A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CALIPHATE

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Rivalry between the two branches of the Luraish:

When the Prophet proclaimed his mission, the Luraish, the tribe of which the Prophet himself came, was divided into two main branches - the Hashimids and Umayyads, between whom there was keen rivalry of supremacy in Mecca. The Hashimids are called after Hāshim, the grandfather of the Prophet, while the Umayyads took their name from Umayyah, their ancestor who was a contemporary of Hāshim. In the struggle that ensued between these two personalities for supremacy, Hāshim got the upper hand and Umayyah was compelled to leave Mecca temporarily. However, the Umayyads did not forgo their claim to superiority; the struggle between the two continued. Hence when the Prophet began his missionary activities, they were interpreted by the Umayyads only as a means of capturing power and establishing the supremacy of the Hashimids. This was the reason why Abū Sufyān, son of Ḥarb who had once led the contemporary of the Prophet and the leader of the Umayyads, fought the Prophet and Islam tooth and nail. It is well known that there were a number of wars between the Muslims and the Luraish in which Abū Sufyān invariably played the role of the leader against the Prophet and the Muslims.

In the seventh year of the migration of the Prophet to Mekka, the Prophet declared his intention of undertaking a
visit to the Holy Mosque of Mecca or perform the 'Umrah'.

When the Prophet reached 'Hudai-biyyah', a place at a distance of three miles from Mecca, he was stopped by the Quraysh from paying the intended visit under the leadership of 'Ali bin Su'ayn, the argument of the Quraysh being that the Prophet's and the Muslims' thus performing the 'Umrah without their previously obtaining the permission from them, would lower the prestige of the Quraysh in the eyes of the Arab tribes. It was, therefore, finally agreed that the Prophet and the Muslims could visit Mecca next year, but would bring no arms.

The Prophet and his companions returned to Medina, in the meantime the Quraysh violated the treaty by attacking Bani Khuzaymah, a tribe allied to the Muslims and killing a large number of them. Bani Khuzaymah reported the matter to the Prophet, complaining the violation of the treaty by the Quraysh. The Prophet decided to punish the Quraysh by attacking Mecca without formally declaring a war, and suddenly appeared before Mecca at the head of ten thousand warriors strong. The Quraysh were taken by surprise and had no option but to surrender. 'Ali bin Su'ayn, the bitterest enemy of Prophet met Abi, the uncle of the Prophet and sought

advice from him as to what to do. 'Abdāl led him into the Prophet's tent who invited him to embrace Islam which would be a full atonement for his past enmity towards Islam. But Abū Sufyān began to praise the Prophet and thus trying to evade acceptance of Islam. The Prophet again called upon him to repeat the formula of confession of Islam, but Abū Sufyān only repeated or pronounced, "There is no God but Allāh," omitting the mention of the Prophet's apostleship. The Prophet said to him, "Why don't you pronounce the formula of faith in full?" Abū Sufyān said, "I do believe in Allāh, but there is something in my mind against your apostleship". The conversation thus went on for a short time when 'Abdās was exasperated and exclaimed, "Would you embrace Islam only when the sword is put on your neck?" Whereupon, Abū Sufyān, seeing no way of escape, pronounced the full formula of faith and thus became a convert to Islam. Following his example the members of the branch of Banū Umayyah embraced Islam. Not only they but also all the Quraysh with exception of a very few dihardcrs who found themselves powerless to oppose Islam openly. One such man when he heard the call to prayers said, "My father was fortunate enough to die before he heard these words.

 Rise of the Umayyads:

The conversion of the Umayyads under circumstances smacking of force and compulsion is of great significance in the early history of Islam. They now saw that supremacy not
only in Mecca, but in Arabia had passed to the Rashids and they were forced by circumstances to acquiesce in it. But as soon as they found an opportunity, they asserted themselves once more when Uthman, the third successor of the Prophet after Abu Bakr and Umar, was chosen caliph. He was an Umayyad and since he was already an old man of sixty or seventy when he occupied the pontifical chair he had no energy left to deal with the problems which new conditions of life brought in their wake. Besides he was very gentle by nature and kindly disposed towards the members of Banu Umayyah. This gave the Umayyads an opportunity to seize the power and dominate the Muslim world. He appointed many of his kinsmen as governors, generals and other high officials of the state which gave rise to great discontent among the Muslims and let loose the dissipated and centrifugal tendencies of the Arabs, who now enriched by the vast and tremendous influx of wealth no longer took religion seriously. The desert tribes which always looked upon the town dwellers with contempt, now grew jealous of the position which the Qurayshite aristocracy occupied in the Arab society. They expected the same treatment which they had received at the hands of the two former caliphs, but they were disappointed in their expectation. They, therefore, entered into a pact among themselves with the purpose of deposing 'Uthman.

