
UNIT 14 THE CALIPHATE: UMMAYADS AND ABBASIDS*

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14.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we will study about the Ummayad and Abbasid Caliphate which were established by Muawiyah I and Abbas As-Saffah respectively. In the same vein the Ummayads continued campaigns and conquests started by the Caliphs — Abu Bakr and Umar. It was the largest empire in terms of geographical extent. But the Caliphate

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developed hereditary tendencies under the Ummayyads. The Ummayyads changed the capital of Islamic caliphate to Damascus. In 750 CE, the Ummayyad dynasty was overthrown by the Abbasids who ruled from Baghdad. The Abbasid Caliphate was dominated by Persian traditions of polity, elites and later by Turkish military. Institutions like *wazir*, *diwans* and *iqta* evolved under Abbasids. After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- analyse the circumstances which led to the consolidation of the Ummayyad Caliphate,
- understand complex taxation structure of the Ummayyad and the Abbasid Caliphate (7th-10th century CE),
- explain the growth of estates, landholdings and spread of agriculture across Central Islamicate,
- identify the factors leading to the decline of the Ummayyads,
- know about the art and architecture of the Ummayyads, and
- discuss changing nature of the Caliphate under the imperial Abbasids.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

When Caliph Ali was assassinated in Kufa, Muawiyah I was the governor of Syria. He was successful in ascending the Caliphate in 661 CE by forging alliances with rival groups, mobilize opportunistic local rulers and appeasing *ashraf* (elites) of Iraq. Ummayyads in their administration heavily depended on the existing Byzantine precedent, so prominent Syrian Christians were incorporated and absorbed into institutions of administration. Ummayyads created new possibilities for expansion and reclamation of land through irrigation techniques. In the Marwanid period the three changes took place: (1) Massive conquests into extreme East upto Sind and West across Iberian Peninsula (2) Arabicisation of *diwans* and coinage, and (3) Centralization of bureaucracy and administration. The Ummayyad rule sustained by commitment to Islam, while respecting Arab tribal coalitions. At the same time they flourished owing to their efficiency to realise vast revenue in the form of taxes from peasants and merchants. One Muslim governor of Khurasan once emphatically remarked: ‘The strength of Muslims is in *Kharaj*’.

The Abbasid imperial dynasty ruled from Baghdad, administration became highly complex and centralized, Persian elite classes of the state offices became dominating. Under the Abbasids clienteles and patronage became central to administration. Abbasids patronized Khurasanis and later Turks and integrated the Persian *Dihqan*. The post of *wazir* was dominated by Persian family of Barmakids. That is why Ira Lapidus remarked that patronage of regional and local powers in Abbasid regime was essential because, ‘Each community was headed by its notables: headmen, landowners, and other men of wealth and standing, who characteristically were allied to superiors and patrons with positions in the provincial or central governments. Government organization, communication and tax collection was bureaucratic in form, but the social mechanism that made the organization work was the contacts between central officials and provincial elites.’

This Unit delineates the changing nature of Islamic Caliphate under Muawiyah I and especially from Abdul Malik bin Marwan as the tightening of Umayyad control over land revenue and coinage started. The subsequent Sections will illustrate the nature of Ummayyad society as settled society rather than a conquest society, their aesthetics and

material culture. Most of the attention has been given to estates, trade and irrigation under the Ummayyads. In the Sections about Abbasids you will read about the reforms brought by Al-Mansur. He also consolidated the administration through a number of *diwans*. Later, under Harun and Al-Mamun number of *diwans* increased upto twenty. With Al-Mamun the Abbasid military compositions were changed dramatically since Turks began dominating the military institutions. In the last Sections you will get to know irrigation, peasants and estates of Caliphs, taxes levied and the institution of *diwans* under the Abbasids.

14.2 THE UMMAYYAD CALIPHATE: SUFYANID¹ PERIOD

The governor of Syria Muawiyah I founded the Ummayyad Caliphate right in the wake of Caliph Ali's assassination in 661 CE that also marked the end of the first *Fitna* (time of trial or Civil war within Muslims; for details on *fitna* see **Unit 13**). An extremely successful dynasty, Muawiyah, the first Ummayyad Caliph, shifted the capital to Damascus owing to the city's cosmopolitan openness and partly due to Medinian resentment towards him. In Medina Muawiyah's agricultural activities had aroused widespread resentment from *Amsar*. Natives in Medina began to feel that their city was being captured by an absentee landlord. In addition Muawiyah had been the governor of Syria for over fifteen years. Thus governing such a vast empire, Syria was a fitting setting as well as a strong power base for Muawiyah I.

While in power Muawiyah I (661-680 CE) had refashioned political authority intended to cope with factionalism within the ruling bureaucracy and to preserve political unity of Muslim *Umma*. Under Muawiyah I the Islamic Caliphate underwent an unparalleled territorial expansion far and wide: the conquests were again carried on in North Africa under the command of Uqba bin Nafi and in eastern Iran in Khurasan, gateway to Transoxiana, under Ziyad ibn Abi Sufiyan. More than fifty thousand Arab families were pushed into Khurasan for settlement. The Caliph Muawiyah I made Khurasan a separate province under the governorship of Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad. Muawiyah I was able to build a powerful military mostly of Syrian tribes and a navy around sea of Marmora. These massive expeditions were motivated by desire for booty to satisfy the tribal chiefs and divert the feuding Kalb and Quda'a tribesmen to foreign lands. In addition to the provincial taxes (*zakat* and *kharaj*), Muawiyah I supplemented and enriched the state revenues in three ways:

- 1) **Frontier warfare:** for booty and tribute helped to maintain the loyalty of Syrians,
- 2) **Extensive agriculture activities:** for promotion of cultivation like large scale farming using the *Mawali* (non- Arab converts) labour. It ensured a substantial income to state treasury. In Iraq the vast lands were brought under cultivation and made government estate controlled by the Caliph.
- 3) **Increased Taxes and Demanded Customary Tributes:** Muawiyah I increased taxes in Egypt and likewise claimed *Nawruz* tributes from the Persians.

Muawiyah I was undoubtedly a seasoned administrator as he streamlined the governing elite and created a tightly knit postal system for efficient communication. Rather acting like a hegemon or absolute monarch, Arab chroniclers considered Muawiyah I as 'a

¹ Muawiyah's successors were known as Sufyanids for Muawiyah was the descendent of Abu Sufyan.

man of *hilm* ' that is he kept an absolute self-control, made decisive and subtle judgments and maintained a neat balance as regards inter-tribal hostilities. To quote M. A. Shaban, 'Appreciating that no group could have its claims completely satisfied, he (Muawiyah) capitalized on the widespread desire for peace to gain a general reconciliation based on compromise, avoiding any imperious show of authority. He was indeed *Amir-ul Mumini'n*, but he acted as, at most, *primus inter pares*, towards the other Arab leaders. Having witnessed the humiliating failure of Ali's reign, he scrupulously avoided any claim to religious authority.'

After Ali's assassination, Muawiyah I approached to Ali's eldest son Hassan, struck a peace agreement with him, negotiated agreements with the Iraqi *Ashraf* (bigger tribal Arab chiefs) and confirmed their rule over Iraq on the condition that he be accepted as Caliph. Muawiyah I affirmed a free hand to the Iraqi *Ashraf* in Iraq and Iran. As we mentioned earlier vast number of Arab families moved into Khurasan and occupied most fertile lands there, following Muawiyah's order. Far from being a tightly centralized state, the Ummayyad state organization during Sufyanid period represented a tribal based polity founded on negotiated agreements amongst dominant Arab tribal patriarchs so was decentralized both in administration and polity. According to one argument Muawiyah I not only eschewed use of military force to rule over provinces but reigned with a 'light touch, relying on local elites to govern the provinces while he himself remained in Syria'.

Muawiyah I married into the Kalb tribe, a powerful Syrian Bedouin tribe, and maintained a tolerant attitude towards the Christians. Muawiyah I transformed the Islamic Caliphate into a hereditary dynastic kingship since he chose his son as his successor, Yazid bin Muawiyah (680-683 CE), to evade any bloodshed.

Yazid faced challenges from Ali's son Husayn and Abdullah Ibn Zubayr. His three years of rule witnessed eruption of a civil war like circumstances, when Husayn rebelled against him. Husayn along with several kinsmen was massacred at Karbala. Abdullah Ibn Zubayr remained his arch-rival for a decade since he refuted Yazid's right to be a Caliph. The Ummayyad polity faltered after the death of Yazid in 683 CE, as the succeeding ruler, Muawiyah II was incompetent and lacked political legitimacy. However, Abdullah Ibn Zubayr was eventually killed in Mecca in 692 CE. Meanwhile a tussle broke out within the Ummayyad clan, the Sufyanid branch was overthrown by Marwan I in 684 CE, hence this line of rulers who were his descendents are designated as the 'Marwanid' or 'Banu Marwan' (For the extent of Ummayyad dominion See **Map 13.1**).

14.3 THE UMMAYYAD CALIPHATE: MARWANID PERIOD

By the time Marwan I, founder of Ummayyad Marwanid dynasty, succeeded Muawiyah II to assume Caliphal authority, he was very old. He had already served under Caliph Uthman/Usman. His mother, Amina Bint Alqama, belonged to dominant Banu Kalb tribe. Since Marwan I had hardly any dealings in Syria, as a result he was entirely dependent on *Ashraf* from the Yamani tribe who had elected him. On his accession Marwan I guaranteed the Quda'a tribe of continued favour in the new state structure. When Ibn Bahdal summoned a gathering with the Syrian *Ashraf*, after some time the *Shura* at Jabiya accredited Marwan I as the candidate of the Ummayyad party, in return for financial promises.

Marwan I opposed Abdullah Ibn Zubayr's candidature as Caliph during the Second *Fitna* (political disarray during Muawiyah II's time). Zubayr successfully drove Marwan I out of Hejaz and Marwan I deemed Zubayr's succession inevitable. Only just in time the Ummayyad governor of Khurasan and Basra Ubayd Ibn Ziyad persuaded Marwan I into politics as a nominated Ummayyad Caliph. While in Syria, Ibn Ziyad defeated the Banu Qays and their leader Al-Dahak Ibn Qays, who had acknowledged Ibn Zubayr's nomination as Caliph, in the battle of Marj Rahit (684 CE) between the Qays (northern) and Kalb (southern) tribes. Therefore, following this decisive battle, the Ummayyad succession crisis was greatly resolved as Marwan Ibn al-Hakam occupied the Caliphal throne and restored the Ummayyad sovereignty again in 684.

