CHAPTER- II

ARABIC LITERATURE DURING ISLAMIC & UMAYYAD PERIOD
The Umayyad rulers were the patron of knowledge. During their rule Arabic language and literature was developed highly. Muawiya bin Abi Sufyan, the first ruler of Umayyad dynasty was a seeker of knowledge. After establishing his power at Damascus he inclined towards religious as well other books. So far as literary matters are concerned it is found that the poets of this period were still sacrificing, in clumsy imitation. But at the same time an apple harvest of occasional poems, inspired by each and every unexpected incidents of the political life of the new Empire.

**Impact of the Holy Quran and the Hadith on Arabic Literature:**

The holy Quran is the first book written in Arabic language. It is the first major work in Arabic literature. It is recognized as the main source of Arabic language and literature. The holy Quran is a sweet mixture of prose and poetry. It has always been considered as the exquisite expression of literary art among the Arabs.

Since its inception, the holy Quran has been playing a tremendous role in the growth and development of Arabic language and literature. Its style, at once vigorous, allusive and concise, deeply influenced later
compositions in Arabic, as it continued to influence the mode of expression of native speakers of Arabic both in writing and in conversation.

The impact of the holy Quran began to develop a strikingly effective rhetorical prose in Arabic literature. It used to create a new linguistic structure in the history of Arabic literature, breaking up the conventional forms of aesthetic production of its time and to inculcate a new, distinctive, and highly prosaic art.

The language used in the holy Quran is called classical Arabic. Not only is the Quran, the first work of any significant length written in the language, but it also has a far more complicated structure with its 114 chapters, which contains 6,666 verses. It consists of injunctions and even comment on itself and how it will be received and understood. It is also surprisingly admired for its abundance of metaphors as well as its clarity.

The holy Quran is also considered as prime source of Arabic literature. The earliest Arabic prose literature came into being not from literary movement, but it was developed step and at the early stage, its chief objective was to serve the religious and practical needs of the society so that common people may fully understand the Islamic revelation and circumstances of the religion. So the specific linguistic features of the
Quran were imitated by the people in their writings. Thus, the Arabic literature began to develop so rapidly that it gradually used to prefer the styles of prose in addition to the poetry of the Arab Society.

The influence of the holy Quran on Arabic literature has been incalculable in many directions. Its ideas, languages and rhythms pervade all subsequent literary works in a greater or lesser measure. Although it contains elements of both prose and poetry, it is closest to rhymed prose. The holy Quran is regarded as entirely as a model and a part from these classifications. Therefore, the writers used to follow its styles and metaphors in their writings. The text is believed to be divined revelation and is seen as being eternal or uncreated. The curious people were sticking to its research and recitation. This leads to the doctrine of inimitability of the Quran which implies that nobody can copy this work’s style nor should anybody try. The closest anyone has come to imitating the Quran is al-Mutanabbi (915-965 A.D.) who is regarded as one of the great poet in Arabic. His name means the would-be prophet partly from an attempt at rebellion in his early life and partly for his skill at writing. This doctrine had a strong influence on the growth and development of Arabic literature. Many people studied Quranic exegesis or critical interpretation, Quranic criticism, the science, apostolic, jurisprudence, scholastic theology,
lexicography, rhetoric and literature. Renowned scholars engaged themselves in the study of astronomy, spherical geography, philosophy, geometry, music and medicine. Thus, the structure of Arabic literature started to take a new shape in the form of prose-style.

Here, we may mention a quotation from the holy Quran which can proof the literary generousness of the holy Quran:

أَتَأْمَرُونَ النَّاسَ بَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْأَنْفُسِمُنْ؟ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ يُكَرِهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيرٌ لَّكُمْ

