

Reviving Ceremonial Literary Practices to Restore Spiritual Influence: The Abbasid Caliphate from (550-656 AH /1155-1258AD)

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Abstract

The Abbasid Caliphate, in its ascension to power in 750 AD after the fall of the Umayyad dynasty, centralized its power by merging religious legitimacy with hereditary succession, claiming descent from the Prophet Muḥammad as a way of asserting divine legitimation. Central to this centralization of power was the tactical use of poetry as a state propaganda tool. While previous scholarship has addressed the Abbasid era's political and religious institutions, poetry's instrumental role in validating the caliphate's authority is yet to be exhaustively probed. In this study, the means whereby poetry was applied to shape people's opinions, legitimize the caliphs, and aid their divine right to rule is examined. Focused on the heights of Abbasid power—namely during the periods of Caliphs Al-Nasir and Al-Mustaḍī—the research highlights how poets like Sibṭ Ibn al-Taʾāwīḍī produced state-sponsored poems that assisted in elevating the political and religious status of the caliphs. The poetic compositions were accorded front-stage positions in public festivities, religious ceremonies, and official discourse, transforming cultural performances into ideological instruments. From the records of the past, literary texts, and recent scholarship, including Hayrettin Yücesoy's *Disenchanted the Caliphate*, this study talks about how poetry functioned not just as creative expression but as a calculated way of establishing and legitimating Abbasid authority. Through an exploration of the intersections of literature, religion, and politics, the study provides a clearer image of how the Abbasids managed to sustain their rule and shape the sociopolitical atmosphere of medieval Islamic society. The findings contribute to broader arguments regarding political communication, literary culture, and the role of ideology in pre-modern statecraft.

Keywords:

Abbasid Caliphate, political legitimacy, poetic propaganda, religious authority, medieval Islamic governance.

Introduction

The Abbasid Caliphate, established in 750 AD after the overthrow of the Umayyad dynasty, strategically intertwined religious legitimacy with hereditary rule to consolidate its authority. By asserting their lineage from the Prophet Muhammad, the Abbasids claimed divine sanction for their leadership, a narrative that was essential for securing widespread public acceptance. To reinforce this claim, they employed various strategies, notably the integration of poetry into state-sponsored celebrations and public discourse. Poetry served as a powerful tool in shaping public perception, glorifying the caliphs, and reinforcing their divine right to rule. The survival and authority of the Abbasid Caliphate were heavily dependent on maintaining both political and religious legitimacy. While previous studies have examined the Abbasid political structure and religious justification, there is a paucity of research focusing on the specific role of poetry as an active instrument in legitimizing caliphal rule. This study addresses this gap by analyzing how poetic compositions functioned as vehicles of state propaganda, reinforcing the spiritual and political authority of the Abbasid caliphate.

This research is significant in understanding the mechanisms through which political and religious power was sustained in medieval Islamic societies. By investigating the interplay between poetic expressions and political authority, the study highlights how the Abbasid rulers harnessed literary culture to shape public opinion and reinforce their divine right to govern. Additionally, it sheds light on the role of poets as both political actors and cultural influencers, demonstrating their critical function in shaping the historical narrative of the Abbasid period. The motivation behind this research stems from a broader interest in the intersection of politics, religion, and literature in medieval Islamic history. The Abbasid era was a period of remarkable intellectual and cultural flourishing, yet its political strategies remain underexplored, particularly concerning literary propaganda. Understanding the role of poetry in legitimizing authority provides valuable insights into the dynamics of power and public influence in historical contexts. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining how the Abbasid rulers strategically utilized poetic traditions to bolster their reign. The Abbasid Caliphate, ruling from 750 AD until its decline in 1258 AD, experienced several phases of political stability and turmoil. This study focuses on the zenith of Abbasid power, particularly under Caliphs such as Al-Nasir and Al-Mustaḍī', who actively employed poetic glorification to affirm their rule. Poets like Sibṭ Ibn al-Ta'āwīḍī were central in crafting and disseminating state-sponsored messages, elevating the caliphate's religious and political prestige. Poetry transcended mere literary expression, becoming a means of constructing and reinforcing the Abbasid ideological framework. Celebrations, religious festivals, and public ceremonies were transformed into platforms for consolidating authority through poetic narratives that depicted the caliph as Allah's representative on earth. In "Disenchanting the Caliphate: The Secular Discipline of Power in Abbasid Political Thought," Hayrettin Yücesoy examines the political strategies employed by the Abbasid Caliphate to consolidate authority. Yücesoy highlights the intertwining of religious legitimacy with hereditary rule, asserting that the Abbasids claimed divine sanction based on their lineage from the Prophet Muhammad. (al-Ṭabarī, 1967, vol. 7, p. 425)

This approach reinforced their leadership claims and necessitated public acceptance, achieved through religious symbolism, public ceremonies, and poetic propaganda. Poetry, in particular, served as a crucial tool in shaping public perception, glorifying caliphs, and reinforcing their divine right to rule. Yücesoy's analysis provides a nuanced understanding

of how the Abbasids utilized literary culture to sustain their political and religious legitimacy.

Through this study, we aim to explore how poetry functioned as an ideological instrument, shaping public perception and strengthening the Abbasid claim to religious and political supremacy. By analyzing historical sources, poetic texts, and state-sponsored narratives, we seek to uncover the intricate ways in which literary culture was employed to sustain the Abbasid Caliphate's legitimacy and influence.

The Political Situation of the Abbasid Caliphate (550-656 AH / 1155-1258 AD)

From the period (550-656AH / 1155-1258 AD), this phase of the Abbasid Caliphate was distinguished by several characteristics that set it apart from previous periods. Specifically, this era, known as the later Abbasid period, witnessed the restoration of significant authority to the Abbasid Caliphate, which had previously been usurped by the Buyids (334-447 AH / 946-1055 AD) and the Seljuks (447-550 AH / 1055-1155 AD).

One of the most notable aspects of this period was the recovery of numerous powers that the Buyids and Seljuks had stripped from the caliphs over nearly two centuries. These ruling dynasties had seized all prerogatives traditionally held by the caliphs, effectively rendering them figureheads without real authority. The caliphs had no autonomy, as decision-making was entirely in the hands of these external powers. The Buyid ruler Mu'izz al-Dawla (d. 361 AH / 971 AD) even allocated the caliph a fixed salary and land grants, limiting his financial independence (Miskawayh, 1987, p. 178; Ibn al-Jawzī, 1995, Vol. 16, p. 271).