These malcontents came from Basrah and Egypt to Medina in a body. They posted 'Uthman with the demand to abdicate leavin
before him their grievances. Uthman made a speech in his defence in public, promising to abide by the demands of the insurgents, whereupon they dispersed to depart to their home towns. But on their way home they met a slave hurrying towards Egypt. Suspecting some foul play, they interrogated the slave who confessed that he was a slave of Uthman and was going to the governor of Egypt. They asked him if he was carrying some letter from the caliph, but as he denied it, they searched his clothes and belongings and discovered a letter in a dry water flask. On reading it they found it contained instructions to the governor of Egypt to execute them when they reached there. The letter bore the seal of Uthman. This letter highly incensed them and they returned with it to Medina and showed it to the responsible men there who asked Uthman if the slave was his, to which he replied in the affirmative. They asked him again if the seal was his, which he also confessed, but denied that the letter was written by him or his command. It finally turned out that the letter was written by Harwan, a kinsman of Uthman and the keeper of his seal. The insurgents, therefore, demanded of Uthman that Harwan be handed over to them. But fearing lest they put him to death, Uthman refused to comply with this demand of theirs. The insurgents, therefore, laid the house of Uthman under seige, cutting off all supply of water and food to him. But some kindly friends managed to provide the
besiege caliph and his family from a house, situated at the back of the caliph’s. Ali tried as did on the previous occasion to intervene on behalf of Uthman, but they proved to be adamant. In order to prevent the rebels from entering the house of the caliph Ali posted his own sons with some other men at the gate of the caliph’s residence, but the rebels climbed down a wall from the back of the caliph’s house and descending into it murdered the old caliph. On the assassination of Uthman, the citizens of Medina and rebels pressed Ali to accept their oath of allegiance to him. Fully aware of the difficulties and the thorny situation that he would be called upon to face, he rejected their request, but as there was no law and order in the city due to the assassination of the caliph and failure to elect a new one he agreed to assume the office of the caliphate in the interest of Islam as he said in one of his speeches.

When the news of his assassination reached Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan, he accused Ali of not helping the aged caliph in his difficulty and of complicity in his murder. Ali indignantly repudiated the charge and called upon Mu'awiya also to take the oath of allegiance to him, but he refused unless the murderers of Uthman were brought to book and punished. Ali expressed his inability to accede to this demand on the

plea that the insurgents responsible for the murder of Uthman were too powerful to be brought to book unless all Muslims had combined by taking oath of fealty to him. Muawiya refused to surrender and this led to a civil war among the Muslims which ended only with the assassination of Ali himself and accession of Muawiya as the sole ruler of the Muslim world.

The Umayyad Caliphate

With Muawiya begins now a new dynasty of the Umayyads. The accession of Umayyads to power was not generally welcomed by the Muslims. However, as long as Muawiya himself lived, things went on well. Although not strictly a man of principle, nonetheless he possessed certain virtues like forbearance, forgiveness and particularly generosity, by which he won the heart of the people. With him, the caliphate after the pattern laid down by the Prophet, came to an end and the period of secular governments began. One of his most unocular steps, was to persuade the people by some show of force to get his son Yazid declared his next heir and had the oath of fealty taken to him, while he himself lived.