كم من فئة قليلة غلبت فئة كثيرة بإذن الله والله مع الصابرين. قول معروف ومغفرة خير من صدقة يتبعها أذى. ومثل الذين ينقفون أموالكم أبتناء مرضات الله وثبيتًا من أنفسكم كمثل جنة برودة أصابها وابل فأانت أكلها ضعفين فإن لم يصبها وابل فطل والله بما تعملون بصير. لم تتألوا البر حتى تنفقوا مما تحبون. ولو كنت فظًا غليظ القلب لأنفضا من حولك. إن ينصركم الله فلا غالب لكم وإن يخذلكم فمن ذا الدي ينصركم من بعده من يعمل سوءا يجز به ولا يجد له من دون الله ولبلا لا نصيرا. قال لا يستوي الخبيث والطيب ولو أعجبك كثرة الخبيث. ما على المحسنين من سبيل. إن الله لا يغير ما يقوم حتى يغيروا ما بأنفسهم. قل كل يعمل على شاكلته. لد عبده من قبل ومن بعد. ما جعل الله لرجل من قلبين في جوفه. ولا يحيق المكر السي إلا بأهله إنما بغيكم على أنفسكم فمن نكث فإنا نكث على نفسه، ومن أوفي بما عاهد عليه الله فسبيئته أجرا عظيما.

ولا تستوى الحسنة ولا السيئة أدفع باللتي هي أحسن فإذا الذي بينك وبيبه عداوة كأنه
Like the holy Quran, the Hadith, the prophetic tradition, also helped to the development of Arabic language and literature. The Sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) began to contribute a very considerable mass of prose literature to the Arabic such as Fiqh, Tafseer, Sharh and Tarikh etc. The traditions cast light on those points very clearly on which the Quran had given just an indication of the work and left them obscure in its narration.

The sayings and the actions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were collected and preserved at first by memorizing and then by writings. Finally, the sayings and the actions of the prophet are collected and arranged by some pious men as Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Ismail al-Bukhari (810-870 A.D), Abul Husain Muslim bin al-Hijjaj (817-875 A.D.), Abu Isa Muhammad al-Tirmidhi (d. 892 A.D.), Sijistani (817-889 A.D), Abu Abdur Rahman Ahmad al-Nasai (830-915 A.D.) and Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Yazid bin Maja (824 -896 A.D.) in the ninth century. The Hadith that is apostolic tradition, not only provided the basic texts from
which Islamic Law was elaborated, but also formed the raw materials for historians as well as litterateurs of the early Arabs. Since each Hadith is a first person narrative, usually by an eyewitness of the event described, they have a closeness and freshness that has come down genuinely through the centuries. The personalities of the narrators- Hazarat Abu Bakr (R), Hazarat Abu Huraira (R), Hazarat Aisha (R) and a host of others are just as vibrant as the events described, for the style of each Hadith is very personal.

The Apostolic tradition plays an important role in the development of prose-style and the literary form of works such as bin Ishaq’s Siraatun Nabi, the biography of the Prophet, originally written in the middle of the eighth century. In this book, Hadith dealing with the life of the Prophet are arranged in chronological order, and the comments of the author are kept to a minimum. Events are seen through the eyes of the people who witnessed them; three or four of the same event are often given, and in each case, the chain of transmission of the Hadith is given, so that the reader may judge its authenticity. In the 10th century, the Hadith literature created the codification and criticism, which was called Ilm al-Rijal, or the science of men, and this science, was specially applied to the criticism of witness and authorities on whom the whole edifice of tradition rests. Among the most
important authors who have written on this subject we may mention bin Abi Hateem ‘Abd al-Rahman (894-939 A.D.), author of the “Kitab al-Jahr wal-ta’dil” or Criticism and Correction, in six volumes. Another one Abul Qasim Sulaiman al-Tabarani (870-971 A.D.) compiled a book entitled “Mujam” or Alphabetical Dictionary of the traditions in three volumes. Then Abu Nasr Ahmad al-Kalabadhi (918-1008 A.D.) wrote a book on the names of Huffaz or custodians of traditions. Abdul Ghani bin Sa’id (944-1018 A.D.) also compiled a book on the names of traditionists resembling each other and those which differ. These works have a great impact in the history of Arabic literature.