This loss of authority is clearly illustrated in a letter from the Abbasid Caliph Al-Muti' (r. 334-363 AH / 946-974 AD) to the Buyid ruler Bakhtiyar, in which he lamented his lack of power, stating that he had no means to finance military campaigns or religious duties since all resources were controlled by the Buyids. He remarked that his only remaining function was to provide legitimacy to the rulers through his title, which they invoked in sermons and public proclamations (Miskawayh, 1987, Vol. 6, p. 349).

Not content with merely seizing political power, the Buyids and later the Seljuks also appropriated religious authority by having their names mentioned alongside the caliph's in the khutba (Friday sermon), a key symbol of sovereignty (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1995, Vol. 14, p. 260). Additionally, they controlled the minting of currency (sikka), another crucial marker of a ruler's legitimacy, removing the title "Commander of the Faithful" from coins and replacing it with their own names and honorifics (Al-Douri, 1945, p. 253).

The Seljuks followed the same pattern established by the Buyids. After Sultan Tughril Beg entered Baghdad in 447 AH / 1055 CE, he removed the last Buyid ruler and reinstated the sermon in the name of the Seljuk sultan (Hsaneen, 1970, p. 139). However, the Abbasid caliphs remained without real power, as the Seljuks retained de facto control (Fawzi, 1982, pp. 107-111). Some Seljuk sultans even went so far as to threaten the caliphs with expulsion from Baghdad. For example, Sultan Malik Shah (r. 465-485 AH / 1072-1092 AD) once ordered the Abbasid Caliph Almqtfy (r. 467-487 AH / 1075-1094 AD) to leave Baghdad and settle elsewhere (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1995, Vol. 16, p. 299).

Ibn al-Ṭīqtaqā vividly described the deteriorating state of the Abbasid Caliphate under foreign control, noting the succession of killings, depositions, and humiliations suffered by the caliphs at the hands of their military factions. He emphasized that this pattern continued

throughout the Buyid and Seljuk periods (Ibn al-Tiqtaqa, 1997, p. 28; Ibn al-Jawzī, 1995, Vol. 17, p. 314).

Hilāl ibn al-Muḥsin al-Ṣābi' (d. 448 AH / 1056 AD) also recognized the dire condition of the Abbasid Caliphate during this era. He compiled *Rasum Dar al-Khilafa* to document and preserve the remaining traditions of the caliphate, ensuring that future generations would remember its former prestige. He justified his work by stating that the caliphate had once been a noble institution, guiding laws and governance with wisdom, but had now declined due to changing circumstances (Al-Sabi', 1964, pp. 4-5).

The Abbasid Caliph al-Al-Mustarshid billāh (512-529 AH / 1118-1135 AD) initiated a policy aimed at liberating the caliphate institution from the control of the Seljuks and translating the theoretical rights of the Abbasid family into practical reality. One can assess his independent thoughts from the speech he delivered after Friday prayers, just before he engaged in battle with the Seljuk al-Sultān Maḥmūd in 520 AH / 1126 CD, in which he said: "*We entrusted our affairs to Allah, for they have exceeded us, and they are many.*" (Sura Al-Hadid, Ayah 16). Under the leadership of al-Al-Mustarshid, the Abbasid caliphate regained large territories that had been beyond its control.

The caliph al-Almqtfy (532-555 AH / 1138-1160 AD) followed in the footsteps of his predecessor, al-Al-Mustarshid, to restore the power of the Abbasid caliphate. It was fortunate for him that Sultan Mas'ud passed away in Rajab 547 AH / 1152 AD, marking the end of Seljuk influence in Iraq, as noted by Ibn al-Athīr: "The happiness of the Seljuk house died with him, and after him, no banner remained to be trusted." (Ibn al-Athīr, 2010, Vol. 9, p. 373). The weakening of the Seljuks encouraged al-Almqtfy to continue asserting his sovereignty. He ordered the assembly of an army and led it himself, recapturing cities such as Hilla, Kufa, and Wasit, and attacking Seljuk strongholds in Tikrīt and wdqwqā (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1995, Vol. 18, p. 113, Ibn al-Athīr, 2010, p. 397-396). By the end of 549 AH / 1154 AD, the caliph's army achieved a significant victory at the battle of "Bikimza," demonstrating to the people of Iraq that the Seljuk army could be defeated. This led to the first Sultan of the Seljuks, Suleiman, being forced to kiss the caliph's door, symbolizing a momentous submission (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1995, Vol. 18, p. 102).

Several factors contributed to this victory, including al-Almqtfy's opposition to the Seljuk practice of confiscating people's wealth. He ordered the sale of his own properties to pay the necessary funds and lifted the financial burden from the people (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1995, p. 315). When the Seljuks persisted in confiscations and imposed unreasonable fines, the caliph wrote to the Sultan, threatening to leave Baghdād and surrender the Caliphate's palace, stating: "I have pledged to Allah that I will not take from the Muslims even a single grain unjustly." (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1995, p. 320).

The caliphs established direct military forces under their supervision and worked on economic reforms, winning public support both in Baghdād and beyond. They also relied on certain local rulers to defend their rights and confront the Seljuk dominance (Al-Qazzāz, 1971, p. 62-77). The caliphate regained much of its lost territories in Iraq, including Tikrit in 585 AH / 1189 AD, and the following year captured Haditha, Anah, and Khuzestan in (590 AH / 1193AD) In the subsequent year, it regained Ray, Isfahan, and Hamadan (Ibn al-Athīr, 2010, Vol. 10, p. 189, 200, 232; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, 1951-1952, Vol. 8, p. 400-680).

It is noteworthy that the later Abbasid caliphs turned to religion, performing religious duties and defending it, as they realized that neglecting religion had invited misfortunes

and calamities, contrary to their position as Allah's representatives on earth (Jawād, 1975, Vol. 1, p. 119).