Abdul Malik bin Marwan: Tightening of Umayyad Control

With the close of second *Fitna*, the most celebrated ruler of the Ummayyad dynasty after Muawiyah I, Abdul Mailk bin Marwan ascended the throne for two seminal decades from 685-705 CE. In this period Abdul Malik had to grapple with rival forces in Iraq, Hijaz and the Byzantines. Abdul Malik chalked out administrative measures and policies that endured even under his successors primarily Abbasids whose outlook differed deeply from his, for his policies brought political stability and homogeneity within the Ummayyad Empire.

Since the beginning of the second *Fitna*, Muslim generals in a great measure had deserted the Ummayyads in Syria, Iraq and Khurasan to join the rival-Caliph, Abdullah bin Zubayr in Mecca. Therefore, first and foremost Abdul Malik signed a truce with the Byzantine emperor (formidable and primordial enemy of Ummayyad) in order to effectively reestablish the Ummayyad authority over Kharijite-ridden Basra in Iraq, which he did immediately in 691 CE. In the next year Abdul Malik's forces locked horns with forces of Caliph Abdullah bin Zubayr in Mecca. The Governor of Iraq and eastern region of Ummayyad state Al-Hajjaj bin Yusuf led the Ummayyad forces and defeated Zubayr and his acolytes in Mecca in 692 CE. This year is also remembered as the 'year of unity of community' in Muslim chronicles.

Abdul Malik maintained truce with the Byzantine state under emperor Justinian II (685-695 CE) until the internal problems could be effectively resolved. In the words of Byzantine chronicler Saint Theophanes (758-817 CE), after 692 CE (i.e., end of *Second Fitna*), the Byzantine Emperor Justinian II refuted tribute in Arab currency so a decade long peace agreement ended. Emboldened by internal peace within his empire, Abdul Malik advanced into Anatolia and defeated the Byzantine forces (mostly comprised of Slavs) in the Battle of Sebastopolis in 693 CE near the Black Sea. To elude future internal or external challenges to Ummayyad authority, the Caliph instituted successful state building measures that certainly transformed and strengthened instruments of coercion and inaugurated a phase of centralization.

Coinage

Prior to Abdul Malik's introduction of new coinage, there were two types of coins in circulation within the Ummayyad empire:

Arab-Byzantine Type: Those early Islamic coins decorated with Christian images and legends inscribed in Greek or Arabic and minted following the Byzantine model (Specimen I). Conventional Byzantine basic coinage contained the bust of Christ or the Cross. While describing Ummayyad imitation of Byzantine coinage, Al-Baladhuri wrote that while the Romans obtained paper from Egypt, Muslims got *dinars* from the Romans.



Figure 1: Byzantine Coin: Justinian I (527-565 CE) Half Follis, Constantinople Mint, 538-539 CE

Credits: English Wikipedia, original upload by Panairjdde

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/51/Half_follis-Justinian_I-sb0165.jpg

Arab-Sassanian Type: Stands for those early Islamic coins with Persian or Arab legends and struck after imitating Sassanian prototype called as *Drahm*. Conventional Sassanid coin contained portrait of the King Khusrau II (590-628 CE) on the obverse and Fire alter on the reverse (as in **Figure 2**).



Figure 2: Arab-Sassanid Coin: Bahram II, with his Queen Shapurdukhtak and prince Bahram Sakanshah

Credits: Classical Numismatic Group; <https://www.cngcoins.com/Coin.aspx?CoinID=133971>

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/46/Bahram_II%2C_with_Queen_and_Prince.jpg

However, post-680 CE Abul Malik Marwan introduced a specific style coinage by issuing distinctly Arab type coin within the political domain therefore replacing the old Byzantine and Sassanid coins. Such a bold reform of coinage by Abdul Malik had been understood as perceptible manifestation to Arabise both coinage alongside the entire administration. The standardization of coinage was basically ‘an expression of an ideological and economic warfare against Byzantine enemy’.



Figure 3: Dinar Before Coinage Reform (from 693-695 CE)

Credits:PHGCOM, 2008

Source:https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bd/First_Umayyad_gold_



dinar%2C_Caliph_Abd_al-Malik%2C_695_CE.jpg

Figure 4: Dinar After Coinage Reform (696 CE onwards)

Gold Dinar of Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan minted at Damascus, Syria in AH 75 (697/98 CE)

Credits: thefireball777 , November 2014

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a3/Dinar_of_Abd_al-Malik%2C_AH_75.jpg

The Standing Caliph Coinage of Abdul Malik (gold *Dinar* above **Figure 3**) imitated Byzantine *Solidi* style, embellished with the portrait of the Caliph in gold, silver and copper, and later after reforms in 696 CE standard *Dinar* (**Figure 4**) became completely epigraphic. Marwanids issued tri-metallic coinage and exploited the gold mines of Hijaz and Najd to procure gold.

Perhaps the most enduring contribution of Abdul Malik Marwan to Islamic civilization was establishment of Arabic as the official language within his empire's courts and government offices in place of Greek, Coptic and Persian. This innovation spawned in its wake a standardized Arabic knowing scribal class who maintained tax registers in Arabic. He introduced the new system of land surveys, got every individual registered to enforce taxes, constructed several canals for irrigation, established a ship-building factory in Tunis and in Ibn Khaldun's words was the greatest ruler because he firmly

‘followed in the footsteps of Caliph Umar in regulating state affairs’. With a powerful Syrian army, own standardised Arabic coinage and efficient Arabicised centralized bureaucracy, the Marwanids could very proficiently expand, control and consolidate their entire empire.

14.4 LATER UMMAYYADS

Before we delineate socio-economic milieu under Later Umayyad rulers (684-750 CE) and its eventual decline of the dynasty in 750 CE, it is necessary to underline the transformation that occurred under Marwanid Caliph Abdul Malik. The changes witnessed under the Umayyad Caliphate are given below in the table.

Sufyanid Umayyad State	Marwanid Umayyad State
Indirect Control: Muawiyah I did not interfere into affairs of provinces on the condition provincial governors forwarded taxes to Damascus. Early Four Caliphs and Muawiyah I instituted an indirect control so the provincial governors were free to manage affairs. The Sufyanid court and state officials were dominated by Byzantine practices and bureaucracy to manage the affairs of administration. It was due to the fact that Muslims, even though rulers, were a minority in Syria, Khurasan and Egypt. Mass conversion began after Al-Walid since not only did Umayyad state divest itself of conquest state but the people began to migrate to the garrison towns Kufa, Basra etc. for livelihood.	Direct Control: Counter to the Sufyanids' non-interference and indirect way of governing the provincial administration, the Marwanids always attempted to balance the <i>ashraf</i> (elite) and the governors through a centralized system of government. Given the circumstances after second civil war, Caliph Abdul Malik kept a loyal imperial army of Syrian troops that was accountable to the Amir al-Mu'minin and the governors and functioned as the key instrument for the Umayyad Empire's defense, formal control and centralization of administration.
Continuity and Decentralized: Under Muawiyah and Yazid I, the Umayyad polity was not based on direct control of provinces. Continuity within political-cum-administrative framework was kept appearing under Sufyanid Umayyads. Therefore the official languages of the empire's courts and government offices continued to be Greek, Coptic and Persian. Though Syrian Arabs possessed power, the Sufyanid administrative documents were still written in Greek. Byzantine and Sasanian coins in respective regions continued to be used to buy and sell goods.	Transformed and Centralized: Under Marwanid dynasty governors were chosen owing to their proficiency not the kinship ties, Arabic was made official state language while replacing Greek and Persian and new Islamic coinage was introduced. Abdul Malik also initiated the Arabicisation of revenue registers called diwans (payroll for soldiers) in Syria and Iraq. Later under Al-Walid diwan in Egypt diwans came to be maintained in Arabic only. Marwanids kept direct control over provincial administration, people and governors.
Blood Replaced Competence: In Sufyanid period generally the governors (<i>Amirs</i>) were the relatives of Caliphs who belonged to the Umayyad clan. Muawiyah I maintained bodyguards rather than an organized standing army. However, Sufyanids possessed no professional standing army but relied heavily on Syrian troops to crush any revolt	Competence and Skill replaced Blood: People with military competence and administrative skills (like Al-Hajjaj) were elevated to the post of <i>Amir</i> (governor) of provinces. Abdul Malik maintained a standing army, mainly powerful Syrian troops who were sent to troublespots and paid out of general taxation. There were provincial armies also. Marwanids, under Abdul Malik, inaugurated and bolstered the formation of Arbo-Islamic identity.

Al-Walid (705-715 CE) continued the campaigns and initiatives of his father Abdul Malik. His reign saw the apogee of the Umayyad territorial expansion since the Muslim armies made successful campaigns as far as Transoxiana and Sind in the East under Al-Hajjaj and Muhammad bin Qasim respectively and on the West into Spain under Tariq

Ibn Ziyad in 711 CE. He completed the Arabicisation of *diwans* in Egypt. It is important to bear in mind that Nasr Bin Sayir Arabicised the *diwan* in Khurasan. Walid also repaired the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina and built a grand edifice near the Dome of Rock called as Al-Aqsa mosque. Sulayman bin Abd al-Malik succeeded to the Ummayyad throne in 715 CE and ruled till 717 CE. Mounting historical evidence suggest that he not only gracefully appointed or deposed provincial governors but *Qad'is* (judges) were directly chosen from Damascus. The provincial authorities were divested of any power and authority to make appointments. Like Abdul Malik bin Marwan all his successors including Walid I (705-715 CE), Yazid II (720-724 CE), Hisham (724-743 CE) and Walid II (743-744) incessantly undertook regular raids and sometimes laid siege of Constantinople.

However through the declaration known as the *Fiscal Rescript*, Umar II (717-720 CE) attempted to refurbish Ummayyad taxation system. In his political efforts Umar II prevented the Ummayyad State from plunging into throes of political disarray. Umar II during his reign, H.A.R. Gibb remarked, preserved the unity of the Arabs, settled the grievances of the *mawali* (new converts), and reconciled political life with the claims of religion. New converts (*mawali*) to Islam were considered identical to the Arabs in rights and duties. The converts were abandoning the lands and migrating to *amsar* (garrison towns). Land belonging to these converts was subjected to cultivation and consequently taxation (*kharaj*). Umar II also eschewed not only from laying any further siege of Constantinople but preferred negotiations over use of brute force when the Kharijites revolted. The last Ummayyad Caliph, Marwan II (744-750 CE) ruled from Damascus. During his reign in the entire region of Iraq and Khurasan anti-Ummayyad revolts gained widespread support. Khurasani people rebelled in 750 CE under Abu Muslim, who inflicted a great defeat on Marwan II in the Battle of Zab in Iraq. Marwan II and his family (except Abdur Rahman) were massacred finally in Egypt by Abbas Al-Saffa, founder of the Abbasid dynasty.