After a rule of twenty years Muawiya died, after whom as previously arranged, his son Yazid ascended the throne. Yazid made fatal mistake of making Abdullah ibn al-Zubair and Husain ibn Ali take the oath of allegiance to him by force and
both of them refused. As Yazid was brought up in an environment of luxury, his life was hardly in harmony with the teachings of Islam, causing great disquiet among the Muslims. The people of Iraq invited Husain ibn Ali to their country promising all sorts of help to him. Trusting in their promises he left for Iraq, with the members of his family and some of his followers. The whole party did not exceed seventy. However, when he reached Iraq Ibn Zayad, the son of so-called brother of Muawiya succeeded in frightening the people of Iraq into submission and sent a large force to demand of Husain the oath of allegiance to Yazid. This force found Husain and his party in Karbala and as they refused to comply with the demand of Ibn Zayad, they were fought and massacred to a man with the exception of Ali, the son of Husain who was lying on sick-bed, and the women folk.

This event aroused a great resentment throughout the Muslim world against the Umayyad dynasty and proved one of the most potent causes of the downfall of the Umayyads. The Abbasida, their Hashimid rivals took full advantage of the massacre of Karbala to malign the Umayyads.

**The Umayyad Caliphate**

This dynasty ruled for ninety years and finally fell before the onslaught of the Abbasid armies, led by the Persian general Abu Muslim of Khurasan. The Umayyads represented the
Arab interests instead of Islam, as their policy was extremely pro-Arab, it aroused dissatisfaction among the subject races, particularly the Persians who had not forgotten their defeats at the hands of the Arabs, whom they considered as the most despicable people of the world and, therefore, were smarting under the humiliation which befell them as a result of their defeats by the Arabs. They were itching for an opportunity to avenge themselves on the Arabs. Seeing the Arabs divided among themselves in two factions the Hashimids and the Umayyads, they determined to help the weaker party, i.e., the Hashimids. How the Abbasids who had always considered themselves as better entitled to be successors of the Prophet, as their grand-father, Abbas, according to their view, was more closely related as uncle to the Prophet than Ali. They also noticed not only the discontent of the Persians of which they resolved to take full advantage, but also the impious attitude of the Umayyads towards Islam which had grievously offended the Muslims in general. The Umayyads only cared for their secular and worldly interests, compelling even converts to Islam to pay the poll-tax, as that their treasury right not suffer any loss. The Abbasids now taking advantage of these two factors set themselves to carry on a propaganda amongst the discontented Persians in favour of the Hashimids, the closest kinsmen to the Prophet, nay from whom he Prophet came.
The Abbasid Caliphate

The Abbasids were cunning enough to conceal their own name and interest. Therefore, the Persians supported the wholeheartedly under the impression that by supporting them, they would be bringing the rightful heirs of the Prophet to the throne. And some of the Persians who were more ardent nationalists into the Muslims, thought that their espousing the Hashid was right give them an opportunity to recover their lost independence and power. However, when the Abbasids came to the throne, they treated the Persians with great consideration, reserving for them all important posts and expelling the Arabs from their government. The Persians now making plan to seize the power for themselves, and as a step towards the realization of this object, they won over the people by their generosity. The famous Persian family of Viziers the Barakid, gradually managed to seize all authority for itself, rendering the caliph a mere puppet. Harun, who was the fifth ruler of the house of Abbas found himself so weak and powerless before the Barakids that if the caliph would ask for any money from the royal treasury, he could not have it, unless the Barakids allowed it. The Arabs, chafing under the loss of their power formed themselves into a party with the object of regaining their old position in the state. The Arab party lost no opportunity to poison the ears of the caliph against the Barakids and the Persians whom they accused of plotting to destroy the Abbasid caliphate and restore the Persian monarchy. Harun already agitated by the attitude of the Barakids, ordered
one night the execution of his Barakid vizier Jafar and the imprisonment of Yahya, the father of Jafar.

Civil war between Amin and Memun

When Harun died after this incident a few years later, he was succeeded by his two sons Abdullah al-Mamun and Mohammed al-Amin. To prevent dissensions among them he had divided his empire between the two, giving the eastern Persian speaking part to his son Mamun who was the son of a Persian slave girl, while he gave the western part which was Arabic speaking to al-Amin, the son of an Arab princess. Amin unfortunately was a worthless debauchee and a man of no principles, determined to seize the whole empire for himself. As a son of an Arab princess he was given preference to succeed his father by the leaders of the Arab party. Due to Amin's desire to seize the whole Muslim world there ensued a civil war between the two brothers. In this war al-Mamun emerged victorious with the help of the Persians who called him their nephew. The Persian party was once more the recipient of royal favours. But al-Mamun too, sensing the designs of the Persians had his Persian Minister assassinated to put an end to their machinations.