The reign of Caliph al-Nasir Li-Din Allah (575-622 AH) was the culmination of efforts by the Abbasid caliphs to free the caliphate from Seljuk control. He expanded his domain significantly, embodying the ambition of the most capable of the later Abbasid caliphs: "The best of the later Abbasid caliphs was al-Nasir, who expanded his empire with determination and great ambition." (Fawzi, 1989, p. 14).

During this phase of the caliphate, the caliph no longer remained a mere symbolic figurehead, hidden behind the defeated; instead, he became the actual ruler of the remaining territories of the state, particularly Iraq and some neighboring regions.

Additionally, this period witnessed the restoration of the Abbasid caliphate's khutbah (sermon) in the Egyptian lands after nearly three centuries, in (567 AH / 1171 AD), following the defeat of the Fatimid caliphate (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1995, Vol. 18, p. 196). The khutbah was also restored in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and the caliph regained the authority to appoint the rulers of these cities (Sibt Ibn al-Jawzī, 1951-1952, Vol. 8, p. 610; Abū Shāmah, 1974, p. 123).

However, these efforts ultimately failed to preserve the continuity of the caliphate, as the appointment of al-Mustaʿsim as caliph proved a significant blow to those ambitions. Al-Mustaʿsim was weak-minded, inexperienced in governance, and easily controlled by the courtiers. His reign led to deteriorating conditions, culminating in the fall of the Abbasid caliphate to the Mongols in (656 AH / 1258 AD) (Al-ʿIbrī, 1964, p. 291).

Literature Review

The Abbasid State was officially established after the assassination of Marwan bin Muḥammad, the last Umayyad Caliph, and the fall of the Umayyad State, where Abdullah bin Muḥammad, known as Abū al-ʿAbbās al-saffāḥ, was pledged allegiance to as Caliph in the city of al-Kūfah in Rabiʿ al-Awwal 132 AH. After the death of Caliph Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, he was succeeded by four Umayyad Caliphs who failed to manage the affairs of the state, which led to its gradual decline and deterioration. The rise of the Abbasids was a devastating blow that led to the collapse of the Umayyad State. After the defeat of the Umayyads in the Battle of al-Zāb in 132 AH, Abdullah bin Ali al-Abbasi seized control of al-Jazira and the Levant, while Marwān ibn Muḥammad fled to Egypt. However, the Abbasid armies pursued him and killed him there, which was a sign of the end of the Umayyad State and the establishment of the Abbasid State on its ruins. The Abbasids were able to establish a vast and inclusive state across a large geographical area, and this state was considered an extension of the Umayyad state. The Abbasid state was influenced by various cultural elements such as Arab, Kurdish, Persian, Turkish, Indian, and Berber cultures, with religion serving as the primary link between these peoples (Al-Shammari, 2020, 2395-24360).

It included all those who opposed the Umayyad state and was strongly organized under the slogan "*The satisfaction of the family of Muḥammad*," with its lineage traced back to Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib, the uncle of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH). The Abbasid call originated from the cities of Kufa and Khorasan. Kufa contained many enemies of the Umayyads, while Khorasan had a strategic location near the lands of the Turks, making it a suitable place for rebels to flee in the event of any threats. Khorasan was also newly acquainted with Islam, making it more susceptible to the Abbasid call and its love for the

family of the Prophet. (Sultan, 2021, 189-224) As for the end of the Abbasid state, it lasted 500 years, but the Islamic state was no longer unified under the rule of the Abbasids. The Umayyads established a new state in Andalusia after Abd al-Rahman ibn Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik fled to it. Other states were established in North Africa and Egypt. In the middle of the fourth century AH, the Buyids were able to control Baghdād and impose their hegemony over the Abbasid caliphs. Historians have divided the Abbasid era into two eras: the first Abbasid era and the second Abbasid era. (Al Azmi, 2024, 524-535).

The first Abbasid era is called the "golden age" and extends from the caliphate of Abu al-Abbas al-Saffah until the death of al-Wāthiq billāh. During this period, the Abbasid state was strong and prosperous under the rule of caliphs who were distinguished by their high administrative and political capabilities. Power was concentrated in their hands, and the state paid great attention to jihad for the sake of God, after it stopped in the last years of the Umayyad state. The Persian element played a major role in this era, as the Persians controlled the army and administration in Baghdād and other regions. Despite the flourishing of the scientific and economic movement, the state suffered from internal conflicts, such as the conflict with al-Shī'ah and al-Khawārij and al-Mu'tazilah.

Politics has changed dramatically in the structure and system of government when the Abbasid state comes to power after the Umayyad state. As it was established earlier, the caliphs who headed the Abbasid caliphate paid much attention to the consolidation of their power; nay, they aimed at constructing a system that would enable it to confront the challenges accruing from internal and external opposition. With regards to authority, other Caliphs like Abū al-'Abbās al-saffāh and Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr extended the Abbasid authority by 'eliminating Umayyad foes and aligning Abbasid with other power interests within Abbasid society.¹³ The Persian element occupied one of the leading positions among all the elements of society that intensified the strengthening of the structure of the Abbasid state. The Persians were occupying high political and military offices in the capital, Baghdād and other areas. Besides, the Abbasids' concept of jihad in the way of God was different from the Umayyads' during the later years of their state. This furthered their military power and structure, their armies to be precise. (Shawqi, 1975).

The Abbasid era also witnessed a great literary renaissance, with poetry emerging as one of the most prominent forms of intellectual creativity during this time. Abbasid poets such as al-Mutanabbī, Abū al-Ṭayyib and al-Buḥturī composed poems that combined rhetoric and eloquence, making Arabic poetry during this period a benchmark for high literary standards. Prose literature also flourished in other fields such as storytelling and literary correspondence, with writers such as Al-Jahiz making significant contributions to multiple disciplines such as literature, philosophy, and sociology. In addition, new literary forms, such as the Maqāmāt, gained widespread popularity during this era. (Haida, 2007). Progress in Applied Arts and Sciences On the matter of the applied arts and sciences the period of the Abbasids was to prove highly fruitful, particular note may be taken of the advances made in the field of astronomy, mathematics, medicine and engineering. Special research centers such as "Bayt al-Hikma" in Baghdād ensured heads of creative scholars from different parts of the world were being attracted. In the field of astronomy, the Abbasid scholars have made significant brings through preparing more precise astronomical tables and developing new ways to measure time. He also stated that medicine also found its place during this period as medical books also were produced during this period, which was translating Indian and Byzantine medicine to Arabic which proved final

reference in Islamic world. Architecture also evolved during this time with many fine structures-built things like mosques and schools that had ornate work and architectural designs. (Maghrabi,2019, 111-142).