According to Patricia Crone, the later Ummayyad period was rich in socio-cultural improvements, for there inaugurated a new *post-tribal order* as well as a *distinct Islamic culture*. Later Ummayyad period witnessed the conversion on mass scale of free non-Arabs known as *mawali* to Islam and during Abdul Malik's reign 'villagers were migrating to garrison cities, where they would convert in the hope of joining the ranks of the privileged conquerors'. But Islamization of the defeated non-Arabs, basically tax payers, sapped both the ethnic and fiscal foundations of Arab society. The peasantization of Arab military men was another process to take roots under later Ummayyads because by the eighth century CE Muslim society had transformed from being like an occupying army living in garrisons to a social framework for trade, business and agriculture as in Khurasan.

Mawali in the Ummayyad Era

There appeared a liaison of Master-Client (*maula-mawali*) between Arab and non-Arabs, who converted to Islam under the Ummayyads. Earlier the distinction was notional but later on Arabs would receive higher salaries, get pensions, obtain lands and privileges and formed the upper class in social hierarchy. The Ummayyads levied higher taxes mostly on *mawali*, who were also paid lesser salary than *Arabs*, and discouraged marriages between the Arab and *mawali* (non-Arab converts). In southern Iraq the *mawalis* were traders, shopkeepers and some even carried caravan trade on behalf of their Master (*Arab-maula*). The Ummayyads emphasized on Arab *nashb* (genealogy or descent) therefore only Arab could become the master. In Hisham's period Ummayyads promised to wave off *kharaj* taxes from converts in Khurasan, but the Persian *Dihqans* alarmed the Ummayyad governors about the massive loss to state revenues, therefore the Ummayyads continued to impose taxes even though *mawalis* were converted. It led to a mass rebellion in Khurasan. Meanwhile these *mawalis* had not only achieved successes in economic fields but also had taken

positions in administration and were intellectual leaders. Most of the *mawalis* had struggled for equal privileges, therefore, they were at the forefront of the Abbasid revolution aimed at ousting of Ummayyads.

A ninth-century Spanish Arab scholar Ibn Abd Rabbihi (860-940 CE) illustrates the Arab disposition concerning the status of *mawalis* in the existing system:

They (*some Arabs*) used to say only three things interrupt prayer – a donkey, a dog and a *mawali*. The *mawali* did not use *Kunya*, but was addressed by his personal name and by-name. People do not walk side by side with them nor allow them precedence in processions. If they were present at meal, they (*mawali*) stood... They did not allow a *mawali* to pray at funerals if Arabs were present.

14.5 UMMAYAD AESTHETICS AND MATERIAL CULTURE

Under the Ummayyads Arabic enjoyed the status of the court language. Ummayyads patronized a number of poets. Ummayyad period also saw brisk building activities.

14.5.1 Court Culture

Mauwiyah I ruled from sprawling Ummayyad capital Damascus where he had constructed a palace which acted as the Ummayyad court. Shortly Abdul Malik built the Amman Palace that used to be a reception hall and meeting room with his military generals. The Ummayyad court culture was largely based on oral traditions so did not demand much written documentation for communication. The court supported Arabs and Arab culture; the Umayyad Court was dominated by the bickering triumvirate poets — Al-Akhtal, Farazdaq and Jarir. They composed a form of poetry called as *naqa'id* (flytings). In this kind of poetry the two contesting poets exchange insults in a poetic battle to determine tribal supremacy. They found patronage because the sources like *Kitab-ul Aghani* makes it clear that listening to the Arabic songs was the favorite pastime among the Ummayyad princesses.

Among various means Ummayyads organized a media of royal interaction with tribal nomads (Uman-Badawi) through poetry. Under the Ummayyad times the *ghazal* (ode) detached from the *qasida* (panegyric). The sources like *Kitab-ul Aghani* (Book of Songs) by Abul Al-Faraj Isfahani (897-967 CE) and *I'qd al-Farid* (the Unique Necklace) by Ibn Abdul Rabbih (860-940 CE) provide valuable details about lifestyles, manners, kingly aphorisms and customs of Ummayyad and Abbasid courts. The Ummayyad monarch Yazid I (680-683 CE) was a prolific composer and introduced musical instruments to the Ummayyad court. Arabic language progressed rapidly since Abdul Malik made Arabic the court language and language of administration within his empire. A classical Arab poet Al-Akhtal used to be the poet laureate of Abdul Malik.

14.5.2 Palaces and Mosques

The Ummayyads built grandiose palace cities, monumental mosques, *Suqs* (markets) and desert palaces (*qusr/qasr*). Abdul Malik was responsible for the building of grand edifice of the Dome of Rock. Al-Walid II's period saw farthest expansion of Ummayyad rule. He constructed fortified palace complexes like *Qasr Amra* and *Khirbat Al-Mafjar* in Jerico, a desert palace notable for striking human murals. Ummayyad princes preferred living in the *villa rustica* to avoid plagues. Mostly they yearned to reside in desert castles called *Qasr*. Al-Walid is credited for the construction and expansion of three mosques — Medina, Jerusalem and Damascus. The first two mosques have been rebuilt. But despite huge damage, the Al-Aqsa mosque had 'retained much of its original character'. He also completed the construction of the historic mosque of Al-Aqsa.



Figure 5: Al-Aqsa Mosque , Jerusalem

Credits: Godot13; Andrew Shiva / Wikipedia / CC BY-SA 4.0

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/87/Jerusalem-2013-Temple_Mount-Al-Aqsa_Mosque_%28NE_exposure%29.jpg



Figure 6: Umayyad Desert Castle (*Qasr Amra*), Jordon

Credits: Greg Asche-commons wiki, Nov. 2005; image under the en:GFDL; under CC BY-SA3.0

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/53/Qasr_Amra.jpg

Source Site: <http://www.dukerisst.com/world%20Fotos/Jordan/QasvAmra/Main.jpg>

The Damascus mosque was built on a place where the Roman Temple of Jupiter existed which was converted into a Church during the Byzantine period. It was built between 706-716 CE on the model of Medina Mosque. The Mosque was shared by Christians and Muslims before Al-Walid II purchased the entire place to build a magnificent and the then largest mosque. In his *Rihla* Ibn Battuta (1304-1369 CE) illustrated the description of the mosque in lofty words that it is ‘the most magnificent mosque in the world, the finest in construction and noblest in beauty, grace and perfection; it is matchless and unequalled.’

In his *Ahsan-ut Taqasim*, Al-Muqaddasi (945-991 CE) quotes his uncle on Al-Walid

II's predilections for construction of the Damascus Mosque: 'Al-Walid was absolutely right. For he saw that Syria was a country settled by Christians, and he noted there their churches so handsome with their enchanting decorations, renowned far and wide. So he undertook for the Muslims the building of a mosque that would divert their attention from the churches, and make it one of the wonders of the world.'

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Why Muawiyah I changed the capital of the Caliphate? How did he increase the revenue resources of the state?

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- 2) How did Malik bin Marwan change the nature of Ummayyad Caliphate from a loose organization to a centralizing state?

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14.6 UMMAYYAD ECONOMY: ESTATES, TRADE AND IRRIGATION

K. N. Chaudhuri has aptly remarked that the economic foundations of both the Ummayyad and Abbasid dynasties relied on three factors as settled agriculture, urbanism and long distance trade.

14.6.1 Settled Agriculture

Expressing the primary motives of Arab chivalrous exploits and migrations into the conquered regions, Abu Tammam (788-845 CE) in *Hamasa* observed:

*It was not in search of paradise that you migrated,
but rather, I think, you were summoned by bread and dates.*

The above stated expression is true only regarding the Marwanid period because Arabs were allowed to purchase cultivable lands by Abdul Malik and his successor Al-Walid II. But in early Islamic period as a general rule in the conquered regions as Egypt, Iraq and Khurasan, cultivable lands were not redistributed among the Arab conquerors. Lands remained private estates of their original native owners. Earlier the Arab rulers considered land too uninviting to usurp; neither by forced acquisition nor even by purchase. However, the Umayyads had a particular interest in agriculture and the reclamation of wasteland (*mawat*) since state revenues depended on agrarian exploitation. *jiziya* and *kharaj* were backbone of the Ummayyad fiscal system. In Abdul Malik's reign after a land and population survey merely four *dinars* poll tax was imposed

on each person annually. At the same time Ummayyads conquered old crown lands and distributed them among kinsmen. This practice transformed the individual peasant holding into large-sacle landed estates.

Muawiyah I had built dams and constructed wells and had them connected to main irrigation canals in Al-Taif and Medina. Principal agricultural products in the Levant region, according to Al-Maqadassi, comprised of mostly dates, olives, grapes, apples, lemons, melons, sugarcane, sundry dyes and honey.

The Ummayyad governors invested in digging of underground canals and watercourses (*qanat*, *karez*, *falaj*) to transport water for irrigation in Iraq and Syria. These agrarian measures alongside use of new agricultural methods in Iraq persuaded various tribes in Southern Arabia to abandon their lands and join the reclaimed farms. Ibn Khurdādhbih (820-912 CE) in his *Kitab-ul Masalik wal Mamalik* states that Ummayyad governor Maslama Ibn Abdul Malik who was sent to quell Kharijite rebellion in Iraq embarked on vast agricultural and water reforms. Irrigation was administered and maintained by town authority called *Sahib al-Saqiya*, who regulated the distribution of water. In the following table we are providing *kharaj* yields in the reign of Hisham bin Abd al-Malik (724-743 CE) given by Al-Baladhuri in *Futuh Al-Buldan*:

Province	Kharaj Yield
Iraq	130,000,000 <i>dirham</i>
Samarqand	2200,000 <i>dirham</i>
Egypt	12,000,000 <i>dinars</i> and 48,000,000 <i>dirham</i>
Palestine	400,000 <i>dinars</i>
Jordan	180,000 <i>dinars</i>
Damascus	400,000 <i>dinars</i>
Hims, Qinnasri'n and Al-Awasim	800,000 <i>dinars</i>

Al-Hajjaj, who was governor of Iraq, also provided loans and material incentives to famers intending to expand cultivable land and alleviate economic distress in Iraq. He constructed Al-Si'n canal near Wasit, Al-Zabi and Al-Ni'l canals and linked them to the Tigris and Euphrates. In the 8th century when Ummayyad Empire was at its political apogee extensive *qanat* irrigation networks, dams and wells were built by Hisham Abdul Malik (724-743 CE) between Damascus and Mecca for extensive agrarian production and sedentary settlement. Later the same underground tunneling technique (*qanat*) diffused into North Africa and Iberian Peninsula² thus reflects the historic flow of Islam.