Coming of the Turks

After the death of al-Mamun his brother Mohammed al-Mutasim who was the son of a Turkish slave girl, and as such, he was very favourably inclined to the Turks, succeeded him.
observed that the Arabs and the Persians had been both dangerous for the interest of the Abbasids. He, therefore, introduced a third racial element, the Turks, into the state. He possessed the same virtues as the Turks, i.e., physical strength, bravery, roughness of temper etc. He gave them all the high posts. As a result of this step, the Turks in course of time grew so strong that they dominated the whole Muslim world from the Danube right to the Bay of Bengal. Turko the Abbasid period when the caliphate grew weak, the Turks played a destructive role, pulling down caliphs or raising them to the throne or even putting them to death as they chose. But soon afterwards, it was these Turks who assumed the role of the champions of Islam who maintained law and order throughout their dominions and kept off the external enemies. It was they who drove out the last remnants of the crusaders out of Syria. A junta of Turkish slaves came to occupy Egypt for themselves and were ruling that country when Suyuti was born.

The Saljuqids were an important branch of the Turkish race who played a very important role in the history of Islam. The role of the Turks in Islam cannot be understood fully without mentioning their history briefly. Therefore, I shall give a brief history of the Saljuqids below as they were the first Muslim to cross sword with the crusaders. The Saljuqids were a Turkish tribe, called after their ancestor, Saljuq. They were turbulent people, therefore, Sultan Muhammad of Ghur, settled
them in Khurasan to enable himself to watch their movements
and keep them under control. After the death of Ḵabūd they
felt themselves strong enough to rise against his son, Ṣ̄uʿūd
on whose army they inflicted a crushing defeat near Marv and
overran Khurasan and other provinces of Persia. They soon
advanced under their leader Ḵo Arsālān on Bahlūl, which they
soon occupied and placed the caliph under their tutelage.
Advancing further they occupied Syria and after sometime in
Eastern Anatolia, from where they spread further westward,
reaching almost the vicinity of Constantinople. After their
occupation of Syria, Palestine naturally passed into their
hands.

Crusaders

Palestine is the Holy Land for the Muslims, Christians
as well as for the Jews, as Christ was born here and, also
according to the Christian belief, died there crucified by
the Romans on the insistence of the Jews. There are two churches
to mark these two sites called respectively the Church of
Nativity and the Church of Resurrection. Besides, the river
Jordan, in which Christ received baptism at the hands of John,
the Baptist, is also sacred in the eyes of the Christians, as
sacred as the Ganges in the eyes of our Hindu brethren.
Thousands of Christian pilgrims visited every year and took
a dip in the Jordan without being molested in any way as long
as the Arab rule lasted over Palestine, as the Arabs, the original
standard bearers of Islam who understood the spirit of their religion, were tolerant to other religions and kindly disposed to the Christians. With the occupation of Palestine by Saljuqids, things changed, as the Saljuqids, an ignorant but zealous people failed to understand devout attachment of the Christians to these places and they quite frequently ill-treated the Christian pilgrims. On going back to their homes in Europe, they made a hue and cry with a vengeance against the atrocities of the Turks, appealing to the Pope to take measures for their protection. The Pope Urban II held a council in 1095 in Clermont in southern Europe to which he invited all the Christian rulers and appealed to them to wage war on the Muslims and to wrest back the Holy Land from them. The enthusiasm of the Pope touched the hearts of his audience who left the Council, determined to undertake an expedition to Palestine to liberate it from the Turks. The soldiers who participated in this Holy war bore a cross on their shields and armours, hence this war is called a "Crusade" and those who took part in it received the title of "Crusaders".

