CHAPTER IV
Chapter-IV

A contribution of the early Abbasid period to Arabic Literary prose

A The Arts of speaking-(Alkhitabat)

In the preceding chapter we have given an account of overall contribution to Arabic prose by way of translations and other scientific writing dealing with grammar philology, logic, philosophy, history, geography, Islamic services, scholastic theology and others.

This chapter is devoted to the main part of the thesis which is concerned with the literary aspect of the Arabic prose. Now that we have entered the Abbasid period we have to deal with changed political conditions which one feels must necessarily effect the course of the literary progress also. No doubt the change of regime brings about change in political set up, but it does not change the literary movement set in motion by the past. It has to be in line with the traditions left by the predecessors. The Abbasids relied in many matters on traditions left by the Umayyads. With regard to literary prose it was natural that they should take advantage of whatever progress was already made in this regard. Ibn ul Muqaffa and Abdul Hamid were the models The Umayyads had left for the literary prose writers.

With the advent of the Abbasid rule, domineer of the non Arabs in the administration increased and after the death of Al-Mansur, the Arabs were almost totally ignored. The controversy raged from both sides as to who belonged to the superior race, Arabs or Persians. Books were written on the subject by prominent writers. Of course the Arab scholars could not
be silent and scholars like Al- Jahiz and Ibnu Qutaiba wrote on the subject, the details of which we need not give here.1

The process of translating Persian books to Arabic started in right earnest and conditions were created in the fusion of the two cultures in particular, which helped immensely in giving new colour to the literary Arabic literature bringing into it the beauties and style of the Persian language. The centre of this cultural development Al- Baghdad was humming with activity and the language of the desert, which was so dear to the Arabs and which remained a uniting factor for the Muslims all over the world with its Quranic base advanced in its style of expression in speech as well as in writing.

In order to survey the development of literary Arabic during this period we will prefer to start with the art of speaking called Al- Khitabat, as it was practiced then. The development of this art from the pre- Islam days to the end of the Umayyad period has already been discussed in brief. Now we are treating this subject in changed political and social conditions. The Abbasids assumed power under the controversy and opposition from the house of Ali, and a debate raged as to who could claim the status of Ahle- Bait of the Prophet of Islam. The first speech which Al- Saffah delivered was master piece, when among others he discussed his legitimacy to the throne vacated by the Umayyad. In his favour he quoted the verses of the Quran interpreting them in own way. Some extracts of his speech are given below:-

1. Dr. Shauqi Daif - Al-Funnu wa Madhahibuhu Fi Al-Nath Al-Arabi, p. 122.
2. Dr. Shauqi Daif - Al-Funnu wa Madhahibuhu Fi Al-Nath Al-Arabi, p. 449
Al- Jahiz also praised Al- Saffah for his eloquence in the following words:

Delivering his speech for the people of Mecca he mentions his victory in the following words:

Al- Saffah did not rule long and died soon. His brother Al- Mansur succeeded him. He was talented ruler and the most eloquent speaker. It was during his reign that Muhammad bin Abdi Allah bin Al- Hasan known as Al- Nafau Al- Zakiyyah revolted against him claiming the Caliphate for himself. He was also forceful speaker. The following is an extract from one of his speeches:

The early period of the Abbasids was the period of suppression and people were not free to open their mouths against the regime. Naturally people were not interested in giving vent to their feelings, with the result that the art of speaking was on the decline. However occasions for speaking arose on special events such as the death of the ruler or his son or daughter, when people had to make condolence speeches.

The distance between the ruler and the ruled increased gradually after the reign of the four pious Caliphs and the public deputations who...
were meeting the head of the state freely for presenting their needs, were practically barred to do so freely. Now that the Abbasids came to the power the structure of the Islamic state was no other than that of the Roman Empire or Iranian state. The rulers lived in their magnificent palaces and claimed that it was the gift of God they were enjoying. They claimed the divine nature of their rule which they freely expressed in their public speeches. As we have said the first two Caliphs of the Abbasid dynasty Al-Saffah and Al-Mansure were forceful speaker with great command over Arabic language.

I have already given an extract from the speech delivered by Al-Saffah. The following is the speech of Al-Mansur which he delivered in Mecca:-

Al-Medi who succeeded his father Al-Mansur was not believed his predecessors in the art of oratory. He was also known for his excellence in the art of dialectic.

I am giving below some extracts of Al- Mansuri’s speeches which are quoted as masterpieces of Arabic literary prose. When he went to Syria he said:-

Al- Mansur was a great scholar of divinity and a man of vast learning. Though he has not left any work in any branch of learning but his speeches are a living proof of his intelligence, his broad mindedness, his knowledge and his excellence in the art of expression. His command over Arabic language is commendable. The following extract from his long speech extempore is a testimony to his marvelous commands over the language as well his intelligence and his presence of mind in answering questions raised during his speech. He is sober and not disturbed in the least. The author of Iqdu Al- Farid reports:-

Apart from the heads of the Empire there were famous speakers who made their name in the art of speaking, they are Sulaiman bin Ali Abdul Malik Ibn Salih bin Ali, and Dawood bin Ali whose speeches have been reported by the author of Iqdu Al- Farid and others, but we have avoided

quoting them for want of space. However among the rulers of Abbasid dynasty Al- Mehdi, like his predecessors was a good speaker and a good dictator. An extract from his speech is given below:

When Harun Al- Rashid succeeded his father Al- Mehdi he kept alive the tradition of the family by equipping himself with vast knowledge and also by patronizing the men of learning. His regime is considered as the golden period of Islam in respect of the expansion of learning and culture. His period was the period of peace and tranquility. It seemed as if the period of civil war and family strife was over. After the annihilation of the Barmaki family Harun Al- Rashid took full control of the administration of the empire and there was expansion in every field of social life. This was the period of economic prosperity also and the society was enjoying the life as it came to them. Harun Al- Rashid as an enlightened ruler kept the zeal spirit of the ruler alive and the speeches he delivered were his own and not written by anyone else. However the political theme in the speeches had become rare and it was the entire religious theme that had become the subject matter of the speech. We shall give below some extracts from the speeches of Harun Al- Rashid which will give an idea of the quality of the oratory during those days. Harun Al- Rashid’s speech has its own identity different from others.

He says:-

In this opening part of the speech which is to follow, Harun Al-Rashid has not only praised Allah and his Prophet (peace be on him) by using terms generally used by many, but he has given the history of the achievements of the Prophet of Islam (peace be on him) a new approach and a style of presentation with select words and phrases of literary beauties. Here we shall quote only few sentences which will serve our purpose. Proceeding further Harun Al-Rashid says:-

It is said that the three Caliphs Al-Mansur, Al-Mehdi and Harun, Al-Rashid had their own preachers in the court to give them sermon. The prominent of them were Amar bin Ubaid in the court of Al-Mansur, Saleh bin Abdul Jalil in the court Al-Mahdi and Ibne Al-Samak in the court of

1,2. Ibnu Abdi Rabbahi - Al-Iqdu Al-Farid, Vol. IV, p. 165-166
Al-Rashid. They did not fail in their duty to give sermon to the caliphs when occasion arose.