From outset conquered lands were classified under three categories: *swadfi/sawafi* lands; *sulh* lands; and *ahl al-dhimma* lands.

Swadfi/Sawafi land: It constituted huge strips of special land set aside for the Caliph and his household. There was a separate *diwan* supervising the property of the state. In historical sources these lands figure as the *sawafi* of the Imam (*sawaf al-imam*) comprising of ten types: (i) The lands of Khusrau; (ii) Lands of other members of the Persian royal family; (iii) Postal waystations and postal roads; (iv) Fire temples (*buyut al-neran*); (v) Marshlands (*ajam*); (vi) Lands of those killed in the wars; (vii) Wetlands

² Iberian Peninsula consisted of modern southwestern corner of Europe comprised of largely Spain, Portugal, Andorra, and Gibraltar.

or swamps such as the *Batihah* in southern Iraq; viii) The lands where inhabitants had fled in the period of war; (ix) Land that Khusrau had designated crown land – *sawafi*; and (x) Walls (*arja*).

***Sulh land*:** Those lands whose inhabitants had not resisted the Muslim campaigns and had made peace agreements with the Muslims were designated the *sulh* lands. The inhabitants were expected to pay a communal tax and retain ownership of their land.

***Ahl al-dhimma*:** Lands of the protected non-Muslims.

The state used to maintain records of lands according to their status either as *swafi*, *sulh* or *dhimma*.

Under the later Ummayyad period, the circumstances changed. The Arab chronicles provide more concrete evidence that the later Ummayyad period witnessed complaints by poor farmers, revolts of livestock owners and acts of resistance like migration. Al-Rai Al-Numayri presented a list of complaints to Abdul Malik Ibn Marwan elaborating how farmers suffered harsh conditions due to huge economic distress sprouting from cruelty of tax (*zakat* and *kharaj*) collectors. The farmers were migrating to Iraq to work on state-owned land. There were two kinds of lands: *iqta al-mulk* which were a private property and *iqta al-ijar* state lands farmed out to farmers for rent. Al-Baladhuri stated that when Hisham's predecessor, Yazid II tried to confiscate the state-owned lands which had earlier been granted to farmers, the plan met not only a disastrous failure as it led to violent revolts but also the Caliph was forced to grant extra lands from the state-owned farms to officials. The Ummayyads re-imposed two Sassanid taxes on the eve of *Nawruz* and *Mihrajan* festivals. Al-Yaqubi in his *Tarikh-i Yaqubi* stated that Muawiyah I 'demanded the people of the As-Sawad give him gifts on the occasions of *Nawruz* and *Mihrajan*. So they did that and its worth reached ten thousand dinars.'

However any disruption in local economy during early Islamic period was hardly ever encouraged by the Arabs. Under the Ummayyads the tax base of Arab empire encouraged neither conversion of masses, wholesale usurpation and redistribution of conquered territories nor the state's isolation from land reclamation.

Moreover the Arabs earlier living in garrison towns had begun to divest of their martial occupations for settlement and occupational and social assimilation into villages as landowning elite in Balkh, Isfahan and Khurasan. We mentioned earlier almost 50,000 families were made to settle in Khurasan in 670 CE by Muawiyah I. However, by 730 CE just 15,000 families were still doing military service. In other regions like Azarbaijan, the Arab chiefs reclaimed deserted lands (every so often usurped), became landowners and set up new agrarian settlements. In Iran Arabs assimilated into Iranian social set up as they married Iranian women, spoke Persian language and celebrated festivals. In Ummayyad Caliphate there emerged a collaborative taxation framework whereby well-read Persian *mawali* administrators would keep *diwans* (registers of revenue and taxes) on behalf of their Arab overlords and military aristocrats in garrison towns.

14.6.2 Ummayyad Trade, Urbanism and *Suqs*

According to a provocative medievalist Henri Pirrene (1862-1935 CE), the Arab conquests in all places 'brought confusion upon both Europe and Asia without a precedent' as he conceived that Western Europe's long distance trading activity stagnated and sapped with the East following Arab conquests. European economy was disrupted and it turned inwards and became ruralised at subsistence (from trade-based money economy to natural and estate based economy) as supply of goods from the East terminated. However, the archaeological and textual evidence present a different picture.

They point out that from late fifth century trade in Mediterranean had declined considerably. They also illustrated continuity in commercial relations as papyrus from Egypt kept on reaching the French Merovingian (450-751 CE) chancery till late 8th century CE.

Contrary to early Islamic settlement organization when Muslims lived in military garrisons formed of tribal military units, the Umayyads gradually disarmed the Arab garrison dwellers who subsumed into the structure of existing Byzantine and Persian cities with no disruption. Based on their Byzantine precedent, the Umayyads initiated grandiose cultural projects — grand mosques, desert castles, cantonments and baths — in their cities and settlements reflecting a distinctive Islamic urban ethos and imperial style of Islamic building. These urban garrison settlements like Wasit, Basra, Kufa, Fustat, Anjar and the like in the course of Islamic conquests were prime catalysts which gave impulse to economic activities — large scale building activity, roads for transportation and import of food supply, household commodities and tools from surrounding hinterland.

The establishment of garrison towns had backward and forward linkages: it also ensured rapid industrial expansion and people especially non-Arab merchants and craftsmen flocked into these settlements for economic service. Regarding the *mawali* traders, Amr bin Bahr, an Umayyad poet, remarked in a verse: 'I have contemplated Iraq's markets only to find that the *mawali* are the owners of their shops.' Iron, tar, bitumen and marble were required for economic infrastructure like construction of buildings and road networks, water wells and reservoirs. In the cities numerous industries fulfilled the market with essential needs. Metallurgy, textile industry, leather in Taif, ironmongery in Mecca, goldsmithing in Hijaz, papermaking industries flourished in various towns. Paper was prepared from cotton, hemp and silk.

The Arab expansion into Central Asia, Azarbaijan, Egypt and Iran facilitated prolific supply of gold, silver and copper. Such massive volume of metal reserves gave the Umayyad currency strong basis for conducting trade and commerce. While describing the spatial and cultural aspects of an emblematic eighth century city, Al-Maqqadasi remarked, 'Halab (Aleppo) is an excellent and well-fortified city... the inhabitants are cultured and rich. It possesses a spacious castle and the Great Mosque.'

Al-Maqqadasi gives details that soaps, carpets, furs, fine swords, bows and arrows, kinds of knives and needles, scissors and cloaks are major manufactures of Transoxiana. Khurasan and Transoxiana were prominent centers of cotton production, Azabaijan and Khurasan were also centres of silk production and Levant region abounds in glass manufacturing within the *Islamicate*. In Damascus a special lustrous cloth was produced called Damsak. We notice that the Umayyads initiated establishment of cities, introduced a strong tri-metallic coinage and developed considerable religious and economic infrastructure which precipitated significant process of urbanism. Islamic expansion into silk roads started during the reign of Al-Walid I (705-715). He sent Qutayba bin Muslim, the Umayyad governor of Khurasan, to conquer Transoxiana and Ferghana with their commercial entrepôts. He initiated sending emissaries into China for commercial and diplomatic relations and this process continued throughout the Umayyad period.

Pre-Islamic Iberian Peninsula had remained backwater in international commerce but after eighth century its trade patterns altered as this region gradually became an economic transit connecting Muslim world and Western Europe. Spain in the succeeding centuries came to be called the garden of Europe. Sea borne trans-Arabian trade was carried in small round ships called *Nefs. Muhtasibs* (market inspectors) regulated weights and measures within a *Su'q*.

14.7 UMMAYAD MONARCHS AND PROVINCES (*WILAYATS*)

The Umayyad administrative apparatus was institutionalized because various *diwans* were responsible for maintenance of military and fiscal administration. Umayyad Caliph was *de facto* head of the state. He exercised his will and administered through court, *Shura* (advisory council) and central *diwans* like *Diwan al-Jund* (Military board) which was first set up during Caliph Umar's time. The *Diwan al-Jund* basically maintained a registry of names and genealogies and stipends of soldiers (*a'ta*). The others included: *Diwan al-Kharaj* (Board of finance) that maintained a register of state revenue. Muawiyah I set up *Diwan al-Ras'il* (board of correspondence) meant to facilitate communication. He also set up a postal system. *Diwan al-Khatam* (Board of Signet) provided security in administrative communication and documents from forgery. The need for *diwans* (government bureaus) emerged for military and financial purposes in the early Islamic period. Muawiyah I and Abdul Malik ensured tight functioning of *barid* across the Umayyad territories. *Barid* was the key apparatus of centralization for the rulers of vast empires that of the Umayyads, Abbasids and the Ottomans.

During the Umayyad period Syria had four administrative divisions (*ajnad*) for military purposes. They included *Filastin* (Palestine founded by Sulayman bin Abdul Malik in 715 CE) with its capital at Ramla, *Al-Urdun* (Tiberias), *Dimashq* with capital at city of Damascus and *Hims* centered around Hims. Later on fifth division in the north was also added in 680 CE called *Qinnasrin*. Among the entire provinces (*wilayats*) of the Umayyads, the richest was Iraq owing to its black fertile land (*as-sawad*), climate and rivers like Tigris and Euphrates. Iraq was also home to two major garrison towns of Kufa and Basra and later Wasit was built by Al-Hajjaj, governor of Iraq under Abdul Malik. Both garrisons of Kufa and Basra were by 670 CE divided for military-administrative requirements. Khurasan was another major province of the Umayyad Empire. Merv and Nishapur were its two chief towns. It acted as base for military expeditions into Transoxiana. Egypt had been an important province under Umayyads. The Umayyads ruled these provinces through clients and *Shurta* (police). Local *ashraf*, chieftains and provincial elites were confirmed in power. The entire Umayyad bureaucratic structure had to perform two fundamental functions: one *military* i.e., maintain order among tribal factions and the other *civic* i.e., support the state in tax collection (*kharaj* and *zakat*).

