'il*, tribes) of Algeria had the Andalusian Moors, driven out after the fall of Granada in 1492, to thank for their conversion.

The conquest of Arabic

The third stage in the series of conquests was the linguistic one: the victory of the Arabic tongue over the native languages of the subjugated peoples. This was the latest and slowest. It was in this field of struggle that the subject races presented the greatest measure of resistance. They proved, as is often the case, more ready to give up their political and even religious loyalties than their linguistic ones. The complete victory of Arabic as the language of common usage was not assured until the latter part of the 'Abbāsid period. In Persia Arabic became for some time after the military conquest the language of learning and society, but it never succeeded in displacing permanently the Iranian speech. In al-'Irāq and Syria the transition from one Semitic tongue, the Aramaic, to another, the Arabic, was of course easier. In the out-of-the-way places, however, such as the Lebanons with their preponderant Christian population, the native Syriac put up a desperate fight and has lingered until modern times. Indeed Syriac is still spoken in Ma'lūla and two other villages in Anti-Lebanon. With its disappearance Aramaic has left in the colloquial Arabic unmistakable traces noticeable in vocabulary, accent and grammatical structure.[2]

Arabic as the language of learning, it should be noted, won

[1] De Mas Latrie, *Relations et commerce de l'Afrique septentrionale* (Paris, 1886), pp. 27-8; Arnold, *Preaching*, pp. 126 *seq.*
[2] Hitti, *al-Lughāt al-Sāmīyah* (Beirūt, 1922), pp. 30-46.

its day before Arabic as the vernacular. In the preceding chapter we have seen how fresh streams of thought from Byzantium, Persia and India resulted in a new concentration of culture in the 800's in Baghdād, al-Baṣrah and al-Kūfah, comparable only to that of Alexandria in earlier times, and rendered Arabic, never used before for scientific purposes, the vehicle of the Moslem civilization. We shall now proceed to trace that cultural movement.

CHAPTER XXVII

SCIENTIFIC AND LITERARY PROGRESS

THE epoch of translation (*ca.* 750–850), discussed in a previous chapter (XXIV), was followed by one of creative activity; for the Arabs not only assimilated the ancient lore of Persia and the classical heritage of Greece but adapted both to their own peculiar needs and ways of thinking. In medicine and philosophy their independent work was less conspicuous than in alchemy, astronomy, mathematics and geography. In law, theology, philology and linguistics as Arabs and Moslems they carried on original thinking and research. Their translations, transmuted in no small degree by the Arab mind during the course of several centuries, were transmitted, together with many new contributions, to Europe through Syria, Spain and Sicily and laid the basis of that canon of knowledge which dominated medieval European thought. And transmission, from the standpoint of the history of culture, is no less essential than origination, for had the researches of Aristotle, Galen and Ptolemy been lost to posterity the world would have been as poor as if they had never been produced.

Medicine

The line of demarcation between translated and original work is not always clearly drawn. Many of the translators were also contributors. Such was the case with Yūḥanna ibn-Māsawayh (777–857) and Ḥunayn ibn-Isḥāq (809–73). The former, a Christian physician and pupil of Jibrīl ibn-Bakhtīshū', failing to obtain human subjects for dissection, a practice which was never encouraged by Islam, had recourse to apes, one of which came from Nubia in 836 as a present to al-Mu'taṣim.[1] Under these conditions little progress was made in the science of anatomy, except possibly in studying the anatomical structure of the eye. The prevalence of eye diseases in the sunny climate of al-'Irāq and other Moslem lands concentrated early medical attention on this subject. From the pen of ibn-Māsawayh we

[1] Ibn-abi-Uṣaybi'ah, vol. i, p. 178.