The last powerful orator which the Abbasid dynasty produced is Al-Mamun whose services to the progress of learning are a landmark in the history of the development of sciences. His active encouragement to the scholars in general and prominent men of learning in particular opened new avenues of developments in the Islamic world of learning. Here are some extract some of the sermons he gave on occasions like Juma prayers and Idu Al-Adha and Idul Al- Fitr. Quoting from Al-Iqdu Al-Farid here are some selected portions of his sermons:

Addressing Juma gathering he said:

While delivering his sermon on the occasion of Idu Al-Fitr, he said:

1. Dr. Shauqi Daif - Al-Fannu Wa Madhahibuhu Fi Al-Nathr Al-Arabi, p. 453.
These are the speakers who belong to the royal family and who were ruling with absolute authority. Then who rose against them were subdued and annihilated political speeches were practically barred. But there was still scope delivering religious sermons which was the pleasant duty of the scholars of divinity, some of whom have been mentioned above.

One of the most eloquent speakers of this period is Abu Hamza, who was a Kharji. One extract from his speech which he delivered at Madina is given below:

\[
\text{ас-самам ар-рахумий айн-нада ар-хаммэл акка би растьастьа}
\]

About this speech which is very long and which is delivered against those in power, Hazrat Malik hin Anas says as reported by the author of Al-Iqdu Al-Farid:

It was during the reign of the Abbasids that the power of the Khawarij was broken and the fiery speeches they were delivering were stopped. This is the period when the art of speaking was restricted or reserved for religious speeches or condolence speeches.

Before closing this topic I would like to throw light on the importance of the art of oratory among the Arabs and its nature. About the poets it is said that they are born in and not educated in that fashion. The same is true about orators also who are called Khutba. For a speaker to make his speech effective it is not only the good language which works, but the speaker must have in him something poetic. It is the inner self which

works. The magic works before the audience only when the inner spirit of the speaker is awake. Poets as a rule do not require listeners but a speaker must have the audience to listen. He must also have a purpose so as to speak with the zeal of a missionary. These qualities were in the process of waning in the ruling class after Harun Al-Rashid left this world. Even during his life he had realized that the successor to his throne was wanting in the qualities required for a good speaker. It was therefore that he asked Asmai to prepare a speech for his son Amin to be delivered at the Juma congregation, thought he knew that only an extempore speech can be a maiden one if delivered with the vigour of a born speaker.

We may mention here the sermons delivered on the occasions of Muslim marriages which is tradition left by the Prophet of Islam (peace be on him). We shall quote here the author of Al-Iqdu Al-Farid who writes:

كان الحسن الصوري نحو في خطبة النكاح ماألغاء الله وعليه وسلم — أما دينه ومنه تمسح بوذ النعمة الإجمالية المفصلة والإسناء المتخرجة وحيل ذات التفجينة من دينه ومنها عرفنا من أمره ووظفه الخلفان وعليه من الله سلاسة وبيتل الصدر كراماً تستدير الأمل. 

It is not necessary for a sermon on the occasion of the marriage to be of one and the same type. It differs from person to person, for instance, the (Khutbatu Nikah) marriage Khutba delivered by Abdullah d. Marwan, while giving his daughter in marriage to his nephew Umar bin Abdul-Aziz was very short and sweet. While delivering the sermon he said:

قد وجهنا أمير المؤمنين نبعت نافعةً ماألزوة أنساً إبناً المومنين حبرًا فقوا أجرت العطية وكيميت المسكين.

This is what we call in terms of Islamic jurisprudence, Ijab wa Qubul offer and acceptance just what is required in marriage.

In the civil war for succession Amin was eventually kind and his brother Al- Mamun was accepted as the head of the Muslims. But he did not leave Al- Rai and did not visit Baghdad. At last when conditions compelled him to shift to Baghdad, he was welcomed there and the following welcome address was delivered there:–

B. The story tellers.

We have already mentioned a group of the religious speakers who were attached to the court and who were giving sermon on appropriate occasions. The other group was that of story tellers who would mix the stories also along with the verses of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (peace be on him). One of the most famous story tellers of those days was Musa bin Sayyar Al- Uswari who was known as one of the wonders of the world. His excellence in both the languages, Arabic and Persian was of equal merit. He would address the public in Arabic and Persian. In his gathering the Arabs would sit on the right hand side while, the Persians would sit on the left hand side and he used to address both at one and the same time, alternately in Arabic and Persian with great ease and fluency. He would move his face one time towards his right and the other time towards his left. Other story tellers who were famous in those days are Uthman bin said bin Asad, Yunus Al- Nahvi Al- Muallimi and Abul Ali Al- Uswari. Others who followed them are, Al- Qasim bin Yahya, Malik bin Abdul Hamid Al- Makoof and Sahel Al- Murri who was called Aba Basher. 1.

1. Farid Rifai - Asia Al-Mamun vol 1 p 405
2. Dr. Shauqi Daif - Al-Funnu wa Madhahihuhu Fi Al-Nath Al-Arabi, p455
It may not be misunderstood that these speakers who were known as story tellers were delivering their speeches for amusement. They were missing the verses of the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet (peace be on him) with a view to great moral and spiritual effect in their deliveries. Once it happened that the famous religious scholar Sufyan bin Habib was present in the gathering that was being addressed by the famous story teller Saleh Al- Murri and he remarked after listening to his address:

لئن حفزت اتاما هذا نزج

Al- Jahiz says:

كان سلمة الهمد الصامع السامع لبلغته كثيرا ما ينفرد في فخضاته، في مرار عنظه حفزاً لكرة في فنارت بعيرت العلم، فكان الفسيحة ممتعة في عقل.

It is also reported by Al- Jahiz that the son of the Quazi of Basri died and Saleh went to him to offer his condolence. He said to him:

إن كنت مصبتة في بنك في حزنك في عظمة في نفس، فسلم المصبت مصبتا، وإن كنت مسموت إرداد المخطو في نفس، مصبتة في نفس اعظم مصبتة في بنك.

We have seen that those who were known story tellers and those who were known as religious speakers were not different from each other, because the aim of both was to convey the people a message of moral values. The approach was different but the motive was one and the same. It is therefore that the gatherings addressed by the so called story tellers were attended by scholars like Al- Jahiz and others of his status. These gatherings had their own charm and literary excellence. In this context Dr. Shanqi Daif writes:
About the most prominent story teller of that period, Al-Fadl bin Isa Al-Raqashi (الراغب فائق) Al-Jahiz says:

As we have seen the art of story telling in Arabic literature is not merely the description of an event or events, as told by others. It is a part of the literary Arabic which includes in it all the literary beauties required for the purpose.

B. Tawqiat

Tawqiat is defined by Dr. Shauqi in the following terms:

The term Tawqiat is used for short sentences or extracts possessing rhetorical beauties to be noted down on the public petitions or individual applications submitted to the rulers or their administrators, so that they may address the needs and grievances of the people. The orders thus passed by noting down on the relevant papers are executed by the subordinates appointed for the purpose.