Research Questions

This study aims to explore key aspects of the Abbasid Caliphate's strategies for consolidating its authority, with a focus on the integral role of poets and poetry in celebrations, by addressing the following questions:

1. How did the Abbasid Caliphate revive and strengthen "the theory of Abbasid rule," rooted in hereditary succession and religious sanctity, through poetic propaganda?
2. What role did poets and their compositions play in transforming celebrations and ceremonies into tools for reinforcing the spiritual and political legitimacy of the Abbasid caliphs?
3. To what extent did the state's success in organizing poetically enriched ceremonies reflect a broader cultural and political development during this period?

By highlighting the centrality of poetry in these events, the study seeks to uncover its influence on shaping public perception and fortifying the caliphate's authority.

The Poetry of Power: Ceremonial Rites and the Caliph's Legitimacy

Once the Abbasid announced their Caliphate after overthrowing the "tyrant" Umayyad rule, they followed their hereditary approach in rule. Not only this, but they also claimed that heredity in rule is a divine issue, thus, obedience is expected, while emphasizing the religious nature of their rule, and their eligibility, proceeding from their kinship to the Prophet - peace be upon him. That became more obvious in the opening speech of Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāh after his ascension in (132 H/ 749 AD) (al-Ṭabarī, 1967, vol. 7, 967, p. 425).

"we were made the most deserving of it and its owners. We were particularized by the kinship to the Prophet, as we were the descendants of his family, the branches of his tree, and the overflow of his spring. He was made by Allāh from among us, it was grievous to him what we suffered, and he was kind and merciful to the believers. We held a descent position of Islam, and that was manifested in the The Holly Quran, where Allāh said: « Say: no reward do I ask of you for this except the love of those near of kin.» (al-Ṭabarī, 1967, vol. 7, p. 425).

By this, he meant that Allāh commanded Muslims to recognize that leadership after the Prophet should be inherited by his family lineage. That verse was the title of the legitimate right of the Abbasid rule. Hence, in their propaganda, they convinced people that Allāh made the rule to be inherited by the worthy of the Prophets' "uṣba" (league) as a reward for them, and that Allāh, in The Holly Quran, imposed on Muslim's obedience to "āl al-Bayt". (al Dūrī, 1988, p. 45).

In ceremonies, they began to assert the religious aspects, where the Prophet's burdah (cloak) became the first emblem of the Caliphate, worn by caliphs in public events as Friday and ʿīd prayers. (The term ʿīd (عيد) refers to an Islamic festival or celebration. There are two major ʿīds in the Islamic calendar: ʿīd al-Fitr and ʿīd al-Adha.)

In such a situation, people could only show loyalty and obedience. As a result, the caliph's sanctity increased, and he was called "Ḥalīfat Allāh" (Allāh's successor). The Abbasid propaganda entrenched in people's minds that the caliphate will remain Abbasid forever. Evidence of that what was mentioned by al-Ṭabarī that Ibrāhīm al-Imām sent a flag to Abū Muslim al-Ḥorāsānī. The flag's name was "al-ẓīl" (shadow). The interpretation of that, as al-Ṭabarī said, was that the land is never without shadow, similarly, never without an Abbasid caliph.

However, the Abbasid state witnessed the advent of the Fatimid state and its demise at the hands of Ṣalāḥ al-dīn al-Ayyūbī, pro Abbasid caliphate, the Seljuk state's emergence, the rise of many states and its disappearance, then the recovery of the Abbasid Caliphate after eliminating Seljuks. All of that had a strong impact on consolidating a belief that this caliphate is eternal, supported by Allāh, and that the caliph is Allāh's shadow. This caliphate was both revered and glorified, with poets playing a pivotal role in affirming its legitimacy and denouncing dissenters. Poet Muqarrab al-'Uwaynī celebrated al-Nāṣir, declaring: (Sibt b. al- al-Ta'āwīdī, 1903, p. 281).

*His Imāma is the absolute truth.
and others', if investigated, mere nonsense*

Sibt Ibn al-Ta'āwīdī said describing al-Mustaḍīr: (Sibt b. al- al-Ta'āwīdī, 1903, p. 413).

*After Allāh, you own forbiddance and command *
and in your hand, gain and loss
Obeying you is faith and guidance *
and disobeying is atheism and disbelief*

Poets once again took up the mantle of propaganda to reinforce the religious authority of the Abbasid caliphs. They portrayed the caliph in a sacred and exalted manner, presenting him as Allah's representative on earth. Sibt Ibn al-Ta'āwīdī offered a striking example of such propaganda in his depiction of al-Nāṣir: (Sibt b. al- al-Ta'āwīdī, 1903, p. 441).

*"O Allah's deputy on earth,
We seek your favor and aid,
And recognize you as His successor."*

This poetic glorification served to solidify the caliph's divine legitimacy and political supremacy, aligning religious reverence with state authority.

Sibt Ibn al-Ta'āwīdī provided an example of such propaganda, where he described al-Nāṣir: (Sibt b. al- al-Ta'āwīdī, 1903, p. 346).

*O Allāh's deputy in land We seek favor
and his successor
and aid from him*

Seemingly, the status and prestige of the caliphate were once again firmly established in the hearts of Muslims across the Islamic world. They broadly acknowledged the legitimacy of the Abbasid caliphate, even when it meant opposing their immediate rulers. A testament to this widespread reverence can perhaps be found in the account of Ibn al-Fawtī, which underscores the enduring influence and symbolic authority of the Abbasid caliphate during this period. In (609 H/1213 AD), a dispute occurred between Ṣultān Muḥammad Ḥawārizm Šāh and Caliph al-Nāṣir, where a group of the Sultan decided to cut off the ḥuṭbat of al-

Nāsir and make al-bay‘ah to one of their scientists; ‘Alā’ al-Mulk al-Qandarī. When people of Ḥorāsān knew, they rejected him, and said: “bay‘at of al-Nāsir was legitimate and not disputed, thus, the plot was a failure”. (Ibn al-Fwaṭī, 1962, vol. 4/ 2: 1085).

