

# Dynasties

## Umayyad Dynasty (661 – 750)

### **Write short notes on the main characters and activities of the main Umayyad rulers**

The Umayyad Dynasties lasted from the year 661 – 750 CE. They were characterized by 4 main caliphs: Mu'awiyah, Abdul Malik, 'Umar II and Marwan II. In a way or the other the mentioned caliphs brought their own contributions. In the paragraphs below we will try to elaborate on them.

The **first** caliph Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan (661 – 680) was the governor over Syria for 20 years. He changed Syria into a powerful military and naval base. His career began in 655 with the murder of the caliph Uthman (رضي الله عنه) who was his cousin. He was determined to bring the murderer to court. After death of Ali (رضي الله عنه), he persuaded Imam Hasan (رضي الله عنه), to renounce his claim to the caliphate. He set about restoring the unity and renewing the expansion of the Muslim state. He obtained strength from two quarters - the Syrian tribesmen and his Umayyad kinsmen. To consolidate the support of the Syrian, he transferred the centre of Muslim government from Iraq to Damascus. However, there was a lack of the support from the influential religious circles. He transformed the Islamic government to an Arab tribal aristocracy served by a bureaucracy. He created a postal service and a bureau of registry. He framed a tolerant policy toward Christians. There was the distribution of bribes to dissident (rebellious) tribes. He organized military expansion - on land and sea, to the north, east, and west. That was a new era of Muslim Arab conquest which was established. He established his kingdom to the east, the north-eastern province of Persia—Khurasan, to the west, North Africa as far west as Algeria and to the north, with the Byzantine.

The **second** main caliph was Abdul Malik (685 – 705). He was recognized by his partisans and he strengthened the governmental administration. He adopted Arabic as the language of administration. He crushed his Enemies: the Kharijites, the Shi'ah, and the forces of the anticaliph 'Abdallah ibn az-Zubayr. The Khawarij was still being a problem. 'Abd al-Malik had appointed al-Hajjaj to govern Basra that campaigns against them began to prove successful. In the north of Kufah, another Kharijite trouble centre developed. The Kharijite movement remained strong, especially among the Bakr tribes between Mosul and Kufah. He captured Carthage and other coastal cities fell, and thus there was the work of pacification and Islamization. He set up a money system. He built mosques from local materials. There was the system of coinage and development in religious architecture. He made the Dome of the Rock, the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and the Great Mosque of Damascus.

The **third** main caliph was 'Umar II (717 – 720). He was not a hereditary successor to the former caliph, but was appointed. His mother was a granddaughter of Hazrat Umar (r.a). He formed a council with which he administered the province. He preferred to keep things simple. All depositing equipment in the public treasury was meant for the caliph. He decided in abandoning the palace to the family of Sulaiman and lived in a tent. He was publicly encouraging the people to elect someone else if they were not satisfied with him. He confiscated all estates seized by Umayyad "royalty" and redistributed it to the people. He was unpopular with the Umayyad court but was beloved by the masses. Umar ended a tradition among some Umayyad rulers where Ali (رضي الله عنه) would be cursed during Friday sermons, replacing the tradition with the recitation of the following verse, "*Surely God enjoins justice, doing of good and giving to kinsfolk*". He enforced the Shari'ah and ended drinking and bathhouses. He continued the welfare

programs and special programs for orphans and the destitute. He reinforced the Islamic frontier but he had to contend with Kharijite uprisings. He was one of the finest caliphs in Islamic History. He gave much importance to Education, Schools of Shari'ah and advocated the return to Shari'ah.

The **fourth** caliph to be studied is Marwan II (744 – 750). He was the last Umayyad ruler to rule from Damascus. He took the caliphate after his cousin Ibrahim abdicated and went into hiding. He inherited an empire that was falling apart and he dedicated his life in trying to keep the Umayyad Empire together. There were Anti-Umayyad in Iran and Iraq and thus the Abbasids had gained a lot of followers. He was killed by Abu Al Abbas As Saffa (at bank of river Nile). There were too many problems and could not solve all of them. He lost many territories to the Abbasid and the Islamic dominion was surrounded by enemies from all sides. There was a lack of administrative measures due to inefficiency of his governors. He was thus not able to consolidate the Islamic frontiers and wasn't able to cope with the existing and uprising Khawarij. For 6 years he tried to regain the lost cause. His society was characterized by Shari'ah being established in the dominion, loyalty of some of his governors, support of the masses, inefficiency of his men, materialistic influence of the society, degradation of the society (sins), emergence of Shi'a movement helping the Abbasid, uprising movement and slogan against the state and threat against the Umayyad families.

### **What were the main traits of the Umayyad Dynasty?**

There were some of the achievements of the Umayyad Dynasty. **Firstly**, there was development in Architectural buildings and palaces. The Umayyad architecture is a major witness of the dynasty, with numerous buildings still extant. Extensive municipal architectural programmes were undertaken, in addition to those constructions that were built by order of the Umayyad royal family. **Moreover**, there was the construction of different mosques and the Dome of the Rock. Both the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus appear to have been built as symbols of Umayyad power and victory, and these buildings still give an impression of the grandeur of the dynasty's architecture. **Thirdly**, there were many palaces used for festivities and the presence of forts and ruins are still important. In addition, the remarkable palatial buildings formerly known as 'desert castles' continue to fascinate people for the window they provide into Umayyad court life and ceremonials. **Furthermore**, there was the construction of full-fledged cities. There were extensive building programmes which were undertaken for the benefit of the community as well as for the ruling elite. Cities such as Amman had a palatial complex, a mosque, a marketplace and a water reservoir, and thus served the government and the administration of the country in addition to the needs of the community. Vitrally important infrastructure such as dams, cisterns and water reservoirs were constructed and bridges were erected.