This practice was followed by the Persian rulers which has its origin in the needs of the rulers and the ruled. When Islamic state came into being and the Muslim armies conquered the neighbouring land, this practice of noting down instructions on the documents by the rulers came into practice. It started in a simple style from the days of the second pious Caliph of

1. Dr. Sliauqi Daif- All- Funn wa Madhahibuhu Fi Al- Nathr Al- Arabi P.456
2. Al- Jahiz - Al Bayan wa Al- Tabyeen Vol I P 290
3. Dr. Shauqi Daif- All- Funn wa Madhahibuhu Fi Al- Nathr Al- Arabi, P.1488
Islam which was followed by his successors, up to the end of the Umayyad period. The wordings of the noting were of business type and it was not considered necessary to use rhetorical devices in the terms used for the purpose. But with the advent of the Abbasid rule this practice appeared in new colours which eventually developed into an important branch of literary Arabic prose. We are giving below some of these Tawqiat as reported by the author of Iqdu Al- Farid and others. Ahmad bin Muhammad, the author of Iqdu Al- Farid writes about the remark which noted down at the bottom of the letter addressed to him by Saad bin Waqas, regarding permission for the construction of the house:-

As regards the third pious Caliph he writes:-

The fourth pious Caliph wrote on the letter he received from his son Al- Hasan:-

Hazrat Muawiyah noted down on the letter he received by Abdullah bin Aamir:-

Abdul Malik bin Marwan wrote the following note on the letter he received from Hajjaj bin Yusuf:-

Umar bin Abdul Aziz wrote a note on the letter which he received from his governor asking his permission to repair the city constructions:-

1. 2. 3- Ahmad bin Muhammad Ibnu Abdi Rabbihi- Al- Iqdu Al- Farid Vol.IV, p.256
4- Ahmad bin Muhammad Ibnu Abdi Rabbihi- Al- Iqdu Al- Farid Vol.IV, p.257
5- Ahmad bin Muhammad Ibn Abdi Rabbihi- Al- Iqdu Al- Farid Vol. 1 IV, p.258
6- Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Ibn Abdi Rabbihi- Al- Iqdu Al- Farid Vol.IV, p.176
Hisham bin Abdul Malik put down a note on the application of a prisoner who was punished for his crime:

When the Umayyad Caliph Marwan Muhammad received a letter from his governor of Khurasan he noted down on it:

Now we have entered the Abbasid period when the tone and style of these notes on the files gradually changes and assumes the excellence of literary prose. Al- Saffah the founder of the dynasty did not live long to rule but his notings on the files have been reported by the author of Iqdu Al- Farid, who says:

The following remark is attributed to Al- Saffah:

Al- Saffah the brother of Al- Mansur who succeeded him after his death wrote his uncle Abdullah bin Ali:

When the people of Al- Kufa complained against the governor, he wrote a note on the document:

When someone wrote to Al- Mansur he noted down on his application:
When a man requested him to construct a mosque near his house, as he had to cover a long distance to reach the mosque in order to offer his prayers, Al- Mansur wrote down the following sentence on his application:

أعطني لرخام

Al- Mehdi wrote on the letter sent by the ruler of Armenia against their disobedience:

عزة المقرور بالمقرور من أعزم عن

When some prisoner appealed to him to show him mercy to him for killing some, Al- Mehdi wrote the following verse of Al- Quran on his application:

لا يسم من الحصاة صيادة للنبي الابن

When Yusuf revolted against him’Khurasan he wrote:

لك ماذا وموكل بها لي

Musa Al- Hadi who succeeded his father Al- Mehdi noted down the following sentence for Al- Hasan ibn Qahtaba:

قد انزلت المنذررة كما سنفينا كلمة الله

The period of Harun Al- Rashid is very rich in respect of giving new dimensions to the art of Tawqiat, who was working with team of literary scholars Yahya bin Khalid, his two sons Fadl and Jafar, Amir bin Masud and others who gave new colour to the art of writing notes remarks and order on the state documents as an administrative duty. They were always careful to see that their writings are pieces of literary beauties in some way or the other. We shall discuss in some detail the contribution of these talented scholars to the art of Tawqiat.

About this period Dr. Mustafa writes:

أو أخمن أن مكنات حضنر بكيت في منارات

Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Abdi Rabbihi Al- Iqdu Al- Farid Vol.IV, P.265-2.

Dr. Mustafa

Al- Adab, P 382 178
Dr. Shauqi Dauf writes:-

Jafar bin Yahya had wonderful command over writing down remarks and disposing off the cases within no time. He was quick as well as at his best in coining the best pieces of literary language. He would not repeat the same note and even if the order carries the same meaning the wording is different.

We shall elaborate our statements by giving examples while disposing the petitions of the prisoners. The language he uses in each case is different though its meaning is the same. In one case he writes:-

المدينون اربتعه والمؤونة تطلعت

In another case he remarks:-
الجانب ما بسته والمؤونة تطلعت

In the third case he notes down:-
المعدل ارتقص والمؤونة تطلعت

When complaint against the governor multiplied he issued the following order:-

يا هذا افتكشر لوط وقتل سا كربث ناما اعترفت وما اعترفت

In the case of a petition from another prisoner, he wrote:-

لمعل اجل كتاه

Once he wrote to his boon companion:-

لا شعر بفیت

1. Dr. Shauqi Dauf- Al-Funun wa Madhahib al-Huwa Fi Al-Nathr- Al-Arab, P 219
2. Dr Mustafa- Al-Adab- P 383
6. Ahmad bin Muhammad Ibn Abde Rabbihi- Al-Iqdu Al-Farid Vol IV, P 270
The wife of one of his soldiers wrote to Jafar complaining the long absence of her husband and asking him to call him back. In reply to her request he noted down on the application:—

With regard to his Tawqiat writing, Ibnu Khaladun pays tribute to him acknowledging his command over this art of literary prose. He writes:—

Jafar bin Yahya was noting down verses also on petitions received by him but we have not quoted them since we are concerned with the literary prose only.