The caliphs recognized the importance of fostering a strong relationship with an influential class: the poets. During the reign of Al-Nasir, a significant and strategic step was taken to solidify this bond by appointing a group of talented and perceptive poets to serve in the Dīwān dār al-ḥilāfa (the Bureau of the Caliphate). These poets acted as spokespersons and heralds, chronicling and promoting the achievements of the caliphate. This move demonstrated Al-Nasir's foresight and political acumen, as it leveraged the power of poetry to enhance the caliphate's image and reinforce its authority. They were allocated a dīwān known as Dīwān al-šo‘arā’, and had their financial allocation regularly paid from Dār al-ḥilāfa. Perhaps, one of the most famous poets of that dīwān was Sibṭ Ibn al-ta‘āwīdī. (al-‘Abūd, 1976: 88-89).

Building on the caliphate's efforts to strengthen its influence through strategic relationships, its dedication to celebrations—particularly religious ones—emerged as another key instrument of political and social cohesion. This focus on festivities reflected the same foresight and strategic thinking seen in appointing poets to the Dīwān dār al-ḥilāfa. By actively participating in such events, caliphs not only elevated their public image, ensuring their fame and reputation were immortalized by poets, but also reinforced their dual role as religious and political leaders. These celebrations provided a platform to reaffirm the bonds between the rulers and their people, bridging the divide between the caliphate's authority and the community's allegiance. Through this careful orchestration, the caliphs strengthened their legitimacy and secured their influence in both spiritual and temporal spheres. (al-Ayyūbī, 1968, p.39-40)

In ‘īd al-fiṭr, Sibṭ Ibn al-Ta‘āwīdī praised al-Nāsir (Sibṭ b. al-Ta‘āwīdī, 1903, p. 288)

*Long life resumed in a state
‘īd is tiresome since you are its ‘īd
with days as a virgin Land
and your presence makes thousands joyful*

Preparations for celebrations, particularly the two ‘īds—‘īd al-Fiṭr and ‘īd al-Aḍḥā—commenced the day prior to the festivities. At the break of ‘īd, senior statesmen gathered at Dār al-Ḥilāfa, entering through Bāb al-Naṣr, where they were greeted by the attendants of the caliphal palace. From there, they proceeded to the al-Arba‘īnī orchard in a meticulously organized procession, overseen by Dār al-Taṣrīfāt, with each individual positioned according to their rank. In 576 AH/1180 AD, it was recorded that all officials assembled to accompany Caliph al-Nāsir, who appeared in a ceremonial white jubbah and ṭaylasānī, reflecting the solemnity and grandeur of the occasion. These orchestrated rituals underscored the significance of hierarchy, coordination, and symbolic representation during such celebrations. The Caliph walked on his right Ustād al-dār, Abū al-Faḍl Ibn al-Ṣāhib, and behind him his servants. When "everyone saw the Caliph, they kissed the ground, made prayers for him, and then everyone approached to serve and salute him". (al-Ayyūbī, 1968, p.39-40).

Among the recognized ceremonies in official celebrations, especially those that took place on the grounds of Dār al-ḥilāfa, and in the presence of the Caliph, that no one was allowed

to enter Dār al-ḥilāfa wearing a ṭaylasān or ṭarḥa; "out of respect for Amīr al-Mu'minīn, except for Chief Judge who made his ṭarḥa as a Ṭaylasān." In his description, Ibn al-Al-Jawzī pointed out to one of those celebrations where he was preaching in "and if I spoke at Bāb badr, I would ascend al-Minbar (the pulpit). Also, if I sat, I would lift my ṭarḥa and put it to my side. When al-maḡlis ceased, I put it on, again". (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1995, Vol. 18, p.219)

The caliphal procession was in accordance with a customary system. For example, the processions of princes preceded the caliphal procession in preparation to receive it. In the two 'īds, the exodus is from twilight time. Al-Gassānī pointed out to an instance of that ceremony in the 'īd al-fitr in the year (644 H/1246 AD). Prince Muḡāhid al-Dīn Aybak al-Mustanşirī rode from his home, at twilight, in the mid of lights and candles, followed by Prince 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Ṭabarsī, then the soldiers marched after them until the Caliph's procession went out to al-muṣallā. (al-Gassānī, 1975, p.543.)

The minister was the first to salute the Caliph. The custom was also to kiss "the honored packsaddle." The Caliph's response to the greeting was through a gesture "not responding loud". Then, the Caliph's procession appeared in the most glorious image, flanked by leaders of the state and military and dīwānī jobs. After that, the procession headed to the palace mosque to perform 'īd prayer, across the decorated streets of Baghdād, especially streets that the procession of the Caliph would cross. At the same time, the people of Baghdād line up along the road to watch their Caliph. When they saw him, they saluted him out loud, saying "peace be upon Amīr al-Mu'minīn and the light of Islam." Caliph replied by kissing the edge of his burdah and waving it. (al-Taṭīlī, 1945, p.133-134).

"Al-Buqḡah Dār" was one of those who rode in the Caliph procession to serve him. This suggests that the Caliph was giving al-ḥil'ah to the statesmen in those occasions in the place allocated for celebration. In the translation of Abū al-Fawāris Alṭān Abāh b. 'Abdullāh al-nāşirī, it was mentioned that "he was one of those who attended in the presence of al-Nāşir, and he used to carry the clothes Buqḡah if the Caliph rode". Moreover, Qurra' al-mawkib (Procession readers) were also another part of the Caliph's procession. They were the ones who accompanied the Caliph and read verses of the The Holly Quran during the marching of the procession. In the translation of Abdul Wahāb Bin Moḡammad Bin 'Abd al-Ġanī al-Ṭabarī al-Moqri' (died in 603 H/1206 AD), it was mentioned that "he was one of Qurra' al-Mawkib, and ahead of the Muezzins of Dār al-ḥilāfa". (Ibn al-Naḡḡār 1997, Vol. 16, p.230).