After their third or fourth attempt they entered Anatolia where the Saljuqids had established themselves. The Crusaders were able to defeat them and to reach Jerusalem which they captured in 1096 or 1099. The Crusaders were a horde
of ruthless barbarians who committed all sorts of atrocities on the conquered people, massacring indiscriminately 70,000 people in the grand mosque of Jerusalem where the Muslims had sought refuge. They raided Muslim territories all round plundering and murdering people ruthlessly. The Muslim world or to be more exact the Muslim Near East suffered terribly from their depredations for near-about ninety years. The first Muslim ruler to challenge the might of the Crusaders was Imāmūdīn Zangī of Mosul, who invaded the Crusaders' territories and captured Edessa, a Syrian town in the hands of the Crusaders and one of their strongholds. He was followed a decade later on by their famous Salāhūdīn Ayūbī, who undertook a holy war against the Crusaders and defeating them in battle of Hittīn, and advancing further captured Jerusalem from the Crusaders. This evoked a fresh wave of Crusades, but bore no fruit. However, the Crusaders' power remained intact in many of the coastal towns of Syria and it was left to the credit of Mamluks to clear Syria of the Crusaders and to make it safe against their further attack as I shall relate now.

The ambition of Ayūbudīn Baybars who had defeated the Mongols, was to be second Salāhūdīn in the holy war against Crusader towns. Especially provoked was he when he found those towns making common cause with the Hūlūidīn Khāns of Egypt, now favourably disposed toward the Christian religion. From 1263 to 1271 he conducted almost annual raids against them. One after another of the Latin establishments yielded with little or
no resistance. The two military orders which now occupied the leading fortresses of Frankish Syria and formed its bulwark were the ones who received his most devastating blows. But throughout the opposition was so weak that hardly a single battle of importance was fought in the open field.

In 1263 Baybars took al-Karak from an emir and demolished the venerated church of Mazraoth (al-Nasir). In 1265 he seized Caesarea, and after a forty day siege received the surrender of Arsuf from the Hospitallers. On July 11, 1266 the Templar garrison of Safad capitulated on condition that the lives of its two thousand knights be spared. Without delay and in spite of the amnesty granted, the sultan ordered them all executed on the neighbouring hill. The story of the victory of "The Alexander of his age and the pillar of faith" is still engraved on the walls of Safad, and the bridge he built over the Jordan stands to the present day bearing his inscription, with the figure of a lion on either side. In 1268 Jaffa was captured without resistance; Shu'Ifurr'n capitulated after a short siege; and what is more important, Antioch, which had maintained amicable relations with the Tartars, surrendered (May 21). Antioch garrison with others to the number of 16,000 were slaughtered and some 100,000 are said to have been led to captivity, besides a rich booty fell into the hands of the conquerors. On the fall of Antioch a number of minor Latin strongholds in the vicinity were abandoned.
In 1271 the formidable Hisn 1-Akrūd, the principal retreat of the Hospitallers and probably the most beautiful military monument of the Middle Ages, surrendered after a short siege. The adjacent castles of Mayyed, al-Qāmin, al-Kahf and al-Khāwābi, which belonged to the Assassins who were in alliance with the Hospitallers, were all reduced. Thus the last vest of an order which for years had struck terror into the people's hearts and carried on intrigue was for ever destroyed. Both the Templars of Antartus and the Hospitallers of al-Mārjaš now hastened to make peace.

Baybars had a worthy successor in Calātron (1279-90), who was almost as energetic and redoubtable an anti-Crusader. Baybars' truce with the Templars of Antartus was renewed (April 15, 1282) for another term of ten years and ten months. A similar treaty was signed (July 18, 1285) with the princess of Tyre who controlled Beirut. On the battle-field he established his right to the honorific title he bore, al-Malik al-Mansūr (the victorious king). Al-Margab (The Watch Tower) which still looks like a dreadnought crowning a hill near Tartus and overlooking the sea, yielded after a siege of thirty eight days, ending May 25, 1285. Tripoli, another of the early conquests of the Crusaders and now the largest town in their possession, fell in April 1289, the city and its citadel were almost entirely ruined. The carnage was so terrible that corpses lay thick on the island outside the port. After Tripoli, the stronghold of al-Sattrūn to the south was captured.
Akka was now the only place of military importance left. In the midst of his preparation against it al-Wānī died and was succeeded by his son al-Ashraf (1290–93), who commenced where his father had left off. After an investment of over a month, in which 92 catapults were used against its ramparts, this last bulwark of the Latin Orient was stormed (May 1291). The help received from Cyprus by sea proved of no avail. Its Templar defenders, to whom a safe-conduct had been promised, were massacred. The city was plundered, its fortifications were dismantled and houses set on fire.