Some prominent poets of Umayyad period:

During the reign of the Umayyad rulers many young poets, thinkers and philosophers came out to compose verses that left no stone unturned for development Arabic language and literature. Among these thinkers and philosopher we may mention the name of Jarir, Akhtal, Farazdaq, Umar bin Abi Rabia etc. Now, I want to highlight some of them:
**Jarir:**

Jarir is the most celebrated poet of Umayyad period. With Akhtal and Farazdaq he tried his best to develop the Arabic language and literature during their contemporary age. His original name is Jarir bin Atiyah al-Khatafi al-Tamimi. He was an Arab poet and satirist.

Jarir was born in the reign of the caliph Othman and was a member of the tribe Kulaib, a part of the Banu Tamim. He was a native of al-Yamamah but also spent time in Damascus at the court of the Umayyad caliph. He had opportunities of extolling Al-Hajjaj, the terrible governor of that province, at whose severity all men trembled. But the favour of the Umayyad princes was not bestowed upon him as Akhtal had prejudiced Abdal Malik against him. He had to wait till Umar II ascended the throne before seeing him preferred before his rivals. He was a mighty fighter, and his life was spent in poetic tournaments. The most famous of these was that with Farazdaq, who was backed by Akhtal. Jarir could not forgive him, and poured sarcasms upon him till he drove him out of Basra, and turned the anger of his own tribe against him. Towards the end of his life Jarir returned to his own tribe, the Yamama and died in 728.
As a poet Jarir gave all he belongs to for the sake of Arabic literature. He was confident in emotion, purer in heart, good in character, bitter in satire, sweet in amorous talk, proficiency in mourning and reformatted in society. For his satire we may mention here a quotation which he composed on Farazdaq:

لقد ولدت أم الفرزدق مقترفٌا فجاءت بوزار قصير القوادم
بوصل حبليه إذا جن ليلهُه ليبرقي إلى جاراته بالسلام
دليت تنني من ثمانين قامته وقصرت عن باع العلي والمكرم
هو الرجس يا أهل المدينة فاحذرنا مداخل رجس بالخبيثات عالم
لقد كان إخراج الفرزدق عنكم ظهورا لما بين المصلى وراقيم

Akhtal:

Another notable poet of Umayyad period is Akhtal who played same eminent place and position as Jarir and Farazdaq played to the development of classical Arabic language and literature. His original name is Abu Malik Ghiyas bin Ghaus al-Taghlibi. He adorned the court poet of Abdul Malik bin Marwan.
Akhtal was born in Farati peninsula by a Christian parent. He was belongs to Banu Taghlib. He lost his mother when he was a small kid. He grew up under the guidance of his step mother whom his father married after death of his first wife. He was an uncivilized boy who never stood for the status of the elders. He wore a cross on his breast, and kept it there even within the Umayyad Palace at Damascus, when the favour of the princes of that family called him thither. He occasionally endured somewhat severe penances, as when the priest of his tribe took him by the beard and trounced him. He was addicted by wine. He never stopped drinking even in Umayyad court. He used to compose from his childhood. He was selected as the court poet of Umayyad rulers.

In Akhtal, the Umayyad rulers found a special bard of their brave deeds. Caliph Abdul Malik, though he cared little for religion, tried to convert him to the Muslim faith. Once in reply of Abdul Malik he said that if he would allow drinking wine and exempted from fasting in Ramadan, he could accept Islam.

A subject of frequent argument at the Umayyad Court was the relative merits of the three poets, Akhtal, Ferazdaq, and Jarir. The princes would amuse themselves by making their courtiers pronounce an opinion,
and the courtiers, who dreaded the vengeance of the two poets who must be passed over if the palm was awarded to the third, would get out of the difficulty by taking refuge in generalities.

In later days, under the Abbasids, when passions had cooled, grammarians ended by preferring Akhtal, because his verses were more finished and correct, and because he had been able to produce the largest number of poems of a certain length which are irreproachable, from beginning to end, both in subject and in form. The qualities most valued in his work are fullness of afflatus and purity of expression. We are told nothing as to the loftiness of his inspiration. But one famous line, which Harun al-Rashid loved to recall, proves the nobility of the moral sentiments he enunciated. It occurs in his ode addressed to the Caliph Abdul Malik, in which, speaking of the Umayyads, he says: you Terrible in their rage if they are withstood, they are the most clement of men when victory is won.