Features of magnificence were evident on those processions, where Arabian horses, golden saddles and the Mamlūks were participating. That was most noted in the procession of the 'īd al-fitr in the year (575 H/1179 AD). Muḡāhid al-Dīn Aybak al-Mustanşirī, the army Chief, was the first to come out, "and his riding was after sunrise, across the lights and candles, along with two hundred Arabian horses with golden saddles at the hands of two hundred Mamlūks." Then, he was followed by Prince Muḡāhid al-Dīn al-Ṭabayrasī al-Tārīḥī, followed by Şaraf al-Dīn Iqbāl al-Şarābī "and in it one can see beautification, multitude, quantity and quality which exceeded everyone." After that, came the caliphal procession where there were more than five thousand Turkish Mamlūks. After these ceremonies, the Caliph ordered the exodus of the procession, so, the Caliph came out from Bab Al-Nasr, and everyone was pedestrian around him, where no one could ride but with a signal from the Caliph. The first to ride was Uşat al-dār, then the ministry representative,

then the princes and heads of the state. When the procession arrived at the field, the Caliph entered while having Uṣṭat al-dār on his right, and the ministry's representative on his left. Then, everyone walked until they reached the Kušk, which was prepared in advance for the stay of the Caliph. (al-Ayyūbī, 1968, p.39).

Caliphs tended to exaggerate in offering ḥil'ah and gifts, particularly, on special religious occasions such as Ramadan, 'īd al-fiṭr and 'īd al-aḍḥā, where al-ḥil'ah was rewarded to the senior statesmen and officials of Dār al-ḥilāfa. Ibn al-Sā'i said, in 637 H/1239 AD: "everyone, this year, had luxurious ḥil'ah in the 'īd, where some had more than thirteen thousand". (Ibn al-Sa'ī, 2010, Vol. 9, p.338). In 640 H/1242 AD, it was mentioned that they distributed ḥil'ah from the store on the servants of Dār al-ḥilāfa and others who used to get ḥil'ah on this occasion, where it amounted to three thousand four hundred and twenty ḥil'ah. (al-Ġassānī, 1975, p. 512). In 652 H/1254 AD, ḥil'ah was distributed on servants and janitors, and they were eight hundred and sixty ḥil'ah. (al-Ġassānī, 1975, p. 604).

In 'īd seasons, al-fiṭr and al-aḍḥā, there was a military parade under the supervision of the minister. In 628 H/1330 AD, it was reported that on the night of 'īd al-fiṭr, a door was opened in the wall of Dār al-wazārah, and an iron window was made in it, "where Mu'ayyad al-dīn al-Qummī sat, the ministry representative, and saw the military parade" It continued for three days. (Ibn al-Kazaronī, 1979, Vol. 8/ 4, p. 437).

After the celebrations ceased, the Caliph went back to Dar al-ḥilāfa, and there, whoever attended was allowed to enter Maḡlis al-ḥalīfa to salute and congratulate the Caliph. That was done in accordance with a special arrangement of Dār al-taṣrīfāt. In the translation of al-Ḥasan b. Naṣrullāh al-nāqid, "and he rode down to the Honored Dīwān in 'īds and sat to perform greetings and attended at the door of al-ḥuḡra al-ṣarīfa (the noble chamber) in the seasons when representatives of Maḡlis al-dīwān came". (Ibn al-Dupeitī, 2006, Vol. 3, p.140).

There were official celebrations of the return of al-Ḥaḡḡ caravan. Traditionally, after choosing the person who would take the position of Imarat al-Ḥaḡḡ, he must enter Dār al-ḥilāfa riding his horse until he reached Bāb al-atrāk. Then, he dismounted and walked to Bāb al-ḥuḡra al-ṣarīfa, and he is given a ḥil'ah in the vestibule prepared for that purpose (Maḡhūl 1997, p 195), and then he was delivered the decree of appointment. After that, he headed the procession, "as he sat in a Hodge that was topped by a dome that was decorated with golden embroidered Dībāḡ, and behind it Koses. (Ibn al-Kazaronī, 1979, p.436).

The celebration of the departure of Al-Ḥaḡḡ caravan was familiar during this era. al-tatīlī, the traveler, described images of what he, himself, saw during his visit to Baghdād in 565H/1169 AD. He saw al-Ḥaḡḡ meeting in Baghdād, and their entrance to Dār al-ḥilāfa, while chanting: "O our Lord, light of Islam, and pride of Muslims, come into sight with your auspicious presence." Then, he described how Caliph al-Mustaḍī' came into sight, and his Hajib conveyed the Caliph's greeting, on his behalf. (al-Taṭīlī, 1945, p.132).

Upon the completion of preparing al-Ḥaḡḡ caravan, and after the Caliph's order of the departure of al-Ḥajj caravan from Baghdād was issued, Ameer al-Ḥaḡḡ took the front of the caravan while carrying a flag. He was followed by drummers, then soldiers who were the guardians of the caravan. In the farewell of the caravan, senior statesmen were present; the minister, Uṣṭād al-dār, Chief Judge, and behind them, people of Baḡdād. (Ibn al-Kazaronī, 1997, p.436).

When al-Ḥaḡḡ (those who perform al-Ḥaḡḡ) completed performing al-Ḥaḡḡ and returned unharmed, al-Mubāšir (bearer of good news) preceded them to Baḡdād to inform the Caliph of their safe arrival. Thus, orders were issued of the exodus of the Caliphal procession to receive them on the outskirts of Baḡdād. (Sibt b. al-Jawzī 1952m Vol. 8/ 2, p.452.) The procession was led by soldiers, and behind them people of Baḡdād. Then, Amīr al-Ḥaḡḡ's caravan proceeds, accompanied by senior statesmen of the Abbasid state to al-Yāsiriyya village, where the rakb stopped to relax to prepare for the entry of Baḡdād the next morning. When they entered Baḡdād, Amīr al-Ḥaḡḡ headed to 'atabat bāb al-nūbī, kissed it and went accompanied by senior staff of Dār succession to the door of the noble room. Following that, the Amīr, accompanied by senior officials of Dār al-ḥilāfa, went to al-ḥuḡrah al-šarīfah, where he is rewarded ḥil'ah in abundance (al-Ġassanī, 1975, p.527).