The fall of Akka sealed the fate of the half dozen towns still retained along the coast, and none resisted the victorious enemy. Tyre was abandoned on May 16, Sidon on July 14, Beirut capitulated on July 21. Antartū was occupied on August 3 and the deserted Templar Castle of Athlith (Castrum Peregrinorum, Château Pelerin) was destroyed about the middle of that month. One of the most dramatic chapters in the history of Syria was thus closed in the interest of the Muslims the credit of which goes to the Mamluks whose military power provided an umbrella under which the Arab world lived in security and peace for several centuries.4

Fall of Baghdad:

In the beginning of the Abbasid rule there were no less
than nine caliphs who were men of guts. It is to them that Muslim culture owes its glory. The age of 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Malik is known as the Augustan age of the Muslim history. After his death in 833 A.D. he was succeeded by his brother Muhammad who assumed the title of al-Mutasim. He always chose his governors and generals from among the Turks. His pro-Turkish policy proved a fatal measure for the Abbasids. Were it not for their spiritual authority the world would have seen their downfall much earlier. Enervated by luxury and debauchery and deprived of power by their Turkish armies they soon turned into mere playthings for the Turkish nobles. With the assassination of al-Mutawakkil (847-861) by the Turks the Abbasid dynasty grew weaker and weaker. His reign is only negatively important as he was a bitter persecutor of not only the non-Muslims but also of the Muslims who did not agree with the caliph's belief. He banned the study of philosophy which brought the intellectual advancements of the Muslims to an end. His anti-Shiite policy had its repercussion in the Fatimid rule of Egypt.

However, just on the eve of the fall and the destruction of the Abbasid caliphate there had been two caliphs who, had they been given more favourable circumstances, they could have

1. Vide Appendix-I.
stayed the fall of the Abbasid caliphate and given it a fresh lease of life. The Mongols had appeared on the scene by that time but the reigning caliph was wise enough to maintain friendly relations with them by sending them presents as tribute. Were it not for a mistake on the part of the uncle of Khwarazm Shah who murdered the Mongol merchants, the Muslim world, perhaps would have been saved the catastrophe which became its lot. The last but one caliph, al-Mustansir had a brother, called Khaffāji who used to say if he ascended the pontifical throne he would make war on the Tartars and wrest back the countries, conquered from the Muslims. But the power-greedy nobles who were anxious to retain their own power raised to the throne al-Mutassim, a worthless weakling. It was Mutassim who by his folly invited the destruction of the Abbasid caliphate. In stead of cultivating the Mongols as his grand-father Nasiridā, he incurred the wrath of the Mongols who marched upon Baghdad with connivance of the minister Ibn al-Alqādī who wanted to avenge the atrocities perpetrated on his community, the Shiās. However this thing hastened the final doom of the caliphate in 1258.

Mongols

The Mongols were the natives of Mongolia, a country, situated to the north of China, and by religion they were Animists i.e. Animists (on a better authority they were worshipers of the forces of Nature), however, if Alībuddīn is to be believed,

1. Vide Appendix-II
they believed in the existence of a supreme being eternal and immortal. But, however, they appeared to be the sworn enemies of the Muslims, determined to destroy them and their religion. As a result of the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols, the Muslims or the Arab nations were seized with the anxiety to save themselves from the Mongol invasions. Persian-speaking scholars fled to either Anatolia, then called Rum or to India and these countries had escaped the horrors of a Mongol invasion, while scholars of the Arabic speech fled to Egypt to whose rulers, the Mamluks were reserved the honour of repulsing the Mongol invasion by inflicting on them a crushing defeat which broke their power.

As the earlier Abbasids had treated the Persians with great consideration the latter Abbasids beginning with Mutāsim, the eighth caliph of the house of Abbās treated the Turks with equal consideration. As the Turks were not an educated people like the Persians, they were not indeed given civil posts, but governors and generals were chosen from amongst them. Ahmad ibn Tūlūn was one such Turkish governor who was sent to Egypt.