The verses of Akhtal consist of elegy, eulogy and satire. His eulogies are purer than milk. We may quote here an example of his verses which he composed on the praise of Abdul Malik:

إذا نفسي فداء أمير المؤمنين إذا
أبدى النواخذ يوما عارم ذكر

If I serve the Amir of the Faithful, if I ever bear an unimportant mention
Akhtal satire not only Jarir and Farazdaq he even satire the Ansars (helper of the Prophet) also. He composed against the Ansars:

Farazdaq:

Another important poet of Umayyad period is Farazdaq. His original name is Abu Firas Hammam bin ghalib al-Tamimi. He belongs to the same tribe of Jarir i.e. Banu Tamimi. He became famous for his elegy and eulogy. He is considered as one of the trio-poets of Umayyad period.
Nobody can his contribution to the development of Arabic language and literature during this period.

He was born at Basra and grew up in the midst of pure language. As a small child he was very clever having strong memory. So his father took him Caliph Ali who guided him to memorize the holy Quran, as a result he memorized the holy Quran in a tender age. But he did not give up composing poetry. He met then some young talent Egypt whom he used to praise with beautiful verses.

Farazdaq was a pious and fervent Muslim. He was entirely devoted to the Prophet’s family. With it all a cynic, a libertine, whose sport it was to attack women’s honour, who made vile use of the terror his ribald verse inspired, while he himself was a mean coward, more timorous than a sparrow, spiteful and vindictive. Such was the shabby nature of this great poet. His imprudent boast, in one of his poems, that he had entered the precincts of a harem by means of a rope-ladder, stirred the rage of the worthy Pharisees of Medina. He was banished by Marwan, and would have settled at Mecca if the death of his enemy Ziyad, Governor of Iraq, had not made it possible for him to rejoin his tribe. His adventures with his cousin Nawar, whom he married, who sought to divorce him, and who could find
no one to bear witness for her before the judge, so great was the dread of
the poet’s satires, who took refuge with Abdullah bin Zubair, the Medina
pretender, and at last obtained her husband’s consent to a separation. Like
his strife with his adversary Jarir, been the subject of many poems. He died
of a skin disease, contracted during a desert journey, towards the year 728.

He was a determined supporter of the rights of the Ali and his
followers. So he used to compose on the praise Ali and his followers. He
even praises Zainul Abidin, the grandson of Ali at the age of seventy. But
satire is his special field, and it must be acknowledged that in it he knew no
limit, whether of decency or honour. Further, that he was constantly and
immoderately guilty of a sin with which Arab writers are frequently
charged homelessly stealing lines from his neighbors’ compositions. He
was a plagiarist, forcing his competitors to leave him in possession of lines
that took his fancy, and below which he wrote his own name.

The verses of Farazdaq are purer. His satires are sharper than blades.
Here we may quote about the purity of his verses:

إذا اغير أفاق السماء وكشفت
بيوتا وراء الحي نكباح حرف
وأصبح مبيض الصقع كأنه
على سروات النيب قطن مندف
Umar bin Abi Rabia:

Umar bin Abi Rabia was one of the earliest poets of Islamic rule in Arabia. He is considered as the most famous poet of the Quraish tribe. He proved himself as the best poet of the Quraish by composing on elegy and eulogy. He shows his capability during reign of the Umayyad dynasty and early Abbasid dynasty. He tried his best to develop Arabic poetry.

Umar bin Abi Rabia was born and brought up at Mecca, the centre of knowledge where the almighty Allah sent his friend Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The father of Umar bin Abi Rabia was a wealthy man, who had been sent by the Prophet to rule one of the southern provinces of the Peninsula. He performed his duty obediently till the death of Umar I. Then he served under Uthman also. At last he returned to his native country
where his son, the youthful poet, grew to manhood. He remained in his
native town till his last breath, except when he was taken as a prisoner to
Damascus, and he did not any part in the wars waged by the Muslims on
the frontiers of their growing Empire. A rich man and an idle, he achieved
opportunities of extolling the charms of many fair ladies, two princes of the
reigning house amongst them. His love affairs threw him into bad
impression; the then Caliph Umar II disliked him for this type character.