Among religious ceremonies which had become an official celebration since the second half of the sixth century was the celebration of the coming of Rajab, or what was known as al-rusūm al-raḡabiyya. This celebration was initiated by Caliph al-Mustanḡid from the year (560 H/1164 AD). Each year, this celebration was attended by senior statesmen, scientists, Foqahā' and Sufis. The celebration continued until the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate. Ibn al-ša'ār said: "the custom of the people of Baḡdād that if Rajab came, scientists, Foqahā' and Sufis would come out, sleep in al-Ruṣāfa at the graves of the Caliphs, read the The Holly Quran, and hold Maḡlis al-wa'd (preaching sessions)." The poet 'Alī b. Rūḥ, who was known as b. al-Ġa'barī, immortalized the occasion saying: (Ibn al-ša'ār, 2005, Vol. 3, p.380)

*I am, if Rajab came
I walk on three
in fatigue and tiredness
the healthiest is the wood*

On that occasion, ḥil'ah was distributed on all those who attended, money was offered, food was served, and then whoever wanted to leave could leave, and Sufis stayed until the next morning. (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1995, Vol. 18, p.174, p.219, p.228, p.238)

That celebration took place in the first days of the month of raḡab. Sibt b. al-Al-Jawzī: said that "in raḡab, Caliph made a celebration for the new Dar, and celebrated it (Sibt b. al-Al-Jawzī Vol. 8, Sec. 2, Sec. 1, p.251). It was attended by heads of state, scientists, Foqahā', Sufis, and preachers, and then all those who attended were rewarded ḥil'ah, and that became a repeated ceremony in raḡab, each year." What confirms the continuation of this celebration in the era of al-Mustaḡīr what Ibn al-Al-Jawzī mentioned of the incidents of the year (572 H/1176 AD): "In the early part of Sunday night, the second of Rajab, we attended the celebration of Amīr al-Mu'minīn, as usual, where it was also attended by heads of state, all scientists and Sufis. They ate, al-ḥātima was completed, Ibn al-Muḥtadī al-Ḥatīb made the supplications of al-ḥātima, then he performed a prayer in that very day and that very night, in the Dar. The ones who should leave left, and the ones who should stay stayed that night, and they were rewarded ḥil'ah and money (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1995, Vol. 18, p.238).

Celebrating military victories was another example of official celebrations. Despite the fact that this era of the Abbasid Caliphate did not witness military conquests as that of the first Islamic eras, yet there was a great interest in showing signs of happiness of the victory achieved by the armies of the Islamic caliphate, or achieved by any of the sultans who follow the Caliph- even if nominally; thus, celebrations prevailed in Baghdad. On Saturday, the twenty-second of muḥarram (567 H/1171 AD), the messenger of Sultan Nūr al-Dīn Zinkī arrived bearing the good news of ḥuṭba for the Abbasid Caliph in Egypt, and coining the currency in his name, after the elimination of the Fatimid caliphate, so " Baġdād markets were suspended, domes were created, and the messenger was rewarded a ḥil'ah. After the abstention of the Abbasid for two hundred and eight years, and then Dār al-ḥilāfa sent ḥil'ah to Nūr al-dīn Zinkī and Saladin with Sandal, an attendant of Caliph al-Mustaḍī'. (Ibn al- Jawzī,1995, Vol. 18, p196).

Beating drums, in a non-scheduled time, was a manifestation of celebrating these victories. When the minister Mo'ayyad al-Dīn b. al-Qaṣṣāb seized Hamadān in 591 H/1194 AD, drums were beaten in Baġdād.(Sibṭ Ibn al- Jawzīm1952, Vol. 8/ 2, p.572) Thus, good news and happiness permeated all over the capital of the caliphate several days. (Ibn al- Aṭīr,1966, Vol. 9, p.364).

When King al-Nāṣir Dāwood restored Jerusalem from the Crusaders in the year (637H/1239 AD), he sent a letter which he wrote to Caliph al-Mustaṣṣir, telling him of the good news of conquest and victory. (1 Ibn Ṣaddād,1996, p.225-233, al-Ġumaylī,1989, p.46).

The capital, Baġdād, witnessed celebrations of the opening of some urban facilities. An example of that, the opening of dars which caliphs gave orders of its construction. When the new Dar that was built by al-Mustaṅgid, at bāb al-ḡurba, was opened, in the year (559 H/1163 AD) a celebration which was attended by heads of state and Sufis' Sheikhs was made.(Ibn al- Jawzī,1995mp.159).

When al-Mustaḍī' built his new Dar in (570 H/1174 AD), statesmen attended to congratulate at Bāb al-ḥuḡrah, then they went to the dār. That celebration was attended by scholars, Sūfis and Qurra'. (Ibn al- Jawzī,1995mp.214).

A similar celebration took place when Caliph al-Mustaḍī' opened his second Dār which was known as al-Dār al-Msutaḍī'iyya. Sibṭ b. al-Ta'āwīdī immortalized that occasion in a poem in which he said (Ṣābī Ibn al-Ta'āwīdī, 1903, p.377-378.)

*Had it not been you, the best of all who walks on a foot
You built a Dār which will be destined fortunate
It is the highest Dār that was ever built
Planets shine in admiration to its glory
hopes would remain unfulfilled and generosity died
he whole world stood up admiring its prestige
resembling the highness of its creator.
and stars surrender to its greatness.*

This stage was characterized by great interest in the establishment of schools. In Baġdād, the number of schools exceeded thirty-six schools. This was accompanied by an obvious interest in celebrating the opening of those schools, especially those created by Abbasid caliphs and princes. When Zomorrud Ḥatoon School was opened in 589 H/1193 AD, all statesmen were invited to attend the opening celebration. After the end of the opening ceremony, a great banquet was laid. The opening of al-Mustanşiriyya school witnessed a great celebration that was attended by Caliph al-Mustanşir and senior men. After the school building was completed, in ġumāda al-tānī, in 631 H/1233 AD, the school, as al-Erpili said, was covered in: "the finest clothes, and ornamented as best brides". (al-Erpili, 1964, p.212).