Were it not the luxurious habits of his son, perhaps Ibn Tūlūn would have founded a dynasty of his own. It was in this way that

الاندین الب پلاک جوائنی: تاریخ-الشامکسکا (31-1)
Turkish race who were sent to Egypt, gradually formed a great force, and with the weakening of the Abbasid power in particular after its destruction by the Tartars, were able to seize that country for themselves. The Mamluks rendered two great services to the Arab world: (1) defeating the Mongols in the battle of Ain Jalut and (2) driving out the Crusaders who were still in occupation of a considerable part of Syria. After dealing briefly of their history I shall throw light in some detail on their services to the Arab world.

The Mamluks:

The Mamluks were a junta of slaves of various origins among whom the Turks dominated and formed a military oligarchy in an alien land. These slave sultans cleared their Syrian-Egyptian domain of the remnants of the Crusaders. They checked forever the advance of the redoubtable Mongol hordes of Hulagu and of Timur, who might otherwise have changed the entire course of history of Western Asia and Egypt. Because of this check Egypt was spared the devastation that befell Syria and Iraq and enjoyed a continuity in culture and political institutions which no other Muslim land outside Arabia enjoyed. For about two and three quarter centuries (1250-1517) the Mamluks dominated one of the most turbulent areas of the world, keeping themselves all the while racially distinct. Though on the whole uncultured and blood thirsty, their keen appreciation of art and architecture
would have been credit to any civilised dynasty and makes Cairo even now one of the beauty spots of the Muslim world. And finally, when they were overthrown in 1517 by Ottoman Suleiman, the last of the local dynasties that had developed on the ruins of the Arab caliphate expired, clearing the way for the establishment of a new non-Arab caliphate, that of Ottoman Turks.

Mamluk Dynasty:

The foundation of Mamluk power was laid by Shajar ad-Durr, widow of the Ayyubid al-Salih (1240) and originally a Turkish or Armenian slave. Formally a bondmaid and member of the harem of the caliph al-Mustasim, Shajar entered the service of al-Salih, by whom she was freed after she had borne him a son. For eighty days the sultānah, the only Muslim woman to rule a country in North Africa and Western Asia, continued to function as sole sovereign in the land which had once produced Cleopatra and Zenobia. She struck coins in her own name and had herself mentioned in the Friday prayer. And when the mīrs chose her associate and commander-in-chief (atibunul-askar), Izzuddin Aybak, for sultan, she married him. In the first years of reign Aybak was busy crushing the legitimists Ayyubid party of Syria, deposing the child joint-king al-Áshraf and going away with his own general who had distinguished himself against Louis IX.
In the meantime the queen was not only sharing her consort's power but keeping him in subordination. Finally, on hearing that he was contemplating another marriage, she had him murdered while taking his bath, after a ball named in the royal palace in the Citadel of Cairo. Immediately after she was herself beheaded to death with wooden shoes by the slave sowan of Aybak's first wife and her body was cast from a lower.

Burjī and Bahri Mamluks:

Aybak was the first of the Mamlūk sultans. The series is somewhat arbitrarily divided into two dynasties: Bahri (1250-1390) and Burjī (1382-1517). The bahri mamlūks had their origin in the purchased bodyguard of the Ayyubīs al-Salīh, who settled his slaves in barracks on the isle of al-Rawdah in the Nile. The Bahris were chiefly Turks and Mongols. In their policy of securing the services of foreign slaves as a bodyguard the Ayyubids followed the precedent established by the caliphs of Baghdad, with the same eventual results. The bondmen of yesterday became the army commanders of to-day and the sultans of tomorrow.

The Burjīs represent a later importation. Their origin was likewise a bodyguard, but it was founded by the Bahri Mamlūk Baḥšār (1279-90). They were mostly Circassian slaves who were quartered in the towers of the citadel. In all there were twenty-four Bahri Mamlūks, excluding Shajara-Shurr, and twenty-three
Burjīs. The Burjīs recognized no principle of hereditary succession and followed no policy of neotism. Their throne belonged to him who could capture it or induce the ministers to elect him to it. In several Bahri and Burjī instances slaves rather than sons of the sultan succeeded him. A large number of sultans met violent deaths while still young. The average reign of the Mamlūk sultans was less than six years.6

By profession as well as by nature Mamlūks were a military caste, naturally with no taste for art of poetry particularly literature when only cultural monuments were buildings, places and mosques. Their language Turkish which was, at that time, not a literary language, neither these Turks themselves had any taste for poetry or literature even in their own language so as to provide patronage to any Turkish man of letters who were non-existant.