14.8 FALL OF THE UMMAYAD DYNASTY

After 744 CE when Syrian armies had assassinated the Caliph Al-Walid II, yet again a civil war precipitated between rival claimants (remembered in Islamic history as the Third *Fitna*). Yazid III's succession (744 CE) to Umayyad Caliphate was later denounced by Marwan II, who in an uncompromising manner promptly with his contingents from Armenia stormed Damascus, trounced Yazid III with his supporters and declared himself the Caliph. Marwan II gained power through the sheer support of leading Qay'si tribal armies rather than Kalbi faction. This civil war had sparked a fresh wave of rampant rebellions and infighting in the provinces of Iraq, Egypt, Khurasan and Hijaz. Marwan II (744-750 CE) remained busy quelling rebellion in Kufa by an Alid, Abdullah bin Muawiyah. In 746, the *Ibadhi Kharijites* organized a revolt under Abdullah Al-Yahya and Al-Mukhtar planning to oust the Umayyads from Hijaz however Marwan II defeated them. He effectively squashed Kharijite rebellion in Hijaz and Yemen, Alid Shiite rebellion in Kufa and similar ones in Syria. Apparently all these rebellions were viciously suppressed since what they lacked was organization and ideological backing.

Quite obviously the Alid revolutionaries in Kufa earlier failed to oust Ummayyads through rebellions in the centre in 736 CE. At this point Abbas Al-Saffah and his clan infiltrated into Khurasan city of Merv, concealed the identity of *Imam*, kept secret *Nisbah* (lineage) of its members to create underground movement, and quietly propagated among its oppressed and alienated populace more importantly to disgruntled factions a Messianic *salvational* message as a catalyst to garner support in favor of their movement i.e., *Al-Rida min Ahl-Bayt*. Such being the case, the Abbasids were emboldened by military weaknesses of Ummayyads which got exposed from the reign of Caliph Hisham. Umayyad armies suffered heavy losses against the Caucasian nomads (Khazars) who invaded Armenia, Berber Muslims revolted in North Africa and Zayd Ibn Ali revolted in Kufa. Hisham continued the futile raids and siege of Constantinople which drove heavy coffers of state expenditure. Marwan II's preoccupations with rebellions bolstered the hopes of Khurasanis led by an able general Abu Muslim.

Khurasan was a far-flung province ravaged by internal strife between Nasyr Ibn Siyar and Harith in 747 CE. Inspired by Hashimite-Abbasid propaganda (*Daw'ah*), soon Abu Muslim raised the black banners and could gather contingent of around 7,000 in Khurasan. At Merv, he successfully routed the Ummayyad governor of Khurasan, Nasyr (d. 748 CE). Within two years Abbas Al-Saffah's armies, supported by Iraqi *Shia* and Yemeni tribe with some Persian *mawalis* in Merv, led by Abu Muslim broke through Kufa, encountered with Ummayyad forces around north Iraq where they sealed the fate of Ummayyad dynasty in the Battle of Great Zab (January, 750 CE).

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) What impact did the Ummayyads' dams and underground irrigation canals have on agriculture and peasants?
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- 2) Write a short note on trade and urbanization during the Ummayyad Caliphate? Do you agree with the view that Arab conquests led to large scale economic and social disruptions?
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14.9 THE ABBASID CALIPHATE: ABBAS AND MANSUR

The Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258 CE) was founded by Abbas As-Saffah (750-754 CE), who received the oath of allegiance as Caliph in Great Mosque in Kufa, where he boldly proclaimed, 'Hold yourselves ready, for I am the pitiless blood-shedder

(*as-saffah*) and the destroying avenger...Allah has distinguished us by kinship to the Messenger of Allah...He made us descendants of his tree...They (Ummayyads) monopolised it (*Caliphate*), doing injustice to its people. Then, in the end, Allah returned the right to its people...'

Since Abbasids confirmed Caliphate as their inheritance, they quickly betrayed their Shiite Alid allies of restoration of authority to descendent of *Ahl A'l Bayt* and *Kharijites* and *mawli* of an egalitarian social order free from Ummayyad injustices. Abbas spent all his energy in hunting, preventing and crushing the potential rivals to his authority from either the Ummayyads or the disgruntled Shi'ites and military generals. In 751 CE Abbas captured Damascus. The Ummayyad princes were invited later to a 'Feast of Peace' in Egypt by Abbas, who had hired assassins to exterminate them with clubs therefore Abbas acquired epithet of *As-Saffah* (blood-shedder). Among the prominent Ummayyad princes, only Abdur Rahman escaped ruthless fate, fled to Spain and became ruler there.

Well-known as the Abbasid revolution in Islamic historiography, the foundation of Abbasid rule laid groundwork for two major developments: one it brought an end to the protracted age of Islamic territorial conquests and second it not only inaugurated the dominance of the Khurasanis in bureaucracy and military elite (*abna-ud dawlah*) but post of *Wazir* (Helper) became decisive within central administrative structure. Abbas managed the state affairs from Kufa. After the defeat of Ummayyads in Iraq, Abu Salama Al-Khalal confidential guide of Abbas was appointed *wazir* (*wazir Aa'l-Muhammad*) however soon killed. Khalid Al-Barmak was assigned post of *diwan al-kharaj* (Chancellor of the Exchequer) since during the rebellion he collected *kharaj* in Khurasan. Abbas As-Saffah governed the provinces through his trusted governors- either from the members of Abbasid clan or those devoted to Abbasid cause. Abu Jafar, who later succeeded Abbas As-Saffah as Caliph, became governor of Iraq, Azerbaijan and Armenia. Hijaz, Yamama and Yeman were given to Daud Bin Ali. Ibn Ali was made governor of Syria. Military was controlled by Khurasani charismatic general Abu Muslim. Abu Jafar Al-Mansur was nominated successor by Abbas As-Saffah d.754 CE. He is also considered the real founder of the Abbasid Caliphate.

Suppression of Rivals: The real founder of Abbasid state, Al-Mansur (754-775 CE) removed not only his rivals but also those who had allied with Abbasids since he tried to dissociate Abbasid power from the salvational movement. The Rawadaniya extremist (*ghulu*) supporters were clamped down by Mansur in 758 CE. Seeing Abu Muslim as a potential threat, Al-Mansur had him assassinated in 755 CE. The Khazars were stopped from further raiding into Armenia. Later Al-Mansur had to subdue an Alid rebellion led by Muhammad Al-Zakia (Medina) and Ibrahim (Basra) in 762 CE. Al-Mansur has started the conquest of Tabaristan.

Transfer of Capital: A man of prudence and 'genius of long term determination', on the advice of Khalid Al-Barmak the Caliph Al-Mansur transferred the capital of Abbasid Caliphate from Damascus to the banks of the river Tigris in 762 CE due to increase in the size of central bureaucracy. This new capital-city was called *Madinat us Salam* (Baghdad). It marked a decisive shift from Mediterranean world to the Persian dominated cosmopolis. Baghdad quickly became a grand trading hub and importantly the symbol of Persian cosmology. Perhaps significantly the Abbasid power was put in the centre of Persian speaking *mawali* people. Al-Mansur successfully created a new imperial elite in Baghdad which absorbed both Arabs and non-Arabs. For Abbasid Empire's agricultural and financial base, Iraq and Khurasan also became lifeline to its survival.

Institution of *Wazir*: It was set up with the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate. In the reign of Al-Mansur it got institutionalised and an Iranian Abu Ayub was appointed *wazir*, who controlled the central government. *wazir* was the top civil official in the Abbasid administrative hierarchy. In their status, they highly depended on the benevolence of the Caliph. Earlier the *wazirs* used to be personal tutors or counsellors of princes. However, Al-Mansur ruled like an autocrat and hardly delegated any powers for *wazir* to exercise. He even took *mawali* as *wazir* on account of their proficiency. Al-Baladhuri and Tabari mentioned Abu Ayub as *Katib Amir al-Munineen* (scribe of the Caliph) not as *wazir*. Later high-ranking efficient Barmakid *wazirs* brought centralization in administration, controlled Abbasid state revenues, connected Caliphs to rest of the administrative personnel and patronized *ulama*, poets, scholars and others. All this they (*wazirs*) carried through *mazalim* (courts of complaints) meetings.

Institution of *Wala*: Abbas As-Saffah had allowed Abu Muslim Khurasani to retain control of the military, but in a bid to enhance the powers of the Caliphal office, Al-Mansur killed Abu Muslim in order to wrest military control away from the Khurasanis. The military-political elite of Abbasid Empire came to be dominated by Khurasani revolutionaries and prominent Barmakid aristocrats of Persian background who filled main central bureaucracy. However, provincial governorships and Syrian imperial contingents were replaced by the Abbasids. Earlier the Arabs equated *mawalis* with slaves owing to their unwarlike peasant nature so were denied the privileges to get entry into *Diwan al-Jund*. Apart from that *Mawali* were subjected to payment of various taxes as *jiziya*, *kharaj*, *ushr* (a tax on the harvests of irrigated land ranging from 5-10%) etc. In the Abbasid times, Al-Mansur recruited non-Arab Muslims for military purposes personally connected them to the Abbasid house by 'contractual *Wala*'. This Non-Arab cohesive social group comprised of diverse races and ethnicities called as *Mawala Amir al-Mumineen* and were endowed top positions in administration like provincial governorships. Al-Masudi quotes Al-Mansur vilifying the conduct of Ummayyad caliphs as ungodly. In one speech in Mecca, the Caliph Mansur said: 'O people I represent the power of God on earth, I lead you with His support... He made a trustee in charge of overseeing it.'

14.10 THE ABBASID CALIPHATE: HARUN AND AL-MAMUN

Harun (766-809 CE) became the Caliph after the murder of his brother Al-Hadi. Before assuming the office of Caliph of the Abbasid Empire, he had served as victorious military commander of various provinces like Syria, Armenia, Ifriqiya (modern Tunisia, western Libya and eastern Algeria) and Azerbaijan. He remained on good terms with China and Byzantine powers by restoring on vast scale diplomatic and commercial relations with them. Harun al-Rashid inherited the Abbasid empire which was politically stable and economically prosperous, that paved way for the remarkable achievements in the spheres of government institutions, trade and literary activity, music and arts. He made investments in huge building enterprises and building of cities, sea fleets and harbours. The frontiers of the Abbasid Caliphate stretched from Egypt in the West to the Central Asia and India in the East (For the extent of the Abbasid Caliphate please see map of the Abbasid Caliphate from 8th to 11th Century, from *World History to 1500*, William and Jackson, p. 198).