When all the invitees attended the occasion, including Nāşir al-Dīn, the ministry's representative, all Walis, ḥuġġāb, teachers, Foqahā', Sheikhs, Sufis, Wo' 'ād, Qurra', poets, a group of senior foreigner traders, Caliph al-Mustanşir honored the celebration by attending. Then the ministry's representative, Naşir al-Dīn b. al-Nāqid, stood, "and in his hand the records of al-Mustanşiriyya school." He reviewed the costs of constructing the school, and then explained its system showing its divisions, allocations, details of management, its waqf, its employees, number of students and the curricula. In that celebration, the minister pointed out to the feature that distinguishes al-Mustanşiriyya school from its predecessors; it is not limited to a particular maḍhab. The teaching is open to the followers of the four Sunnī Maḍāhib "and for each Maḍhab, Sixty-two Faqīh was selected". (Maġhūl, 1997, p.82).

Then, the Caliph ordered the ḥil'ah to be distributed on the teachers of the school, which usually consisted of a black Jubbah and a dark blue ṭarḥa; the formal dress for the teacher, which he was not allowed to enter teaching halls without. The Caliph's rewards also included a mule, which was a special mount for teachers. As for substitute teachers, their ḥil'ah was a masmaṭ shirt and a turban made of cane, then ḥil'ah was rewarded to all who participated in the school constructing. Then all those present were invited to a banquet in the school's courtyard that included different types of food and drink. At the end of the celebration, poets recited praises to the caliph and his glorious deeds. ". (Maġhūl, 1997, p.83).

In 653 H /1253 AD, Caliph al-Musta'şim, accompanied by a number of princes, attended the opening of al-Bşayriyya school, which the Caliph's wife, al-Sayyida Bāb Başir, ordered its construction. She could not attend the opening because she died before its completion. ". (Maġhūl, 1997, p.307).

Dār al-taşrīfāt prepared the place as befits the Caliph, his sons and the princes, and they all sat in the middle of the school courtyard. After that, the Caliph settled in his place; it was allowed for those who were invited to attend the celebration to enter and salute the Caliph. The celebration was concluded by a great banquet, and all those who attended the school were invited to it.

The ceremonies required perpetuating the date of opening of those facilities. According to the information about the opening of the school of al-Sayyida Banafša, in Ramaḍān, in (571 H/1175 AD), it was written on the wall of the school, "This auspicious school was made a Waqf by the great and honorable al-Ġihah in the days of our Master and Mawlā,

al-Imām al-Mustaḍī' Amīr al-Mu'minīn to the followers of Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal....". 1 Jawād, 1975, Vol 2. P.1127)

Conclusion:

The Revival of ceremonies of Dar al-Ḥilāfa during this era of the Abbasid Caliphate was part of the caliphs' plan to restore their influence. Because of the importance of receptions and celebrations, and their relatedness to fame and being known, the Abbasid caliphate was keen on manifesting those occasions publicly. These ceremonies and receptions were an opportunity to show the prestige of the Caliph, regain the power of the caliphate in the hearts of everyone and to instill that power also in the hearts of arrivals on Baġdād from kings, sultans, princes and their messengers.

For the sake of showing celebrations as worthy of the Caliph and his guests, the caliphate institution introduced a subsidiary institution related to Dīwān al-Ḥilāfa, known as Dār al-Tašrīfāt. The task of that institution was supervising the organization of everything related to the Caliph, his ruling center, his residence, and celebrations, all in accordance with rules and strict regulations. A number of employees, led by Motawallī al-Dār, oversee the application of these rules.

The study also showed that there were a number of ceremonies that were applied from the moment of the guest's arrival to the outskirts of Baġdād until he leaves, which are summarized as follows:

Caliphs' participation in celebrations and 'īds, especially in the celebrations of 'īd al-fiṭr and 'īd al-aḍḥā, reflected their desire to strengthen the relationship between them and their parish, and to consolidate their religious legitimacy in ruling. Thus, Dār al-Tašrīfāt was keen on organizing the celebration of those two 'īds from the moment of the exodus of the caliphal procession for prayer, through supervising the organization by lining up people on both sides of the road that the Caliph would cross, until the return of the Caliph to his maġlis to receive congratulations of the 'īd from the senior men of his state. For the same aforementioned objectives, the caliphate showed great interest in celebrating the exodus of al-Ḥaġġ caravan from Baġdād.

Conclusion

The Abbasid Caliphate, from its inception, sought to establish its legitimacy not only through military conquests but also by invoking religious and cultural elements deeply rooted in Islamic tradition. Central to this endeavor was the theory of Abbasid rule, grounded in hereditary succession and religious sanctity. Poetic propaganda played a crucial role in reviving and strengthening this theory, transforming the caliphs into figures of divine authority. Through the use of poetry, the Abbasids presented their rule as not only politically legitimate but also divinely ordained, emphasizing their kinship with the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) and portraying the caliph as Ḥalīfat Allāh (God's deputy on earth). Poets like Sibṭ Ibn al-Ta'āwīdī celebrated the caliph's authority, reinforcing the narrative that the caliphate was a divine right, an inheritance from the Prophet's family.

The role of poets and their compositions during Abbasid celebrations cannot be understated. Through public events such as the 'īd al-fiṭr and 'īd al-aḍḥā, poets transformed these religious festivals into powerful instruments of political and spiritual reinforcement. The Caliph's participation in these events was accompanied by poetic glorification that

elevated his image, aligning the caliph with the divine. These poetic expressions not only celebrated the caliph's virtues but also positioned him as the central figure in both the spiritual and political realms. In this way, poetry served as a tool for the Abbasids to consolidate their rule, portraying the caliphate as an eternal, sacred institution, one that was inherently tied to the legacy of the Prophet.

The state's success in organizing poetically enriched ceremonies highlights a broader cultural and political development that defined the Abbasid era. These celebrations, meticulously orchestrated by Dār al-Tašrīfāt, were not just political spectacles but also cultural expressions that reinforced the unity between the ruler and the ruled. Through these events, the caliphate's authority was not only reaffirmed but also symbolically intertwined with the religious and cultural identity of the Muslim community. The strategic appointment of poets to the Dīwān dār al-ḥilāfa further underscores the significance of poetry in solidifying the caliph's image and maintaining political stability. The poets' works ensured that the Abbasid Caliphate remained not only a political power but also a symbol of religious legitimacy, celebrated across the Islamic world.

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