Not that Jafar bin Yahya is the only one recognized great as Tawqiat writer, there are others also who preceded him like his father Yahya, Al-Zaid bin Salih, Al-Mehdi’s minister Abu Muslim Al-Khurasani, Al-Rashid and others. Jafar’s superiority over them is that his contribution to this art by way of quantity is much greater and the speed with which he used to note was such that in one night he noted down one thousand such remarks on the same number of petitions and it did not affect the literary excellence of his writing nor did he repeat the same in other case. No doubt this is something which others could not do. §

We have given here only one aspect of Jafar’s achievements. The whole family rendered useful services to the house of Abbas. They were all wonderful people. Yahya bin Khalid was the most intelligent, wise, scholarly, genius and pious Vazir who devoted himself fully to the services to the house of Abbas. He was the wisest of the wise, who played his role in persuading Caliph Al-Hadi not to disturb the will of Al-Mehdi in

1. Dr. Mustafa — Al Adab — P 383
2. Ibnu Khaladun — Muqaddama Ibnu Khaladun P173
3. Ibnu Khalilkan — Wafayatu Al-Ayan Vol I P 105
appointing Harun Al- Rashid as his successor, till Hadi’s son grows young. In the mean time Al- Hadi died and Harun Al- Rashid succeeded him. His eldest son Al- Fadl resembled him in all his qualities and in a way; he was a copy of his father. Yahya also loved him dearly. As regards Jafar he was more than a brother to the Caliph Harun Al- Rashid. He was his closest companion and a partner in his drinking. When Yahya retired as prime minister, Al- Fadl succeeded him; this was not liked by Harun Al- Rashid who wanted Jafar to be supreme in his administration. His appointment brought down to the whole family which has its history not known clearly to the historians. With his extraordinary intelligence, sharp memory, vast learning and dynamic personality, he had endeared himself to the Caliph and in practice it was he who was ruling the empire and not Harun Al- Rashid. His contribution to the Tawqiat literature is a land mark in the development of literary Arabic prose. His devotion to this art could not be replaced by any after his death. 1. However there are others whose contribution in this art cannot be underestimated. We shall mention here some of them. Harun Al- Rashid was an accomplished scholar and writer. His Tawqiat are also of great literary value, some of which we are reporting here.

He wrote to the Governor of Egypt:-2

ما لا نبكل للك ب يفسس نماتن من

To the Governor of Khurasan Al- Rashid wrote:-3

إن لله لى نداسف م اجري

On the petition of a prisoner he put on record:-4

مين لحاBAL 11 11

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1 For more details about the services of the Barmaki family to Harun Al- Rashid and literary achievements, please see Dr Mustafa’s work ‘Al- Adab’ from page 369 to 392
2. 3. 4. Ahmad bin Muhammad Al- Iqdu Al – Farid Vol IV, P 265
When it was reported to Al- Rashid that Khuzaima bin Khazim ( ) resorted to killing, when he entered Armenia, he wrote disapproving his action:-

لا أسم الله تقاتث بالذنب حين لاذنبا له

In the case of a magian, he wrote:-

سني لاجي الى اتعدا جا

Once he wrote to the Governor of Madina:-

ضغب جليله عن رواب اهل هذا
المها مزعم مهور ظالمو لب
بالسحاء ونغم عم سي
لزيار الموار - 3

He wrote to Al- Sandi:-

خف الله وماملك وحما جمالك - 4

When he received a letter that the Roman forces were intending to attack the Muslim empire, he replied this threatening letter in the following words:-

سسرعمل الساعه عقب الموار - 5

1. 2. 3. Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Abdi Rabbihi. Al Iqdu Al Farid
4. 5. — 110 —
Vol IV. P 265
P 266
When Yahya felt that he was to die in the prison soon, he wrote few words to Harun Al- Rashid to which Harun Al- Rashid replied, the detail is given as under:

Al- Mamun Al- Rashid.

Mamun- Al- Rashid as head of the Muslim empire was the most successful ruler. His contributions to the Muslim world are many. His personality is reflected in his Tawqiat also, which he wrote extensively and some of which are given below;

He wrote to Amar bin Masadah in the case of an oppressed petitioner:

In another such case, he wrote to Abu Ibad:

Abu Muslim’s Tawqiat have also been reported by the author of Iqdu Al- Farid, in which he generally quotes the verses of the holy Quran. He wrote the following note on the letter he received from Sulaiman bin Kathir:

To Ibn Qahtaba, he wrote:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5 - Ahmad bin Muhammad

Al- Iqdu Al- Farid Vol.IV, P.266 - 269

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Then again he wrote to him on two occasions:

Again;

To his administrator at Balakh, he wrote:

He wrote to Abu Salma, when he doubted his sincerity:

Al- Fadl bin Sahl wrote to his brother Ahmad:

About someone who was oppressed, he wrote:

To his Chamberlain he wrote:

When someone complained about his wrong doer, he wrote:

When someone rebuked the first and the second Caliphs of Islam, he ordered:

Al- Hasan bin Sahl is also known for writing Literary Tawqiat. For example, when a woman wrote to him about her husband who was in prison, he noted down on the petition:

When someone asked for monetary help, he wrote down on his application:

Al- Iqdu Al- Farid Vol. IV, P. 270

Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Iblin Abdi Rabihi

Al- Iqdu Al- Farid IV, P. 272
Tahir bin Al- Husain's Tawqiat were also very popular. Once he wrote on the application of someone who was oppressed by Nasr bin Suhail's men:

طلب الريحاني دارالبلاط

When someone applied for a permit for something he wrote:

إجلس يا ملك الأسرى يا نبي صلنا ما كنت يا مرمصما

In the case of a Magian, he wrote:

ببطل ريمتيك

On one document he wrote:

سنحار أصفرت أم لم يصب من ألا ربيع

We have given in brief some of the Tawqiat of the Caliphs and some of the administrators of the Muslim state. It will not be out of place to report here some Tawqiat that have come down to us by way of translation from Persian into Arabic and that relate to the rulers of the Persian Empire and others. Ardsher wrote:

منعا العدل لن لا يفرح الابلة ورميهم التذرون

The author of Iqdu Al- Farid has reported many such Tawqiat which are given below:
As we have already said that the art of noting down remarks on the relevant papers was in practice in Persia. As the matter of the administration necessity, this later on developed into the art of writing with all its rhetorical beauties. The Persian Tawqiat served as a model for the Muslim rulers and later on it developed into a branch of literary prose as the Abbasid administration was in control of the Persians. Later on, during the early Abbasid rule the art reached its height of excellence. Tawqiat translated from Persian into Arabic, are a part of the Arabic Tawqiat which is almost the same in substance and style. Yet it is only a broad based composition since the literature produced in this particular branch of Arabic prose is very rich both in quality and quantity, since it combines in it the wisdom of the Quran and Al-Hadith also, which adds to the beauty of this art.

Before we close our discussion on the subject it will be appropriate to quote here some of the translated Tawqiat from Persian into Arabic which will give an idea about the real nature of Tawqiat and the process of its development. The author of Iqdu Al-Farid writes:-

When the advisors of the kings informed him about the people who were reported to have conspired against the king and that they had used language against him. The king noted down on the document:

1.2. - Ahmad bin Muhammad Ibnu Abdi Rabbihi - Al-Iqdu Al-Farid Vol. IV. P.274
The noting of the king on the complaint of his official, speaks of the wisdom and magnanimity of the man who is destined to rule such a vast land of his lord, the creator of the universe.