Map 14.1: The Abbasid Caliphate, c. 850 CE

Credits: Gabagool, April 2009

Source: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e1/Abbasids850.png>

Semi-Autonomy to Province of Ifriqiya: The latter half of Harun's reign suffered from political instability that allowed free hand to provincial governors. The Barmakid family tried to control Ifriqiya like other provinces. These centralizing imperatives failed when in 800 CE Harun was compelled to grant semi-autonomy to the governor of Ifriqiya, Ibrahim al-Aghlab. The Aghlabids carried out military and fiscal administration of Ifriqiya from 800-909 CE. Aghlabids recognized the authority of the Abbasid Caliph merely nominally and paid them annual tribute.

Destruction of Barmakid Family: According to historian Al-Tabari in September 787 CE Harun al-Rashid appointed Yahya bin Khalid bin Barmak as *Wazir*. Harun no doubt had well-established personal ties with Barmakid family of *Wazirs*. The mistrust between Caliph and Barmakid family was gradual and final destruction of the all-powerful al-Barmaki family came in January 803 CE when Khalid al-Barmak was killed. With it also started a period of political and territorial decline of the Abbasid empire.

The Caliph Harun al-Rashid had nominated Al-Amin as his first successor (*wali al-Ahd*) to be followed by Al-Mamun. In 802 CE at Mecca Harun had made covenant for succession arrangements according to that Al-Amin would become Caliph of the empire and granted Khurasan to Al-Mamun in appanage. Several historians including Tayeb El-Hibri have refuted this interpretation of Harun's Protocol in Mecca in 802 CE because they state that Al-Mamun later brought interpolations into it which makes it 'disproportionately favourable to Al-Mamun'. However in 809 CE, a blood-spattered civil war (Fourth *Fitna*) precipitated between Al-Amin (d. 813) and Al-Mamun (786–833 CE) which lasted for more than four years. Supported by Persians finally Al-Mamun removed Al-Amin. Under Al-Mamun (813-833 CE) the Abbasid Empire was marked by immense intellectual vitality, popular rebellions and witnessed territorial decline and the waning of Abbasid hegemony.

Al-Mamun (813-833 CE) for first six years lived in the city of Merv among Khurasani aristocrats. Al-Fadl ibn Sahl, *wazir*, was running the administration of the Abbasid state. Al-Hassan ibn Sahl, Al-Fadl's brother, was finance minister. Al-Mamun brought a new military policy which was implemented by a Khurasanian warlord Tahir ibn Husayn, whom the Caliph appointed military head of the entire Abbasid military. The policy

curbed Arab hegemony and gradually their contingents began to disappear from Abbasid army. In the meantime the Caliph also put checks to the power of the Khurasanis especially Tahirids through the forming of two types of armies:

Shakiriyya: These independent military units were maintained by their own lords from Transoxiana, Armenia and North Africa. They were not under direct control of the Caliph. They often served as counterweight to Tahirids. The *Maghariba* troops (North African regiment) were part of the *Shakiriya* contingent.

Ghilman: These forces were basically Turkish slave soldiers, either captured or purchased from the frontier regions of Transoxiana. Turkish slave soldiers increased Caliph's strength. Turkish soldiers quickly began clashing with the Baghdadi populace. They do killed some Arab soldiers in the Baghdadi army. Ultimately Al-Mau'tasim was left with no choice but to build capital-city of Samaraa in north Baghdad (838 CE) to detach the troops from the masses.

During the Caliphate of Mamun (813-33CE) the ruling members of the family were made hereditary governors of Samarqand, Ferghana and Herat without state supervision. Samanids became hereditary in Transoxiana and likewise Tahirids after 820 CE in Khurasan.

Capturing Slave Soldiers in Transoxiana

According to Al-Baladhuri, 'Al-Mamun used to write to his *Amils* in Khurasan to raid those of the people of Transoxiana who had not submitted and accepted Islam. He would send his envoys to grant pension in the Register (*Diwan*) to whom he liked. He wanted the good-will of the people of these regions and of the sons of their kings, and to conciliate them by favours. When they came to his door, he honoured them and gave them his blessing. When Mau'tasim became Caliph he followed the example of the predecessor to such an extent that most of the leaders of the army were from troops of Transoxiana: Sogdians, Ferganah, and people of *Ushr'usanah*, *Ash'ash* and other places. Their Kings used to visit him; Islam became dominant religion in those regions; and the inhabitants of those countries began to make war against Turks beyond them.'

(*Futuh Al-Buldan*, Vol II: 205)

Al-Mamun is remembered less for long drawn military warfare on the Byzantine frontier but more commonly for the *Mihna* (Inquisition), support to a group of Islamic theologians called *Mautazilites* (for details see **Unit 15**) and his economic support to the House of Wisdom (*Bayt-ul Hikmah*). His reign was dynamic and still stands as a glorious moment in the entire intellectual history of Islam. The Caliph also got the map of the Earth drawn – see in the picture below.



Figure 7 : Surat-ul Arz (Picture of the Earth): Al-Mamun

Credit: Ibn Fadlallah al-Umari's (1301-1349) *Masalik al-absar*, in Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul, Ahmet 2797, fols. 292v-293r

Source: <http://www.myoldmaps.com/early-medieval-monographs/2261-ibn-fadi-allah-al/2261-al-umari.pdf>

What underlying reasons induced Al-Mamun to insist upon the dogma that the *Quran* was created? Earlier historians would have us believe that Al-Mamun was a 'free thinker' so through *Mihna* (inquisition) he tried to expose and undermine the position of *ulema*. Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds had provided a balanced opinion concerning Al-Mamun's *Mihna*. The Umayyads claimed leadership of *Ummah* on three grounds: religious authority and intervention in religious and legal matters, waged wars on unbelievers (Byzantines) and the last was leading and providing safety for observance of *Hajj*. The Abbasid rulers like Harun performed *Hajj* many times, nevertheless *ulama* had come to be considered authority on theology and religion, Al-Mamun tried to reclaim that lost religious authority by ousting the *ulama*. So he targeted *ulamas* and *Qazis* within the Abbasid domain, compelled and persecuted them to acknowledge the Caliphs or state's interpretation of law. The Inquisition eventually failed because as Patricia Crone has made an important observation that 'The Caliphs problem was that the scholars (*ulama*) have no organization by which he could subdue them as a collectivity. They owed their religious leadership to the informal consent of their followers; it came from below and could not be wrested from them by any means at Caliph's disposal.' The persecution by *mihna* (inquisition) continued until widespread protests urged the Caliph Al-Mutawakkil to abandon it in 848 CE.

14.11 LATER ABBASID CALIPHS

Various internal revolts had erupted in Azerbaijan (by Babak, d. 838 CE) and Tabristan during the rule of Al-Mau'tasim (833-842 CE). He opened a new chapter in political history of Islam by employing the Turkish mercenaries initially as elite palace-guards and later in useful campaigns against Byzantines in 837-38 CE. Unlike Khurasanis and Arabs, Turks were exceptional mounted archers. They were strictly loyal to their patron i.e., the Caliph. He introduced *mamluk* military society on a grand scale into the Abbasid Islamdom at the cost of wholesale withdrawal of Arabs from the *diwan*. These Turkish slave-soldiers were called *mamluks* or *ghulams*. They were captured or purchased in large scale; paid higher salaries than the rest of the regiments; and nurtured within families (for *parwarish/tarbiyat*). This was a watershed that opened the gates of rapid Islamization of the eastern territories of the Abbasid Empire. Al-Mau'tasim had directed his Turkish *mamluk* forces to besiege principal cities of Amorium in 838 CE, thus for the first time Turks advanced into central Anatolia. However, unruly behaviour of the Turks persuaded Al-Mau'tasim to move the capital of the Abbasid state from Baghdad to Samarra (For map of the post-Harun Al-Rashid Abbasid Caliphate please go to <https://www.writing-endeavour.com/blog/the-abbasid-caliphate-p9.html>).

Al-Watiq (842-47), Al-Mutawakkil (847-61), Al-Muntasir (861-2) and later the skilled politician Al-Muwafaq tried to contain the power of Turkish troops. Later Abbasid period witnessed a series of wars of succession in tandem with huge nomadic movements westwards that brought Abbasid Caliphate into disintegration. Although Abbasid Caliphs continued as figurehead (945-1258 CE), the empire resembled a congeries of independent provinces as Khurasan under Tahirids and Samarkand under Samanids, Fars under Buyids and Egypt under Fatimids, since Caliphs at Baghdad had been reduced to mere puppets by the Turkish elite guards who were deposing Caliphs at their will (For the post-Harun Al-Rashid Abbasid Caliphate see <https://www.writing-endeavour.com/blog/the-abbasid-caliphate-p9.html>).

1) How were the Abbasids able to overthrow the Ummayyads?

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2) What was the impact of the Abbasid Revolution on administrative composition?

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3) What were the main changes instituted by Caliph Al-Mansur in Abbasid state?

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14.12 THE ABBASID CALIPHATE: IRRIGATION, PEASANTS AND ESTATES

The Abbasid Caliphate was specially known for constructing massive networks of canals for irrigation. However, towards the closing years of the Abbasid Caliphate massive peasant and slave revolts shook the very base of the empire.

14.12.1 Irrigation

When Al-Mansur adopted Baghdad as capital of the Abbasid Caliphate, the Abbasid elite showed immense interest in increasing and augmenting cultivation over vast swathes of marshy lands especially the flat alluvial plains in southern parts of Iraq known as the *Sawad* region. It was important sources of foodgrains, vegetables and fruits. Wheat, rice and barley were staple crops in the *Sawad* region. They overhauled and revived the long abandoned existing irrigation network. To boost agriculture older *qanats* (underground water channels) were repaired, innovative waterways (*tura*) or moats dug, additional water channels excavated and techniques to reduce channel silting were devised. Apart from Iraq, particularly *Al-Sawad* region, the other two fertile agricultural zones of the Abbasids were Egypt and Khurasan.

