

State' and al-Kufa in Iraq was made the new capital(1). Al-Kufa had always been the centre of enthusiasm for the family of the Prophet and rebellion against the Umayyads.

Abu-al-Abbas soon built himself a residence at Anbar, above Fallujah on the Euphrates(2). where he resided with his wife. The cold and calculating Caliph had only one wife, who he consulted frequently on current affairs, but he never took a second or made use of concubines or slave girls (3).

He enjoyed witty conversation and would sit up nearly all night with his intimates, telling and listening to anecdotes, reciting poetry or discussing the history of the great kings of antiquity(4). Some of the men that the Caliph patronized were versed in canon law, and he sought their advice on matters of state affairs(5).

In June, 754 Abu-al-Abbas died of small-pox,(6). at the age of thirty-four years, having ruled the vast domain for the last four and half years of his life(7). The Umayyad Islamic Arabic State had been the strongest of it's time . Stretching from Spain in the west and India in the east, it reached from southern France in Europe to as far south as Somalia in Africa. Abu-al-Abbas, the young Arab political leader was under thirty years of age when he organized his followers and sent emissaries to preach the political ideas of equality and brotherhood. The spreading of these ideas were to challenge, then topple the government of the powerful, well-armed state. It was Caliph Abu-al-Abbas who instigated the rebellion and succeeded in bringing a new era to the Islamic world. It is clear that the story of this unique political leader is yet to be told.

1. *History of the Arabs* P. 286.

2. *T. R.* p. 157.

3. *E. A.* p. 228.

4. *H. A.* p. 288

5. *E. A.* p. 228.

6. *T. R.* p. 155.

7. *E. A.* p. 227.

Khurasan. Their mission was to engage in political propaganda in favour of the house of Abbas. The members of the political group usually posed as merchants in order to justify their movements from place to place (1).

In the year 722 Abdullah, the man later to become the Caliph Abu-al-Abbas, was born. The son of Mohammed, he replaced his father as organizer of the underground network of propaganda against the ruling power of the Caliphate(2). The descendants of Abbas had played no political role until the reign of Umar (ibn Abdul Aziz). It was at this time that Abdullah took the name of Abu-al-Abbas and prepared himself and his group for the revolt by moving to al-Kufa. The hour of takeover approached when he signalled to the shia of Khurasan to begin.

On June 9, 747, Abu Muslim, a leader among the shia of Khurasan, unfurled the black banner and the long meditated revolt broke out. At the head of the men of Azd, a Yemeni Arab tribe, he entered the capital city, Maru(3). The fall of the Maru was followed in 749 by the capitulation of the leading city of al-Iraq. Al-Kufa, the hiding place of Abu-al-Abbas, surrendered to the insurgents without much opposition. On October 30th, 749 public homage was paid in the chief mosque to Abu al-Abbas as Caliph. Thus, the first Abbasid Caliph was enthroned (4).

It was not however, until the Abbasids forces had a major battle with the forces of the Umayya, that they could claim the Caliphate. In January, 750, headed by Abdullah (ibn Ali ibn Abbas), an uncle of the new Caliph, the Abbasids met with the Umayyad army. On the left bank of the greater Zab, a tributary of the Tigris, the Umayyads were defeated and Abbasid victory was proclaimed (5).

Gradually the main governors of the provinces declared their support to the Abbasid government. The government called itself "Dawlah, or

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1. *Empire of the Arabs*, P. 176.
 2. *Empire of the Arabs*, P. 176.
 3. *History of the Arabs*, P. 285.
 4. *History of the Arabs*, P. 285.
 5. *History of the Arabs*, P. 285.

A STORY OF AN ARAB CALIPH

ABU-AL-ABBAS 749-754

Joseph Almaleh & Jacqui Underwood

Caliph Abu-al-Abbas was the founder of the Abbasid Caliphate, the most celebrated and longest lived Arab dynasty in Islam. It ruled (from Baghdad) 750 to 1258 A.D. Abu-al-Abbas was a man of a most determined personality. He was purely intellectual, guided by logic and lacking in emotions or the weaknesses bred by affection or pity(1). He came to power as a result of a successful revolution which overthrew the Umayyad Caliphate of Damascus.

The revolution started with a small underground political "shia" group who asserted that the Umayyad family had no claim to the Caliphate and that the descendents of the late Caliph Ali were the rightful heirs. The leader of the anti-Umayyad group was closely supported by the Abbasid family. When he breathed his last words he named Ali (ibn abd-allah ben al-Abbas) as his successor. The Abbas family took over the political group and devoted their efforts at building unity and support for almost thirty-two years. The Abbasid political leadership emphasized on general themes such as equality among Muslims and reformation of the state. Various emissaries were sent to the Islamic Arabic provinces all over the state, with special attention paid to Khurasan province. There had been long and careful preparation for the revolution.

Mohammed (ibn Ali ben al-Abbas) succeeded his father as a leader of the group. He lived in Shera, an area west of Maan, now in the Kingdom of Jordan. A small town close to the main highways of the Caliphate, proved to be an ideal base for sending secret emissaries to al-Iraq and

1. *History of the Arabs*, P. 288.