Although he was disliked by the emperor he did not gave away composing
poetry. He even earned his livelihood on poetry. He died in the year 719
A.D. undoubtedly his poems, set to music, and popularized by professional
singers, who made their way all over the Arab world.

Here we can cite an example of Umar bin Rabia’s poetry:

ولا الجبل موصول ولا أنت مقصر

قهي فانظري أسماء هل تعرفته

هذا المغيري الذي كان يذكري

وعيشك أنساه إلى يوم يتبغيء!

لهن كان إياه لقد حال يعدنه

عن العهد والإنسان قد يتغيءر

نهن إلى نعم فلا الشمل جامع
Besides the above mentioned poets and thinkers there many poets and philosophers who tried their best to develop Arabic language and literature during the Umayyad period. During this period a notable poet was jilan bin Uqba. This man was become more popular with the name of Dhur Rumma. He carried on the tradition of the desert poets. Farazdaq complained that he was too fond, like the ancient authors, of descriptions of forsaken encampments, of camels, and the bird. He himself, indeed, admitted that his comparisons might go on forever. Nevertheless, his poems were long held in high admiration by the philologists, more especially, perhaps, on account of the uncommon words occurring in them.

Moreover, we found the simplest of prosodic metres, the rajaz, suddenly springing into considerable importance, and rising as high as its fellows in the popular estimation. The rajaz, despised by the heathens, looked on as a sort of cadenced prose, only fit, at its best, for improvisations, had been softened and transformed by Al-Aghlab bin ‘Umar bin Ubaida, who fell fighting gallantly at the Battle of Nehawend in 641, and reached its full development in the work of Abu Najm al-Fadl bin Qudama al- Ijli, the friend of the Caliph Hisham, Al-Ajjaj, and his son Ruba.
The funeral elegies written by a woman, Laila al-Akhyaliyya, are famous, more especially those devoted to the memory of Tauba bin al-Humayyir, who loved her, and suffered the anguish of seeing her married by her father to a stranger, a mean and jealous fellow, who beat her. The story goes that one night, sick of ill treatment, she called an unknown guest who had joined the tribe at nightfall; that he came, under cover of the darkness, struck the husband three or four hearty blows across the shoulders with a stick, and departed, the poetess having prevented his further interference in the domestic broil. He went away unrecognized, and was never seen again. Laila saved her friend from many ambushes prepared for him by jealous rivals. He was true to her till his death, which took place in an intertribal quarrel in 704. The celebrity won by these touching compositions encouraged their authoress to persevere. She paid visits to princely courts, waited on Caliph Abdal-Malik, and on the Governor of Iraq, Al-Hajjaj, to whom she offered eulogies. She died in 707, while on her way to visit her cousin, Qutaiba bin Muslim, the Muslim general then governing the province of Khurasan.

Al-Khansa is the only Arab poetess who can be considered her superior. She was a tall woman with great black eyes. Laila waged a war of epigrams with Nabigha al-Jadi, who hotly answered her, concerning the
attacks of a certain Sawar bin Aufa, called bin al-Haya, after his mother, who had spoken evil in his verses of the tribe of Azd. Nabigha had replied, and all this happened at Ispahan. The verses circulated through the desert, and the censured tribes threatened an appeal to the Governor of Medina, or even to the Caliph.

Amongst the desert poets who were Christians must be mentioned Abdallah bin al-Mukhariq, called the Nabigha of the Beni-Shaiban, who swore by the Gospels, the monks, and all the usual Christian oaths. He was fond of leaving his Syrian steppes to recite his well-paid eulogies in the presence of the Caliphs at Damascus. Abdal-Malik and Walid were his patrons. Hisham, on the contrary, could not endure him, and kept him at a distance.