The *Nahr Abul-Asad*, a new water canal was deep and excavated by one of Al-Mansur's military commander Abul al-Asad in the swamp lands. It was the main source

of water supply in the region. The *Nahr al-Bilah* was constructed in Wasit. It was a vast water channel constructed during the time of Al-Mahdi. Wasit was a garrison centre earlier. In the Abbasid period it supplied reasonably cheap foodstuffs to the growing market in Baghdad. The Nahrwan system (construction of water channels/canals) helped to revive vast lands. According to one chronicler, the crops harvested on these lands 'were given as assistances and gifts to the inhabitants of the *Al-Haramayn* i.e. "two holy places — Mecca and Medina", and as charitable gifts for the poor there.' Apart from that the *Nahr Zubayda* was constructed to supply water to the people of Mecca. The northern portions of Wasit (Mubarak and Silh) became cultivable subsequent to the construction of *Nahr Al-Rayyan* by the mother of Harun Al-Rashid. The Caliph Harun also had the *Nahr al-Qatul* dug to facilitate the supply of water to those lands which provided 'provision for his army', and on which he spent '20 million *dirhams*'.

Tax from agriculture constituted the backbone of the edifice of the Abbasid Empire. The Abbasid Caliphs, royal ladies, governors and nobles often made substantial improvements in water channels, wells, dams with sluices (*musannayat*) and other *nahr* to supply irrigation to peasant lands. The Abbasids derived most of its state income from alluvial plains of *Al-Sawad*. In the fabled work on state revenue *Kitab Al-Kharaj*, Abu Yusuf elaborated the state's duties concerning irrigation of fields. Abu Yusuf states: 'If the inhabitants of the *sawad* require the digging [or dredging] of their great waterways which branch from the Tigris and the Euphrates, they are dug for them and the cost is paid from the treasury and the *Kharaj* payers (*Ahl al-Kharaj*).'

Al-Mansur constructed Baghdad as a planned concentric city. It was provided water through *four* major irrigation canals (*nahr*) originating from the Euphrates *viz.* of the *Nahr Isa*, the *Nahr Sarsar*, the *Nahr Malik*, and the *Nahr Kutha*. The Western Baghdad was irrigated by water canals originating in the Euphrates. Eastern Baghdad was irrigated by the *Nahr Qatul* originating from the Tigris River. In early ninth century Khurasan, the governor directed the legal scholars to compile a book on water irrigation, which they wrote in the form of the *Kitab al-Quni*. In all provinces *Diwan Al-Ma'a* distributed water among peasants and regulated irrigation practices.

14.12.2 Popular Revolts in the Abbasid Caliphate

The earliest peasant revolts against the oppression of the Abbasid state agents that broke out rapidly were concentrated in Syria during Al-Mansur's period. They were spearheaded by Bundar. Peasants also revolted in Khurasan, Ifriqiya, Egypt and other provinces during the Abbasid period trying to shake off the Abbasid yoke. In Egypt, Copts revolted against the Abbasid state during Harun Al-Rashid's time. In Azarbaijan and Transoxiana massive peasant uprisings attempted to 'shake off the heavy hands of Abbasid governors'. The Kurdish tribes revolted in 839 CE in Mosul and Tikrit.

The Zanj insurrection broke out during the time when Samarra was engulfed by anarchy due to civil war. The Zanj slaves were used to work on marshland estates southeast of Baghdad, mainly Basra. They would clear away top soil. Conscious of their miserable conditions, they revolted several times. However, the most formidable of rebellions that lasted for almost fifteen years (868-883 CE) is called the Revolt of Zanj. Tabari offers a fair account of the social uprising by slaves since he had been in Baghdad that time. Zanj rebels had captured and controlled Basra; defeated the Abbasid armies; and their leader Ali ibn Muhammad was declared **Mahdi**. However, their leader was ultimately killed. Historians are divided on the nature of the Zanj revolt whether it was a slave revolt at all. The revolt broke out as slave rebellion later Muslim peasants, Bedouins and dissatisfied Abbasid troops and groups joined the rebellion.

14.12.3 Forms of Estates under the Abbasids

In the Abbasid Caliphate in the 8th century the crown lands were called *Swadfi/Sawafi*. Since variety of progressive improvements in land had occurred, the Abbasid crown land is also known to have increased significantly. Caliphs and their household members used to purchase private estates. The private estates of the Caliphs were called as *Diyaal-khilafah*. Abbasid Caliphs like Harun al-Rashid, is believed to have coerced the local ruler of Tabaristan, Vanda Hurmuzad, to sell him precious estates in Tabaristan for one million *Dirham*. In the same region Harun's son tried to buy estates of 300 villages. In general, the reign of Harun also witnessed a marked increase in *swadfi* (Caliphal crown lands) but more in Al-Jazira (north Iraq) and the frontiers. In the medieval period Al-Jazira meant the land between upper reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates. In Al-Jazira corn and other foodstuffs were produced only to be supplied to Iraq and Baghdad.

When Abu al-Abbas confiscated the properties and land estates (*Diya'*) directly owned by the Marwanid Umayyads, he set up a special *diwan* to supervise them. Ira Lapidus has argued that Abbasid estates were supplemented by confiscation of the Ummayyad holdings. In other words, when came to power, Abbasids had confiscated the estates previously controlled by the Ummayyads. In several regions pasture lands were earmarked which the Caliphs' flocks and animals would use for grazing. Hassan Ibn Muhammad in the *Tarikh-i Qum* states that vast pastures were reserved in every village in the neighborhood for the beasts of the Abbasid Caliphs and governors.

In the second half of the 9th century when Turkic mercenary soldiers were introduced by the Abbasid Caliphate military expenditure increased considerably. The state, in lieu of salary, assigned its troops the land grants called *iqta*. It refers to a portion (*qata*) of land held as private estate. In the late Abbasid times it became a dominant form of land-holding. To put simply the *iqta* 'system evolved in the Islamicate in the 9th century to relieve the state treasury because inadequate tax revenues and little war booty from campaigns made it hard for the government to pay salaries of the army. Historians like Ann S Lambton have also claimed that *iqta* system was enforced owing to 'the progressive deterioration of the fiscal stability of the Abbasid state'. Becker has claimed that originally *muqta* (holder of the *iqtas*) had no military obligations. It was only subsequent introduction of the Turks into military that military penetrated into the system of assignees. Becker viewed that the *iqta* system grew originally as an administrative-cum-bureaucratic apparatus however later it changed into military grant system and an effort to meet the military expenditure when the gold economy had broken down.

With the coming of the Abbasid Caliphate the most outstanding event in the entire Islamic history was the introduction of paper into the Islamicate through the Chinese prisoners. The first Arab paper industry came up in Samarkand in 751 CE and in Baghdad 794 CE. Paper mills swelled in number in the Islamicate world with astonishing rapidity across the world including Syria, North Africa, Egypt and Spain. The Arabs ensured considerable improvements in paper technology to produce high quality paper. Vast availability of paper facilitated the production of books on an unmatched scale. Paper facilitated codification of land revenue process and correspondence and exchange of information as well.

In the ninth century when the agricultural yields contracted for the entire Iraq *Sawad* region had plunged into anarchy due to the Zanj revolts, however, Egypt continued to grow. The landed elites and private individuals invested in the production of linen and flax. Cotton production also boomed. Papyrus, wine, woollen fabrics and grains from Egypt continued to be traded in Hejaz and other provinces. In Basra, Egypt and Baghdad

the *suqs* or bazaar played an essential part in the life of most of the towns and cities in the 'Abbasid era. These *suqs* were established by people of power. They offered an alternative public space for people to draw together, communicate and buy and sell.

Under the unified Arab Islamic state there occurred a process of diffusion of foodcrops and irrigation technology across the Islamicate. It is called Arab Agricultural Revolution. It occurred through massive migration of people, territorial expansion and translocation. The government bureaucracies sponsored construction of irrigation canals, underground water harvesting techniques (*qanat*), dams and wells since cultivation of crops like sugarcane, cotton required plenty of water. New water raising techniques came up like *norria* (water driven wheel), or *saqiya* (animal driven chain of ports).

14.12.4 Tax Farming in the Abbasid Egypt

The tax farming contract was called *daman* or *qibalah*. Under this abominable contract arrangement selected state and private individuals would pay a specified amount in advance to state *amils* to ensure a free hand in the tax collection. It evolved mostly in Khurasan and Egypt where it later gave way to system of auctioning. It proved to be disastrous for the Abbasid state in the long run. It ruined the land of its fertility and harmed the peasants. Abu Yusuf cautioned about tax farming in general and in *Sawad* particular:

I deem that none of the Sawad, nor other lands, should be subject to a tax farming contract (*Qibalah*). The tax contractor/farmer (*Mutaqabbil*), if there is a surplus over and above the *kharaj* in his contract, overburdens the *Kharaj* payers and imposes on them what is not obligatory for them, oppressing them and harming them in order to be protected from that which he has entered. In that and what is the like of it, there is the ruination of the land and the ruin of the subjects. The tax contractor does not care about their ruin so long as his own concern is guaranteed in his contract (*Qibalah*); and, he might even derive greater benefit after [receiving] a large surplus by [the contract]. However, he can only do this except by means of draconian force against the subjects. He flogs them brutally; he makes them stand in the sun and hangs stones around their necks. This is the excessive punishment which he metes out to the *kharaj* payers.

In the late ninth century Egypt Abbasid state formulated a fiscal arrangement called *iqta-i qabala* land grant meant for the payment of the specified amount of tax. During the Abbasid period merchants as crop brokers and money-changers had played a vital role in the tax collection. However the civil wars (*fitna*) leading to property confiscations compelled them to settle in Khurasan and Syria. It dealt a heavy blow to the Abbasid state finance as the revenue began to contract. Various Abbasid elites owned private estates in Khurasan, Tabaristan, Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Al-Yamamah. Their owners would have them farmed out to cultivators for sharecropping after signing a contract straight with bureau called *Diwan-i Diya*.

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) Why did the Abbasid Caliphs and nobles build canals, dams and wells?

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- 2) Write a note on management of irrigation network during the Abbasid Caliphate?

3) What were the main forms of estates and land-holdings under the imperial Abbasids?