When someone complained to him about the oppression, he was suffering from, he noted down the following words on the petition:-

لا ينبغي للمالك ً الخالق ً ومن عنده ينتسب الدل ً لا يجب
وم من ينصب الوجه ً اسم ً كحصان راحيل ينسوب بعين ميرى القدر

When one of his servants wrote to him about his financial difficulties and his inability to maintain his large family, the king investigated his case and it was found that the man was telling lies. The king wrote down the following on his application:-

../images/002.jpg

مُنِبَّتَ إلَى الْجَدِّ بِنْعَكَ ٢٠٠٠٠

Somebody told him something against someone which was not correct, so the king remarked:-

أَتَسَلُّمُ ْنِحْفَ ۖ قَلِب٤

In the case of a Magian, he remarked:-

مِنْ رَكِبِ ْمَا لَقَّيْتِ مِنْ كِفْلِهِ أَيْنَ مِثْلُكَ

Finally I would like to add, that this branch of literary prose called Tawqiat is the most interesting part of it. All its contents are short and sweet, full of rhetorical beauties. it is observed that much attention has not been paid to its study and many of its aspects remain unexplored. The wisdom employed in this art and the moral lessons contained in them are the gems of the literary Arabic prose, the value of which has yet to be evaluated.

1. Ahmad bin Muhammad Ibn Abde Rabbihi- Al-Iqdu Al-Farid Vol.IV, P.274
2. Ahmad bin Muhammad Ibn Abde Rabbihi- Al-Iqdu Al-Farid Vol.IV, P.275
C. Literary prose writings: A general survey of its development till 300 A.H.

In the preceding part of this chapter we have discussed the art of oratory and story telling. Now we are dealing with the art of letter writing, essay writing, composition, noting as orders and remarks on the relevant government papers called Tawqiat. This relates to the written part of literary prose writing during the early Abbasid rule. The letters include, both official and non-official matter, as Dr. Ahmad Daif explains:-

It is natural that managing the affairs of the state administrative apparatus was established called Dawawin. Each department of the government had its own office. The revenue department where tax was collected was called Diwanu- Al- Kharaj. The department for correspondence was called Diwan Lil Rasail, with which we are concerned here. Other departments of administration were called Diwanu Al- Fauj, Diwanu Al- Hurab and so on. They were divided into zones and rezones, called eastern sector and western sector. Nobles of the empire had their own department for correspondence where writers were employed, who were highly qualified for the purpose. The members of the royal family had their own secretaries, who were writing on their behalf. It was thus those qualified writers who were in much demand, and who could get the opportunity of promotion in their job. This profession was considered respectable and these writers were employed by the judges and men of

1. Dr. Ahmad Daif - Tari'kh Al-Adabi Al- Arabi P.9
learning for helping them in their jobs. These were the men of learning some of whom rose to high positions in life.

In this highly educated society with encouragement from the ruling class, source of the most prominent writers who were not known, came to light.

Dr. Shauqi Daif writes:-

أعلى هذا العصر، كان الكتاب فيه هذا العصر الجسراً الذي يجمع
المحribbon الشخص إلى الرفوع المناصب.

Abdul Hamid had laid down the norms of prose writing. He acknowledged the influence of Arabic language in his literary writings. There is no other influence, he says. Though Abdul Hamid was a Persian and knew his language very well, but Persian influence is not so visible in his writings. On the other hand the capital of the Abbasid Empire was built on the soil of the Old Persian Empire, and Persian books were translated into Arabic. This gave an additional advantage to Arabic prose writers of those days, who borrowed many things from the Persians.

The charge against the Abbasid dynasty is that they polluted the pure Islamic and Quranic culture by accommodating other cultures which they call a cultural revolution. No doubt, the administration of the Abbasid state at the high level was chiefly manned by the non-Arabs and this process continued for long, which had its own effect.

The influence of the Persian language and literature gave new colour to the style of Arabic prose. At the same time the Arabic language greatly influenced the Persian. It was under these conditions that Umara bin Hamza emerged as a great writer and was appointed as the Kalil or secretary of the Caliph Saffah and then continued in the same position during the Caliphate of Al- Mansur. Later on he was promoted to other part of Basra. He wrote a
booklet in support of the claim of the house of Abbas, as the successor of
the Prophet of Islam (peace be on him).

As regards the style of Umara, he always tried to adopt the style of
the Arab writers, and he was always keen to quote the verses of the holy
Quran in his letters. For example, he quotes the following verse at the end
of one of his letters:-1

Al-Mehdi also acknowledged his great abilities as a writer.

Masada bin sad bin sul also has the honour of working as Al-
Mansur’s Kuttab, which is the post he had held formerly under Khalid bin
Barmark, when he was the prime minister of Al- Mansur. When Al-
Mansur asked Masada to write a book on Islam as a great religion, he did
the job soon and very sincerely.2

Yusuf bin subaih was also among the staff of Al- Mansur who was
writing for him. During the Umayyad rule he was employed in the office at
Karfi. Abdullah bin Ali, uncle of Al- Mansur appointed him to write for

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1-2-3. Dr. Shauqi Daif-

Al- Funun wa Madhahibulu fi Al- Nahl- Al- Arabi. P.P 489 - 490

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him. When Abdullah revolted against Al- Mansur, Yusuf went into hiding. Then he met his fellow writers who were working with the staff of the Caliph. He got a job there and worked in secretariat of the Caliph Al-Mansur. There he came into contact with the family of Barmark. Another famous writer of that period was Jabal bin Yazid, about whom the author of Al- Fihrist says:

It is said that he wrote the following letter to Al- Mehdi on behalf of Umara bin Hamza, when his father Al- Mansur died:

Another prominent Arabic literary prose writer of the period of Al-Mansur is Ghassan bin Abdul hamid, who was attached to the office of Sulaiman bin Ali, the Governor of Al- Basra, about whom Al- Nadeem says:

Ibnu Taifor was also a good writer who was famous for writing condolence letters. One of such letters of him which is reported is given here; he wrote to Al- Mehdi condoling the death of his father:

1. Gbnu- Al- Nadeem - Al Fihrist 377
2. Dr. Shauqi Duff P471
3. Gbnu- Al- Nadeem - Al Fihrist 289
Another prominent writer of this period is Abu Obaidullah Muawiya bin Obaidullah Ibn Yasar. When Al- Mehdi succeeded his father Al-Mansur he appointed him as his minister and put him in charge of all offices of his administration. Then it was in the year 163 A.H. that he was removed from that position and he was put in charge of correspondence only. That department was entrusted to him under the Caliph. He worked in that capacity up to 167 A.H. when someone else was appointed in his place. He died in the year 170 A.H.

Ismail bin Saheeh is also a prominent man of letters of this period. It is said that even Abu Obaidullah used to consult him on this art from time to time. While giving instructions to regional Governors, he writes:

As we have seen his letters contain many verses of the Quran and the words he uses in his letters are mostly Quranic. The style is simple and attracts the attention of the reader. He died in the year 164 A.H. His son Umar was also a great writer of Arabic literary language, who worked in the secretariat of the Caliphs, both Al- Mehdi and Al- Hadi.

1. Dr. Shauqi Daif- Al- Funn wa Madhahibuhu Fi Al- Natr- Al- Arabi, P.471
2. Dr. Shauqi Daif- Al- Funn wa Madhahibuhu Fi Al- Natr- Al- Arabi, P.472
As we have seen that the early Abbasid period up to Al- Hadi produced a number of famous writers whose contribution to the art of letter writing is immense. No doubt they followed the tradition left by Abdul Hamid and also Ibn Muqaffa. Within a short time the art of correspondence appeared in many colours. However the period of the Caliph Harun Al-Rashid is the most important period in the history of the development of both art and science. There was all around development during this period, which is why the period of Harun Al- Rashid is called the golden period of Islam. Here we are concerned only with one aspect of this development which we call Al- Kitabatu Al- Inshaiya, beauty of the prose writing which emerged in different colours, the details of which we shall discuss here.