Beside these poets we must also place Asha Hamdan, a Quran reader and lawyer, belonging to Kufa, who forsook his legal studies to declaim poetry, and fought against the heathens of Dailam, among the mountains south-west of the Caspian Sea. He fell into their hands as a prisoner of war, was saved by the love of a young girl of that country, and took up the cause of Abdur Rahman bin al-Asfrath, who had ventured to proclaim the deposition of Abdal-Malik, and whom some held to be the Qahtanid
expected by the Moslems as a precursor of the Last Judgment, but who was vanquished by Al-Hajjaj in 702. The poet shared his leader’s sad fate. Herded with a crowd of other prisoners, he was put to death by the terrible Governor of Iraq, who could not forgive the imprudent attacks he had made on him in his poems. Ahmad al-Nasibi, with whom he had entered into bonds of brotherhood, after the fashion of the desert Arabs, was a musician, who sang the lines written by his friend.

Al-Hajjaj had a sister, Zainab, who was beloved by Numairi of Taif, a writer of erotic stanzas. But the governor thought the poet’s praise compromised the reputation of his family, and Numairi had to seek refuge with the Caliph of Damascus. Zainab, who had been sent to the same city at the time of Al-Ashath’s revolt, died there of an accident — a fall from her mule. Numairi found consolation in singing elegies over her tomb.

The Muslim Conquest had given a huge ascendency to the Arab tongue, and literary efforts by men whose native language was not Arabic were already beginning to appear. It would be impossible, were it only on account of his surname, Al-Al jam, not to recognize the Persian origin of Ziyad bin Sulaiman, who was client of an Arab tribe (by client must be understood either a freed slave or a man who voluntarily lived under the
aegis of a patronage which raised him above the singular humiliations which were the lot, at that period, of a vanquished foe, even of one who had embraced the Muslim faith) dwelling at Persepolis, was born, according to some, at Ispahan, and died in Khurasan in 689. His funeral eulogium of Muhallab bin Abi Sufra won universal praise. His poetic talent rose above an inconvenient impediment in his speech. He was accused of pronouncing like a peasant. He could not articulate the letter Ain—the peculiar onomatopoeia of the Arab tongue, which reproduces the grunt of the camel as it is being loaded—pronounced the sad or emphatics wrong, and could not produce the guttural h at all.

Another Persian who became an Arab poet was Ismail bin Yasar, a client of an Arab tribe, and a partisan of the Zubairids. He accompanied ‘Urwa, the son of Zubair, on his journey to the court of the Caliph Walid, and wrote an elegy on the death of his patron’s son, who fell off a roof among a drove of horses, and was kicked to death by them. Later he paid a second visit to Walid, when the Caliph was at the Syrian Rusafa, built to the west of Raqqa by Hisham. There, and during that prince’s time, he began chanting the praises of the Persians instead of extolling his host. The Caliph fell into a violent rage and had him thrown into a pond, out of which he was dragged half dead and banished to the Hijaz. He had two brothers,
Muhammad and Ibrahim, both of them poets, and descended from slaves taken in the province of Fars. Ismail is the earliest instance of these Shuubiyya, fanatical adherents of their own race, who, notwithstanding their Arab education, openly declared themselves to be of a different origin from that of their barbarous conquerors.

Amongst other poets of foreign birth whom the ascendancy of the conquering race and of the desert converted to the language of the Quran, we must not omit to mention Abu e Ata Aflah bin Yasar. His father was an Indian from the banks of the Indus. The chances of life so fell out that the child was born at Kufa, but he never spoke Arabic well, a remark we have already made as to the Persians who had adopted the dominant tongue. He was the chartered panegyrist of the Umayyads, and was obliged to direct the shafts of his satire against the ‘Abbasids. He lived long enough to see these last — victors, thanks to the help of the Persian Shites — found the city of Bagdad on the banks of the Tigris, for his death only occurred when Mansur was Caliph in 774. So faulty was his pronunciation that he was obliged to have his stanzas recited by a Barbary slave who had a fine voice. The eulogies he offered to Mansur were not well received by that Caliph, who could not forget that he had written verses mourning the death of Nasr bin Sayyar, the adversary of Abu Muslim. The poet, thus repulsed by the
‘Abbasid prince, took vengeance on him in his satires, jeering at the decree whereby the populace was commanded to dress in black, the chosen colour of the ‘Abbasids.