14.13 TAXES AND *DIWANS* UNDER THE ABBASIDS

Kharaj (lit. revenue derived from land) referred to a regular tax levied on agricultural produce of land. In the early Islamic campaigns the conquered lands distributed among Muslims were not levied such a tax but they paid *ushr* and *zakat* while the non-Muslims paid *kharaj* tax. It constituted major portion of the state's income. *Kharaj* lands were imposed much higher rates of taxation compared to other taxes. Abu Hanifa was a widely acclaimed Islamic theologian and jurist *par excellence* who tried to codify Islamic jurisprudence on the basis of deductive analogy called *Qiyas* in the reign of Abbasid monarch Al-Mansur (754-775 CE). His approach towards land taxation (*kharaj* or *ushr*) and land reclamation was flexible and inclined towards benefit and easing of the burden of cultivator (see the box below). His pupil Abu Muslim compiled an authoritative work on Islamic taxation — *Kitab-ul Kharaj* — to harmonize Islamic principles with state taxation policies on the demand of Harun Al-Rashid.

Laws of *Kharaj* Lands

Only the land which was taken by assault, such as *As-Sawad* (Iraq), *As-Sham* (Syria) and others is subject to the *Kharaj*. If the leader divided it among those who conquered it, it is the tithe-land, and its inhabitants slaves; if the leader did not divide it, but turned it over to Muslims as a whole, as Umar did with *As-Sawad* then its people sustain the burden of the *Jiziyah*, and the land is subject to *Kharaj*, but the people are not slaves. This is the dictum of Abu Hanifa.

In regard to the people 'of assault' who accepts Islam: The *Kharaj* is upon the land, and in addition to *Kharaj*, the *Zakat* (alms-tax) of the crop. This is the dictum of Al -Auza'i. Abu Hanifa and his school say: A man is not liable for both *Kharaj* and *Zakat*... and if a man sows *Kharaj* land several times in a year, only a single *Kharaj* was collected from him. Ibn Abu Laila says the *Kharaj* is collected from him as often as crop ripens for him. Abu Hanifa and Malik say in regard to *Kharaj* land which has no owner. If the Muslims live on it, and transact business, and use it as market-place, no *Kharaj* is assessed against them for it.

Umar abolished *kharaj* for everyone who had been converted to Islam in Khurasan and made an allotment of money to those who had accepted Islam.

Al-Baladhuri, *Futuh Al-Buldan*, Appendix I, Concerning the Laws of *Kharaj* Lands, pp. 237&426.

Ushr literally means tenth part. Abu Yusuf expounded, 'The *Ushr* was only taken for what the owner of the *Iqta* had to pay for the trouble of digging canals, constructing houses/buildings (*buyut*) and work on the land.' The other taxes included *jiziyah* (poll-

tax), *khums*, *maks*, tax on market and commodities sold in market. The tax on markets was known as (*Daribat al-aswaq*). One chronicler noted that, 'Al-Mansur did not impose a revenue tax on the markets up until the time he died. When Al-Mahdi became his successor, Abu Ubayd Allah pointed this out to him. He ordered it and imposed the *kharaj* on the shops (*Hawanit*), and that was in 873 CE.' The ships coming from India and China were levied a tax that amounted to one-tenth called *Ushur Al-Sufun*. *Maks* tax was imposed on ships to Basra. Later in the 10th century taxes on ships like *Maks* or *Ushur Al-Sufun* were discontinued. Abbasid state imposed taxes on all foodstuff, fruits and vegetables sold in the markets. Animals sold in the market were taxed like importantly horses, beasts of burden, cows and sheep. Particular taxes were imposed on production of beverages, selling of *Khumur* (wine), silk and cotton products.

The Abbasid military, civil and agrarian administration was a deliberate improvement upon the inherited legacy from the Umayyads. Under the Umayyads *Dihqan* collected taxes, while the Abbasid state had absorbed them into administrative personnel, the state officials directly realized the taxes. Based on the Persian traditions, they ushered more centralization and delegated powers to the institution of *wazir* and created various *diwans* (departments). The *wazir* supervised all the *diwans*. Systematization of the registers into *daftar* (Codices) to prevent their loss under Abbas Al-Saffah's reign and creation of the institution of *wazir* under Al-Mansur's reign were basic administrative changes under early Abbasids that guaranteed centralized control over revenue. Harun Al-Rashid created separate post of *Qazi ul-Quza*. The departments and *majlis* (committees) under *wazir* kept on increasing to an extent that there were almost twenty central *diwans* of state in Baghdad under Caliph al-Muqtadir (908-929 CE). Some of them have been given below:

Diwan al-Kharaj: The hub of the central state administration, *Diwan al-Kharaj* dealt with land tax and related financial matters of the central government during the 'Abbasid period (750-945 CE). Most often it supervised and monitored the agricultural and economic productivity of the provinces. It functioned independent of the rest of *diwans* and acted as an internal audit office over the *wazir*'s.

Diwan al-Azimmah: This department was created by the Abbasids (750-945 CE) as supreme audit office to supervise, control and check the accounts of other *diwans*. It acted as connecting link between different *diwans* and the office of *wazir*.

Diwan al-Daiyah: This central office was set up by Abbas al-Saffah. It supervised and maintained several personal estates, rents and investments of the Caliph during the 'Abbasid Caliphate.

Diwan al-Khazin: This department in the central 'Abbasid administration was responsible for governmental stores of natural products and arsenals.

Diwan al-Nafaqat: This Abbasid department was established to manage expenditure on the administration of the royal court. It dealt with the salaries of the court officials and construction, expansion and repairs of the royal court buildings.

Diwan al-Sawad: It was the most dominant department of the Abbasid state. This office was established by early 'Abbasids to act as agent for collection of all revenues and taxes from the agricultural lands of Iraq.

Diwan al-Mal: This provincial department of revenue in the 'Abbasid period maintained registers 'defining each province and indicating how it had been annexed to the Islamic state: whether by force ('*anwah*) or by contract (*sulh*). Registration covered the status of land taxation at various points (indicating whether the receipts were *kharaj* or '*ushr*,

whether *kharaj* was considered as rent or as *jizyah*), the survey of the land with the names of holders, and the type of *kharaj* assessment (whether it was *misahah* or *muqasamah*, and the fixed rate of *kharaj* in the case of *misahah* or the proportion of yield in case of *muqasamah*).

Diwan al-Ma’: This department was basically responsible for the supervision of irrigation works and distribution of water. The department maintained accounts of the agricultural productivity. It also supplied *diwan al-kharaj* with data for calculating *‘ibrah* (average output).

The fiscal and military administration in the provinces was entrusted to two departments: *Diwan- al-Harb* (military) and *Diwan al-Kharaj* (revenue) appointed by central government. These departments were manned with officials including the scribes, money-changers, mint supervisors, *muhtasibs* (market inspectors) and toll officials and clerks. *Rustaq* was smallest administrative unit. Some of the provinces which were not directly administered in the Caspian highlands were Jilan, Tabaristan, Daylam, and Jurgan; and in Inner Asian provinces those included Transoxiana, Ferghana, Ushrusana and Kabul.

Check Your Progress-5

- 1) Do you agree with the view that both the Ummayyad and the Abbasid states were based on agrarian taxation?

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- 2) The Abbasid administrative framework was highly complex. How were the Abbasids controlling such a vast central imperial bureaucracy, provincial and local agents and magnates?

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3. Match the following:

Name

Definition

a) *Diwan-al Ma’*

i) Land Tax

b) *Kharaj*

ii) Irrigation Department

c) *Daman*

iii) Assignment of Land

d) *Iqta*

iv) Tax Farming

14.14 SUMMARY

To sum up, this Unit gives an account of the evolution of Islamic society from 7th to 10th century — administrative innovations and several forms of estates as well as changing nature of the Caliphate from a loosely organized decentralized state to a highly complex and centralized one. The Ummayyads built their administrative institutions, system of coinage and revenue and court culture by emulating and improving upon their Byzantine and Sassanid precedents. They also extended the frontiers of the Caliphate to the highest extent, expanded the cultivation of fallow land by investing in construction of *qanats*, wells and dams with sluices. Ummayyads refined the state administration through introduction of *diwans*. However, the Ummayyads ruled over a population mostly constituted of non-Muslims; Ummayyads barely encouraged mass conversion whatsoever. The Abbasid period marked the highest watermark of the Islamic civilization. They inherited the rich and centralized administration from the Ummayyads and imbibed the Persian traditions of governance. With the Abbasid ascendancy, the Arabs gradually began disappearing from the state army and bureaucracy. Their place was accorded to the Khurasanis and Turks. Islamisation of Turks and mass conversions were witnessed in the Abbasid period.

14.15 KEYWORDS

<i>Zakat</i>	: Alms-giving. It amounted to 2.5 per cent of total property.
<i>Nahr</i>	: A water body or irrigation canal.
<i>Nawruz</i>	: The first day of Iranian calendar.
<i>Amsar</i>	: <i>Misr</i> means a garrison town or city, its plural in Arabic is <i>Amsar</i> .
<i>Numismatics</i>	: The study and collection of coins.
<i>Mahdi</i>	: A messiah, rescuer of Islam; according to Islamic tradition a <i>mahdi</i> will appear before the Day of Judgement to get rid of all the evils.

14.16 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Sections 14.2 and 14.3
- 2) See Section 14.4 on Marwanid and the Box on the Sufyanid State and Marwanid State

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Sub-section 14.6.1 on Ummayyad Economy: Estates, Trade and Irrigation
- 2) See Sub-section 14.6.2 on Trade, Urbanism and *Suq*. Focus on the Henry Pirrene's argument

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) See Section 14.9

- 2) See Section 14.9
- 3) See Sections 14.9 and 14.10

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) See Sub-section 14.12.1 on Abbasid Caliphate: Irrigation, Peasants and Estates
- 2) See Sub-section 14.12.1 on Abbasid Caliphate: Irrigation, Peasants and Estates
- 3) See the Sub-Section 14.12.3 on Forms of Estate in Abbasid period and focus on *Swadfi*, *Iqta*, *Daman* and other types of landholdings

Check Your Progress-5

- 1) See Section 14.13 Taxes and *diwans*. Focus on *kharaj*, and other types of taxes
- 2) See Section 14.13
- 3) a (ii), b (i), c (iv) and d (iii)

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14.18 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

The Early Middle Ages, 284-1000: The Splendor of the Abbasid Period

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ji8kKMSLEQo>

Islamic Societies

<https://www.uctv.tv/shows/Islamic-Societies-with-Ira-Lapidus-Conversations-with-History-7242>