This Abbasid period produced writers like Yahya bin Khalid, his two sons Jafar and Fadl, Amr, Ibrahim bin Al- Abbas. They were followed by the great writers of fame like Al- Jahiz, Ahmad bin Yusuf, Ahmad bin Ali Dawood, Ihamamah bin ashras, Al- Fadl bin Sahl, Muhammad bin Abdul Malik, Ibnu Qutaiba, Al- Zayyat Sahl bin Harun and many others who were in the service of the Caliph and the state which they used as a political weapon to subjugate the intelligence of the elite.

As regards Ibn Al- Muqaffa we have discussed his achievements in a separate chapter along with others of his rank. Here we are mentioning those writing skills that relate more to the political matters attached to the administrative apparatus then to pure literary skill, rather a mixture of both yet with wonderful literary excellence.

The family of Barmak rose to fame and power during the reign of Harun Al- Rashid who called Yahya his teacher and prime minister “My father”. No doubt Harun Al- Rashid had full confidence in the ability, honesty and loyalty of the house of family of Barmak so much, that he had
given Yahya almost all powers to rule. Yahya with his two sons Fadl and Jafar had devoted themselves to the service of the empire from morning till late in the night looking after the welfare of the state. The Caliph was free from all cares and was enjoying life as it came to him. The two families, the rulers and the ruled were so close to each other that Yahya’s wife had nursed Al- Rashid at her breast, while Al- Rashid’s mother had nursed Fadl at her breast.

About the three great men of letter’s of their age, Yahya, Al- Fadl, and Jafar, Dr. Mustafa writes:-

Yahya had full command over language he was a poet as well as a prose writer, but his main field of literary excellence is literary prose in which he has no equal. He could write long letters with as much ease as he could pen down the same in concise and brief language with all the rhetorical devices under his command. We shall quote below a letter addressed to Yusuf bin Al- Qasim who was employed as one of the writers under him and who had asked for some financial advance in respect of the payment he was receiving, so that he could get his son Ahmad, married.

In reply to his request, Yahya writes:-

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1 Dr. Mustafa- Al- Adab, P. 369
Kitabul Wuzura Wa Al- Kutlab

2 Dr. Mustafa- Al- Adab, P. 177

3 Dr. Mustafa- Al- Adab, P.P.371-372
As Al-Fadl was the eldest son of Yahya he was designated as junior vazir, while the Caliph wanted this post to be given to Jafar, but but he did not wanted to write Al-Fadl directly. So he told Yahya to manage the same, the short note wrote to his son Al-Fadl shows his remarkable command over expression, it was so short and sweet, he wrote:-

when Al-Fadl received the letter of his father he understood the meaning and he did not feel it at all, in reply he wrote:-

Jafar knew what happened between his father and his brother to which he expressed his reaction in the following words:-

Though the two brothers Jafar and Al-Fadl were highly educated but their temperaments and habits were different. Fadl did not care for the position as much as he cared for the moral values. He could not be present with the Caliph in his wine parties and that was a great handicap for him and which cost him his minister ship in favor of his younger brother Jafar.

1. Dr. Mustafa - Al-Adab - p 373
2. 3.4 Dr. Mustafa - Al-Adab pp.374-375
On the contrary Jafar would arrange wine parties for the Caliph and he
would be in his company as long as the Caliph Al- Rashid wanted him to
be. This made him more powerful so much so that some times he would not
hesitate in taking independent judgments without prior permission of the
Caliph. His father Yahya had warned him against this style of his working
in the following words:-

في أهل ملأ خلعنا لزمان نبي عشير شرف جليل مرك
وان كنت احسنت ان كن مانو لا شيرك لحا

However Jafar worked with the administration as Vaziri Saghir, the
deputy prime minister yet he was all powerful on account of his constant
nearness to the Caliph. He was too intelligent and too confident of his
position and at the same time too careless to heed to the advice of his
father. Yahya was a great politician and a man of learning. He had gathered
around him a team of scholars of divinity who had vast knowledge in
various sciences. He was a man of wisdom and culture. Many of his
sayings are often quoted, some of which are given below:-

البلاغة ان فظعم كل يوم بما انفعه

He told his son Jafar:-2

بابين السؤس من كل علم سبيلا مأله من حصل
عارة وآلاك من نلؤا نعداى لس من
الأرب

When Yahya was imprisoned he sent the following letter to Al-
Rashid:-3

من شخص اسلامته زلوبه را ولا تقتبه عوبره
وخلد شقيقه رفصه مدينه مالبه الزمان

1. Dr. Mustafa- Al- Adab, P.375
2. Dr Shauqi Daif-
   P.475
3. Ahmad ibn Muhammad
   Al- Idhu Al- Farid, Vol. V, P 68
Yahya was man of great command over writing literary prose with ease employing all the rhetorical devices at his command. He was man of culture and learning and these qualities he had inherited from his forefathers. He had taken care to that his Sons, Al- fadl and Jafar are also highly educated. He had taken advantage of the renowned scholars of that period like Imam Yusuf for this purpose, and the response from his two sons was also very encouraging. They worked hard to and equipped themselves well to take the place of their father, in which they succeeded.

Jafar was man of extraordinary intelligence and he had endeared himself to the Caliph Harun Al- Rashid so much that, it was he who was practically ruling. About his quick and sharp memory and the style of writing remarks, notes, orders, etc called Tawqiat on the relevant papers was great. It is said that he could depose of one thousand such Tawqiat in one night and in one sitting with the wording of each remark different from the other. His Tawqiat are considered as the best pieces of Arabic literary prose.

After the elimination of the family of Barmak, the other family which rose to fame in learning and literature was that of Suli, who earned name as great Arabic literary prose writers. The name of their grandfather
was Sul. He and his brother who was known as Feroz had come from Jurjan. Suli had embraced Islam as his religion when Yazid bin Al-Muhallab was the Umayyad governor there. This family produced great men of learning as well as great Arabic literary prose writers. Among them was Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Yahya Al-Suli, who is the author of many works, Ibrahim bin Al- Abbas, Abdullah bin Al- Abbas and his brother Ibrahim who were both attached to Al- Fadl Ibn Sahl. Amr bin Masada who was appointed Al- Mamun’s minister also belonged to this family. There are others also who belonged to this family and who are famous for their scholarship and vast learning.1

The two families, Barmaki and Suli resemble each other in many ways but at the same time they are poles apart from each other. Firstly the Barmaki family was more political minded as compared to their literary and scholarly bent of mind, on the other hand the Suli family preferred scholarly life than the political life. Secondly the Barmakis rose very high as men of authority but eventually their destruction astonished the world. On the contrary, the Suli’s ruled and lived in peace.2

The other writers of fame during the regime of Harun Al- Rashid who were working in different administrative apparatus all over the empire, the most prominent of them was Ismail bin Sabeeh. He worked in this capacity with different people including Yahya and Al- Rashid. He started his career from the days of Al- Hadi and he was still in charge of the department of correspondence and drafting letters on behalf of the Caliph when Amin ruled in Baghdad.