Hence Arabic literature naturally ceased to enjoy the patronage which it had only under the Umayyads or the early Abbāsids but also under the later Abbāsids and semi-independent or independent dynasties though of limited power like Hamdānids of Aleppo, but also under the rulers of utterly foreign origin and speech like Mā'ārīr of Egypt, Buwayhīds of Iran and his celebrated minister and patron of Arabic literature.

Ismail ibn Abbād known as as-Sāhib (companion or friend) as he was a personal friend of his sovereigns. He can be compared with Maceenas of Rome, the famous patron of letters. As-Sāhib maintained a glorious court to which poets repaired from all parts of the Muslim world. Naturally enough such a patronage of Arabic literature could not be expected from these wild warrior descendants of the Nomads of the desert of Tartary.

What can be said to the credit of the Mamluks that they provided protection to men of letters and scholars establishing a pax turcica which created a safe environment and protected Egypt which had become after the fall of Abbāsids, the main refuge of Arab culture. Let us bear in mind that it was these Mamluks who repulsed the Mongol hordes of Hulagu Khan and were it not for them, Syria and Egypt may be North Africa, might have shared the fate of Baghdad, Bukhārā and other cities of Eastern Muslim world. European Christians who had been always eager to wrest Jerusalem from the Muslim hands, but also keen to extirpate Islam itself, entered into a military pact with the Mongol who had been till that time a heathen people and hence naturally enough hostile to Islam and eager to destroy it. It was the military might and prowess of the Mamluks which prevented the
plans of these common enemies of Islam from fructifying, for
the Mamluks under the leadership of Qutbuddin Baybars inflicted
a crushing and terrible defeat on the Mongol forces, sent by
Hulagu from Baghdad to invade Egypt and to destroy the Mamluk
power. Out of 90,000 strong Mongol army, the vast majority
was massacred and the remaining few thousands were made captives
and fled to Cairo with the head of slain Mongol hanging from his
neck.

Battle of Ayn Jalut:

This was the battle of Ayn Jalut which broke the spell
of the invincibility of the Mongols. It will be amusing to
note that when the news of disaster of this battle reached
Hulagu in Baghdad he went mad and died. The effect of this
battle may be gauged an idea, had of it from this fact. Breaking
the Mongol power is the greatest achievement of the service
rendered by the Mamluk to the Arab and the Muslim world.8

I have spoken of the invincibility of the Mongols. It
was a belief which had found currency among the Muslims, though
no devoid of an element of truth but the fact seems that the

Mongols had not yet met with an organized resistance. They fell upon the civilized population of the Muslim lands in their ferocity and by their sheer numbers broke down any resistance and then fell upon the peaceful inhabitants of cities and towns and massacred them sometimes almost to a man. Jalalud-din Rumi said that the only Muslim sovereign who tried to resist them but without any assistance from his fellow Muslim potentates. Needless to mention all his efforts to stem the Mongol tide met with failure and he became a fugitive. It was the ruthless plunder and mass murder which struck a terror into the hearts of the people. Hence we find Ibn al-Athir saying, "If someone tells you that the Mughals have been defeated, do not believe him."

He himself thus tells us his own experience that he sat in his home in Merv, when the news spread that the Mongols had arrived. The effect of the news was so terrible on himself that he fled his house in utter consternation that he went on running for twelve miles naked as when his mother has given him birth.

The Mamluk rule is usually described as rapacious whose aim was only to amass money and wealth and they did not hesitate from resorting to harsh measures to extort money from cultivators, but on the whole it maintained, as already mentioned, law and order throughout their dominions and was strong enough to protect

the land from the depredations of internal or external robbers or invaders.

To complete the story of Mamluks they were just fourteen years after the death of Suyûtî, overthrown by the Ottoman Turks under Salim I. The Turkish rule lasted for sometime only in its full strength after which the Mamluks again asserted themselves and began to rule almost as independent monarchs. They were finally overthrown and destroyed by Muhammad alî pasha in 1819.