



Persians' infiltration to the joints of the Islamic State

Umayyads relied on the Arabs and neutralized them, thus the Abbasids secret call was their way through

The emergence of the Abbasid state must be read in the framework of the secret call it resorted to and on which it was established, and how it spread rapidly in Persia. Persians became a major component in that call although they did not join the Abbasid call out of conviction, but rather out of their hostility to the Umayyad Arab state. They found in the Abbasids their aspiration to destroy the Arab state that they have always dreamed of eliminating and which they believe have caused the demise of their Sasanian empire and the historical dissolution of their civilization, so as to infiltrate thereafter to the new emerging state based on their alliance with and their support thereto, and overthrew it.

Hence, we must understand why the Arab element was prevalent at the beginning of the Umayyad dynasty and not others, which the Persians accused the Arabs of as the period of formation of the Arab state depended entirely on the Arab element. The state, at that time, was in the beginning of its inception and those peoples who entered Islam did not know the Arabic tongue, nor the method of governance, its mechanisms and details coming from an ancient Arab and Islamic heritage. Arab man was able to contribute to managing the joints of the state and spreading Islam, where no other elements were needed.

Umayyad state depended on the Arabs and a few of non-Arab origin. There is no doubt that Islam came to unify and not to separate, fair among all races. However, Arabs had great tasks in that era, which could not be entrusted to others, foremost of which is the spread of Islam that they knew and inherited, while others were new to Islam. In Persia in particular, there was still a majority over the religion of their Persian fathers and grandfathers.

Arabs are more entitled to the presidency in their country:

Abd al-Wahhab Azzam says in his book Relationships Between Arabs and Persians and their Ethics in Jahiliyyah and Islam: "Arabs were advocates of religion and owners of the state. Because they are the ones who established the state and spread the religion, they see themselves as more worthy of leadership and honor, given their self-esteem and pride in their lineage since the days of Jahiliyyah. The Persians hated them for that, yet they were still overwhelmed by the Islamic conquest and had not yet mastered Islam and the language, nor did they mix with the Arabs in a way that may enable them to compete therewith. The Arabs, on the other hand, had not been weakened, changed and dispersed in the countries yet. Hence, the Persians remained angry for themselves".

For that reason, Abbasid rebels sought the help of the Persians against the Umayyads, so they helped Al-Mukhtar ibn Abi Ubaid and Abd al-Rahman ibn Al-Ashath, where the army of Al-Mukhtar was of loyalists except for a few. The Arabs reproached him for seeking help from freed slaves and then giving them their share of the spoils. When Abd al-Malik's messengers said to Ibn al-Ashtar: "Have you come to fight the armies of the Levant with these people?", he replied: "These are nothing but the sons of the Persian Asawira."

Ministers of Abbasid Era:

Ministry position in the Abbasid state took a different form compared to that in the Umayyad state. Appointment of ministers was necessary and they were granted broad powers that were not known in the Umayyad state. Hafs ibn Suleiman, known as Abu Salama Al-Khalal (died: 32 AH / 750 AD), is deemed the first to be called a minister in Islam.

Under the Abbasid state, minister position reached a prestigious position. Rather, the minister became a disposer, in place of the caliph, of the affairs of the state and the people. This is clearly evident in the subsequent role of the Barmakids in Abbasid history, when Yahya ibn Khalid al-Barmaki was granted absolute power, so he became the upper hand in the affairs of peoples and states.

Persian Impact on Abbasid state:

Abd al-Wahhab Azzam also says about the impact of the Persians on the Abbasid policy and in Baghdad, the center of Islam: "The Persians have prevailed over the Arabs among the caliphs since the establishment of the state. The matter culminated with the dispute between Al-Amin and Al-Ma'mun. Al-Ma'mun was in the region of Marw, in the farthest part of Khurasan, like a Persian caliph, where the Persians helped him fighting his brother, who was of great appreciation to Arabs. It was, undoubtedly, a Persian coup under the cover of the Abbasid state, with which the racist Persians were able to hijack the state and turn it into a tool in their hands to achieve their Persian dream of taking revenge on the Arab element and destroying their state that they had always dreamt of destroying. That conflict and bias were documented in Persian poetry and poems were composed for it in praise of Al-Ma'mun. This continued until al-Ma'mun died and the Persians prevailed and remained in control of the caliphs.

The Persians took control of the state and followed the Sasanian Persian culture. Abbasid caliphs started to imitate Persians' clothes, homes, food and drink, even that Caliph Al-Mansur ordered the Persian cap to be worn. He and those who followed him wore gilded suits in Persian style, even in his image on the dirhams, Caliph Al-Mutawakkil's was in full Persian costume.



Among the comprehensive words in that regard, Al-Mutawakkil said when he wanted to reform the fiscal year and restore Nowruz to its place in the year, so he brought the jurist to seek his help. The caliph then said: "There is a lot of discussion about this and I shall not go beyond the Persians' fees" and asked him his opinion on the reform.

Barmakids Power:

As the Persians used to infiltrate the joints of the state, the Barmakids were able to rule the scene during the caliphate of Harun al-Rashid. The caliph took their advice in every matter, until their authority expanded and their status elevated, till they became a subject of poets' poems.

Barmakids are affiliated with Barmak, who is a priest of the House of Fire in the city of Barm, known as Al-Nubhar, which is a temple of the Zoroastrian religion. That religion was full of complex rituals, magic and secrets, so when they converted to Islam, their chests were not devoid of the effects of that creed. Due to their status and supremacy over the Abbasid authority, they transferred ancient Persians' books, customs and traditions to the Islamic state. However, their domination exceeded that to controlling all funds of the state. This went to the extent that if caliph Harun al-Rashid wanted to decide on any matter, he had to consult with them thereon. The first figure that emerged from among them was Khalid al-Barmaki. Their status elevated during the era of al-Rashid at the hands of Yahya ibn Khaled.

Grandfather Khaled Al-Barmaki is considered the first Barmakid to contact the Abbasids during the Abbasid call. He played a prominent role in this call and the developments it went through until the Abbasid state was established in the year (132 AH). As a result, Khalid al-Barmaki assumed the first office in-charge of taxpayers and soldiers, and he was with al-Saffah in the position of a minister, especially after Abu Salama al-Khalal was killed. He worked as a minister and, during the era of Al-Mansur, Khalid assumed one of the key positions in the Abbasid state. He was entrusted with the ministry at the outset of Al-Mansur's era, then he was entrusted with the state of Persia, followed by Al-Ray in Tabaristan and Dunbound. He also worked as an advisor to the caliph Abu Jaafar al-Mansur, where such position was of great importance to the Al-Barmaki in his position, as he was involved in decision-making and in drawing up the policy that al-Mansur was pursuing.


The Abbasids empowered the Persians because their call emerged among them and with their support, thus they fell into the trap of their Shu'ubiyya


As for the Barmakids disaster, it took place in their own hands rather than by others due to their domination and seizure of the state, not to mention usurping all Muslim money, to the extent that when Al-Rashid asked for a small sum of money, they refused. So they overpowered and shared his authority. He was helpless in managing the affairs of his state. Al-Barmaki appointed twenty-five of his children in the caliphate house to be his eyes therein and prevent others from reaching the state's affairs!

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