It is reported that he was the instrument in drafting the following letter on behalf of the Caliph Harun Al- Rashid which was sent to the governors of the Abbasid Empire:

1. Ibnu Khalikan-
2. Dr. Mustafa-

Wafayatu Al- Ayan, Vol. 1 P.16
Al- Adab, P.393
Yusuf bin Sabeeh, who has already been mentioned before is also one of the renowned writers of this age, who was famous for writing with ease employing the rhetorical devices at his command. Muhammad bin Al-Laith has also been mentioned by the author of Al- Fihrist as one of the famous writers of the days of Al- Rashid, who says:

1. Dr. Shauqi Daif-
2. Ibn Al- NAdeem-

The letter which Muhammad bin Al-Laith had drafted on behalf of Al- Rashid and which was addressed to Constantine VI, was spread over about seventy pages in which the Caliph had invited to embrace the religion of Islam and contained the details of the faith. It is a booklet written by one who has full mastery over writing beautiful literary prose. We are giving
below an extract from the booklet entitled “Kitabu Al-Khati Wa Al Qalam” which Muhammad bin Al-Laith had written:

Anas bin Ali Shaikh is one of the ten top men of letters of that period of Al-Rashid. He was employed by Jafar to write for him. Jahiz and Ibnu Al-Nadim have also praised him as a writer who had full command over the use of appropriate words and phrases and rhetorical devices he was using.

When Jafar was eliminated by Al-Rashid he was also punished on account of his association with Jafar. Ibnu Al-Nadeem writes:

We are giving a few lines of his writing in which he praises the Al-Mighty so beautifully:

As is evident from the above quotation Anas bin Abi Al-Sheikh writes rhymed prose as was the fashion in those days. In fact this
style was encouraged by Yahya and Jafar. One novelty which Harun Al-
Rashid introduced in letter writing and also in other writings is that he
added the praise of the Prophet of god (peace and blessings of god be on
him) called Nath along with praise of god Al- Mighty called Hamd. It may
be noted that this practice is being followed since then and even today in all
the major languages of the Muslim world Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu,
Bengali, Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi and Muslim world this practice is being
followed.

Another prominent writer of this age is Ramama bin Ali Yazid.
Primarily he was employed by Saleh bin Ali, later on he was appointed to
write for Al- Qasim Ibn Al- Rashid. Then he worked under Abdul Malik
bin Saleh who was the governor of Al- Jazira, Syria and Egypt. It was
unfortunate that he conspired against the governor and incurred the
displeasure of the Caliph Harun Al- Rashid. He was executed in the year
178 A.H. and thus ended the career of the most brilliant writer and the most
fluent speaker of his time.

We shall mention here two more writers who had earned name in the
art of letter writing, they are Jafar bin Muhammad and Umar bin Mahran
who worked for the state in different positions and served the cause of the
art of letter writing. The following is an extract from the writing of Umar
which he ahs addressed to the Caliph al- Rashid:-

As we have stated that the period of Harun Al- Rashid was the
golden period of Muslim rule when the society was on its way to cultural
development and there was general intellectual awakening among the
people. Harun Al- Rashid was a man of extraordinary abilities but under the
spell of the family of Barmak, who were actually ruling the country those qualities were dormant in him. He had perfect to enjoy life rather than to rule. He had given full powers to Yahya and the family of Barmak was supreme. However when Al- Rashid All of a sudden realized his responsibility, whatever may be the reason, he awakened to rule and to rule so well. The family of Barmak was eliminated and the set up of the administration was changed totally. New faces appeared on the scene and the administration was fully controlled by the Caliph himself. The active participation of the ruler in the affairs of the empire and the disgrace of the house of the Barmak, frightened the people which changed the very face of the personality of the emperor of the Muslim Empire. He had also taken care to see that the arrangements made by him are not disturbed even after his death. His two sons Al- Amin and Al- Mamun were highly educated and he had left instructions for them to keep the old order intact. Al-Mamun was at Rae according to the arrangement of Al- Rashid when his father died. Al- Amin succeeded his father and settled in Baghdad as the new Caliph of Islam. This is the period when Al- fadl bin Rabi was managing the affairs of the empire as its prime minister. He was in charge of almost all the departments of administration with full powers. Al- Amin had got the ability to govern such a vast empire. He intended to remove Al-Mamun from the position Al- Mamun had given him. He failed in his attempt and eventually he was killed mercilessly. Al- Mamun was declared the Caliph of Islam. This is the period of all round development of learning and writing.

The translation movement is the greatest achievement of this period which we have already discussed in chapter III. Here we are concerned with the progress made in the literary Arabic prose writing.
When Al- Mamun assumed power with Baghdad as his capital, he appointed Amr bin Masada, a renowned writer of those days as his minister. He belonged to the Suli family, who rose to power after the fall of Barmaki’s. Amar was a man of learning and a writer of fame. His father Masada has already been mentioned above.

Amar was working with the caliph not only as his minister but also as his advisor. In addition to that he was in charge of drafting letters on behalf of the Caliph. His father had already worked under al- Mansur. Al-Mansur had all praise for the writing of Amar.

This is confirmed by Ahmad bin Yusuf a renowned writer of his time who was also in service of the Caliph. He says:-1

Amar had worked under the family of Barmak also as a writer during the beginning of the career. One day he was with Jafar bin Yahya who was disposing of the official papers, when an application was presented to him in which request was made for the increase in salary. Jafar forwarded this application to Amar and asked him to note down his remarks on that, immediately Amar noted down the following words:-2

Jafar was astonished to read the remark and patted him on the back saying:-3

This is what Jafar had predicted when Umar was working under him in a lower position. At last he rose to the position of the minister of the empire during the period of Al- Mamun. Jafar had uttered these words not
knowing that the man sitting before him was really going to occupy the position which the family of Barmak was occupying then. Amar bin Masada rose to this position gradually step by step on account of the merit he had displayed. He was a remarkable administrator but he had no ambition because he was not a politician like the family of Barmak. He was a man of many good qualities with simple habits. He was a generous man ready to help his relatives and friends when needed his help. For example, we are quoting the following verses of his uncle’s son Ibrahim in which he praises and thanks him for his timely help when he was in financial difficulties. He writes:

Amar was known for his honesty and he was loved and respected by all. When he died the public in general mourned his death including the Caliph, Al- Mamun. When it was reported to him that Amar had left huge wealth of eight million Dirham the Caliph remarked that it was a small amount for a man who had served the Caliphate so long and so honestly.