The Caliph Walid was a poet, a musical composer, and a singer. A born artist, he early plunged into the greatest excesses, and drank wine during his pilgrimage to Mecca. He lost the affection of the people, and was killed by the Yemenites in 742, just a year after the death of his uncle Hisham. He modelled his drinking songs on the works of ‘Adi bin Zaid, and his successor in this line was the great poet, Abu Nuwas. This Caliph, brilliant though he was, and full of showy qualities, necessarily displeased the Moslems by his shameless debauchery, and they accused him of having entered into a compact with Persian teachers, and of being a secret believer in their faith. He composed numerous airs, could play the lute, mark the rhythm on cymbals, and walk in cadenced step to the sound of the tambour — he denied this, it is true, and forbade his comrades to speak of it. At Mecca his chief care was to send for the best singer of the locality, Yahya, surnamed the Elephant and take lessons from him. Yahya, transported with admiration, besought the Caliph to receive him amongst his followers, so that he might profit by the teaching of a renowned artist, whom he acknowledged his superior.
At this period, also, flourished a very remarkable man, Hammad bin Sabur surnamed Al-Rawiya, or the Quoter — because his extraordinary memory held thousands of ancient Arab stanzas and complete poems. To him the preservation of great part of the pre-Islamic poetry is due, and to him we owe the collection into one volume of the Muallaqat. He was an Iranian. His father, Sabur (Sapor), who was taken prisoner in war, belonged to that redoubtable race of the Dailamites, which braved the Arabs and maintained its independence in the inaccessible mountains of Gilan, and which was later, under the name of Buwaihids, to seize Bagdad, and reduce the Caliph’s power to a purely spiritual sovereignty. This early commentator and scholar, whose linguistic blunders bewrayed his foreign origin, was also born at Kufa. The favour shown him by Yazid had displeased Hisham. When he succeeded, Hammad was fain to hide himself a whole year in his own house, never leaving it, save to pay secret visits to trusted friends. But the new Caliph soon summoned him to Damascus. He is said to have died either in 771 or 774. His learning extended over the legendary history of the pre-Islamic Arabs, their poetry, their genealogies, and their dialects. He could distinguish the ancient from the modern style; he boasted that he could recite long odes, belonging to the heathen times, rhyming on every letter of the alphabet. He was a living encyclopedia. He
had begun by being a thief and a rogue. Some verses which he found on the
person of a man he had robbed in the middle of the night stirred his
vocation in him. He wrote poetry himself. Al-Mufaddal al-Dabbi accused
him of interpolating his own lines amongst those of the ancient poets, so
that it was impossible to detect the difference, and it is even said that, when
pressed by Caliph Al-Mahdi, Hammad confessed his fraud.

History first makes an appearance under the sway of the Umayyads.
We are told that Ziyad, brother to Muawiya, and his lieutenant, wrote a
book on the pretensions of the Arab families, which was intended to serve
as a weapon in the hands of his own descendants, in case their origin
should be attacked (he was the son of Abu Sufyan, Muawiya’s father, by a
slave) but this is by no means a certainty, though the assertion is sup-
ported by the authority of the Fihrist. Abid bin Sharya was an Arab from
the South; he was summoned to Damascus from Sana, by Muawiya, to
whom he used to recite the stones of the kings of Yemen, and biblical
legends, as also did Wahb bin Munabbih (638-728), a Jew by origin, and
either a Muslim convert, or, possibly, a Sabian, or Christian follower of St.
John Baptist. His surname, Abnawi, indicated his descent from the Persian
colony left in Southern Arabia by the troops sent by Chosroes I.
Anushirwan against the Abyssinians. He played an important part in the
elaboration of Muslim jurisprudence and theology, which are based, after the Quran, on the Hadith, or traditions of the Prophet. Wahb was one of the most ancient and popular of the traditionists. He was born at Dhimar, near San’a. Abu Mikhnaf Lut bin Yahya wrote three-and-thirty treatises on different persons and events. They deal more especially with the history of the conquest of ‘Iraq, a subject on which he was, in the earliest days, the uncontested authority. He died in 774.