Amar was in fact the pen of the Caliph and also his tongue. He liked his beautiful presentation and his rhetorical devices. Amar was famous for not only writing official letters for his master Caliph Al- Mamun, but even his private friendly letters on behalf of the Caliph. He writes to Al- Hasan bin Sahl on behalf of Al- Mamun congratulating him on the occasion of the birth of his:

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1. Ibn Khaldikan - Wafayatu Al-Aayan Vol I p 391
2. Dr. Mustafa - Al-Adab - PP 398-399
   and Jamharaat Rasaili Al- Arabi Vol III p 512

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He was writing to his friends also such private letters. An extract from one such letter is given below:-

Another literary figure who served the cause of the Arabic literary prose is Ibrahim bin Al- Abbas who belongs to the family of Suli. He had the privilege of working for a number of Caliphs. After the death of Al-Mamun his brother Al- Mustasim succeeded him. After him, his son Al-Watik occupied his place. Ibrahim bin Abbas served under four Caliphs, Al- Watik, Al- Mutawakkil, Al- Mustansir, and then for Al- Mutaz. He worked for them continuously to the satisfaction of all. The condolence letter which he wrote to Al- Watiq after the death of his father Al-Mutasim, reflects his command over the language and also his intelligence in adopting the style which is appropriate for the occasion. He wrote:-

1.2 Dr. Mustafa – Al Adab p. 400-402
Jamharaat Rasaili Al- Arabi Vol III P 513
Ibrahim was not only the excellent prose writer but he was also a good poet, but while writing he would not make use of his poetic talent in quoting the relevant verses. It is his literary prose also which has something poetic in it. Two of his verses are often quoted by men of letters, which are given below:

However his main field is prose in which his merit is recognized universally. Yet it was his practice to quote verses. Ibrahim had his own style of writing. The words he was using were simple yet they carried more meaning with all the beauty of literary prose. We are giving below a few lines from his letter to the Governor which will give an idea of the simple language he uses:

Ibrahim bin Al- Abbas had full control over the language he used on different occasions and different situations, he was confronted with. His main merit is in simplicity. It does not mean that his writings are always of one and the same type. Whenever he writes rhymed prose with rhetorical devices in it as appears that he has very few equals in this art:
This is another style of his writing in which he uses all the rhetorical beauties at his command with ease and yet the language is simple with its depth of meaning. He mixes the Quranic verses with his own language on appropriate occasions expanding the scope of meaning which he intends to convey to his readers.

Another bright aspect of the writings of Ibrahim bin Al- Abbas is that he is recognized as an expert in writing 'Tahmid', a few sentences in praise of Al- Mighty, the lord of the universe, in the beginning of the letter. The practice of writing in praise of god before starting the letter is old from the days of the Prophet (peace and blessings of god be on him) but it was short and as brief as possible. Then it was Harun Al- Rashid who introduced Nath in praise of the Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of god be on him). Another novelty added to the art of letter writing was that it was the end of the writer to write as much as he could and as best as he could in praise of his lord using all his literary skills. Ibrahim bin Abbas is ahead of all in this art. He writes lengthy Tahmidat and that part of his writing has all the beauties of the Arabic literary prose, which is in fact an addition to the characterization of the Arabic literary prose writing. It assumed not only its religious importance, but also its political, social and literary importance, because now the letters appear in a new style, a new approach, and a new tone adopted by the writers.

The credit for introducing a new element in the Arabic prose writing goes to Ibrahim bin Al- Abbas alone which became so popular not only in
Arabic prose writing but also in the prose writing of all the languages of the Muslim world like Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Indonesian, Bengali and so many other languages of the Muslims. We shall give below an extract from the letter of Ibrahim bin Al- Abbas, which will give us an idea of his style of this writing:-

This style of writing Hamd, praise of god in prose was adopted by all those who followed the author of such letters.

The fame of the Suli family does not end with the fame of Amar bin Masada and Ibrahim bin Abbas only. Others who followed them from this family are Abdullah, brother of Ibrahim and masud, Muhammad and Mujashi all brothers of Amar bin Masada.

The last of the most prominent men of learning from the Suli family is Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Yahya Al- Suli, who is not only a prose writer but a renowned poet. A man of vast learning and also a politician of repute he rose to a high position of honour in the administration of the Abbasid Caliphate. He had the privilege of being in the company of the Caliphs, like Al- Muklafi, Al- Muqtadir, and Al- Radi who would seek his advice in

1 Jamhanatu Rasial Al- Arabi Vol v P P 172-173
many matters of political importance. Abu Bakr was reputed to be a scholar of vast learning in various sciences like, the science of language and literature, History and other Islamic sciences. The author of Al- Fihrist writes about him:

Ibnu Al- Nadeem was given a long list of the works of Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Yahya Al- Suli, a few of which we are mentioning below:

There were two families who were close to the Caliphs of Baghdad; one was the family of Barmak while other was that of Sul. Both were famous for scholarship and administrative abilities. But there is vast difference between the two the origin of the two families was not the same. Barmak was a Persian while Sul was a Turk. The family of Barmak was more political minded and they were very close to the royal family in their private relationship. On the contrary, Suli’s were more prudent and wise in knowing the limitations of a subordinate who is always at the mercy of the ruler. It was on that account that the house of Barmak had to suffer and the family of Sul lived in peace and served the Caliphs for a long time. The family of Sul was more scholarly and devoted to learning. As we have already said Abu Bakr is the last of the Suli family who was a great scholar.

1. Ibnu Al- Nadeem- Al- Fihrist, P.P.221-222
2. Please see Al- Fihrist for detailed list of Abu Bakr’s works- P.P.221-222
as well as a renowned administrator. It may be noted here that after embracing the religion of Islam, the talent of the Persians and the Turks did not suffer on account. They being non-Arabs and they rose to the highest positions of power only because of their ability and merit. Abdul Hamid, the great writer of the Umayyad period who was a non-Arab had advised all his co-writers to adopt Arab culture both in thought and action and to learn Arabic language and Islamic sciences in depth without which there can be no way to reach the height of literary excellence.

In our survey of the development of Arabic literary prose, we have devoted a major portion of it to the official correspondence in service of the Caliphate. Before closing this part from Tawqiat, which we have treated as another branch of the Arabic literary prose on which we have written separately. Some of the private letters with literary beauties in them have been reported from various sources. For instance, the author of Al-Fihrist writes:

1. Ibn Al-Nadeem
2. Here, means
3. Dr. Shauqi Daif
Jabal bin Yazid wrote to one of his brothers:

أعلمني الإخواند صلى الله عليه وسلم
وربي وسلما

Friendly or brotherly letters have their own beauty of approach and presentation and in a way that they are a little different from official letters in which some norms have to be followed. But here we are concerned with only the literary aspect of such letters and therefore we shall confine our remarks to only that part of it. Here we have given only a general survey of the development of letter writing, book and pamphlet writing which is followed by Tawqiät as a separate art of writing literary prose which has its own charm and beauty. In this chapter we have avoided the discussion of details of prominent literary Arabic prose writers for whom a separate chapter has been devoted, which is to follow this chapter.

1. Dr. Shaiqi Daif-

Al- Funn wa Madhabibuhu Fi Al- Nathr Al- Arabi, P.492