**Added to the above**, there were different styles and cultures of different countries used by the Umayyad caliphs and governors. In this formative phase one cannot speak strictly of a full-blown Islamic art as it is the juxtaposition (association and comparison) and innovative combination of various decorative styles and motifs (styles and designs) drawn from different artistic and imaginative traditions that produced such striking results and made them appear different. **Besides**, there was the establishment of independent policy. During the caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik bin Marwan (r. 65–86 / 685–705), a policy of administrative and political centralisation was initiated. Each province had its own way of administration and policy. However the rulers and governors will be accountable for the financial development and problems. **Seventhly**, there was the introduction of an income to be allocated for members of the state and the role of the Bait ul Maal. In the fiscal / financial administration, however, the Arabs introduced an innovative

system according to which all fully fledged members of the new polity were entitled to regular stipends (salaries) ('*ata*'); a system that was financed by the taxes of the local populous (people). The main taxes were land tax (*kharaj*), a fixed rate in kind or money and the poll tax (*jizya*), which was imposed on every mature non-Muslim and means tested according to income. Priests, monks, and the disabled were exempt from paying *jizya*. **Last but not least**, there was the introduction of the official Arabic coinage. A standard Arabic coinage was developed to replace the Arab-Byzantine (Roman empire) and Arab-Sassanian (Persian of modern times(new persian people)) types which had been used up to this time. From the coin reform on, all Umayyad coinage was of a standardised weight and design: purely epigraphic, with an inscription giving the date and a religious formula. These measures served to introduce a unity which hitherto had been lacking.

### **What were the reasons for the downfall of the Umayyad Dynasty?**

There were many reasons for the downfall of the Umayyad Dynasty. **At the outset**, there was the battle of Karbala against the Ahlu Bait by Yazid the son of Mu'awiyah where many of the members of the family of the prophet (ﷺ) were killed and among them there was Imam Hussein (رضي الله عنه). **Moreover**, there were too many illicit thoughts and activities (policies) like adultery, prostitution, the bait-ul-Maal became the kingdom's property as such. The people were disgusted with that regime. **Thirdly**, there were bribes which were distributed to gain popularity and election by the governors of the future caliph. They were buying their seats for the caliphate. **Furthermore**, interest was ramping and too much liberty was given to non-Muslims in many fields. The rate of interest imposed by the lenders over both Muslims and non-Muslims were too high. The rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer was the condition at that time. **Added to the above**, there was a return to islamisation from the good caliphs which also meant a reduction of illicit gain. In this way the corrupted people tried their best to eliminate them (the good caliphs). **In addition**, both the Christians and the Jews were not loyal to the caliphs and they plotted against them (the caliphs) for personnel interest. They were never for the caliphate or the Islamic state as during the time of the prophet (ﷺ). **Besides**, the Khawarij were always uprising from all sides to create instability in the society. That was since the time of the prophet (ﷺ) in his army and city. They were the mischief mongers. **More to the point**, there were revolts from those tribes who accepted Islam based on personal interest and once a caliph passed away they rose against the Muslims. They wanted only to be under the protection and wings of the caliphs. **Ninthly**, there were constant revolts from the Abbasid leaders against any Umayyad caliphs. The Abbasid wanted to come to power and every mean was good to attain their objectives. **Tenthly**, there were revolts from the Shi'a movement in search for a leader from the Ahl-ul-Bait. The shi'a were never satisfied and wanted only a member and descendant of the prophet (ﷺ) as leader and guide. They would not accept any other leader.

**Another** reason was that there was a decrease in the amount of *jizya* obtained from non-Muslims resulting in a decrease in the Bait-ul-Maal. That was done to please the non-Muslims and to obtain their votes but the bait ul Maal was not well funded. **Added** to that, the unpopular caliphs due to their personal interest disgusted the common people. The latter knew that these caliphs were nominated due to their political power and thirst for money and power. There were so many unreligious and egocentric deputies, governors and caliphs of the Umayyad period. **In addition** to that there were so many other small Karbala (murders) against the caliphs of the Umayyad. The opposing regime (Abbasid) would use illegal means in order to wipe out the Umayyad from the surface of the earth. **Moreover**, there was a general political instability among the caliph due to their inexperienced governance. At the outset they were nominated due to their influences and many of them were inexperienced in fields of administration, business (trade) and

humanitarian grounds. **Furthermore**, there was a lack of expertise and counselling from Umayyad caliphs. Each caliph would do as he wanted to run his reign and country. There was no sincere and concrete Majlis Shurah. **Besides**, there were well established conspiracies led by the Abbasid to bribe and buy the Umayyad governors. Many governors were on the side of the Abbasid secretly and they plotted against the Umayyad till its downfall. **More to the point**, there was a series of attack on the main points/strength of the caliphate or related to their family members. There were menaces, threats, kidnappings, many attempts to kill and murders upon the Umayyad. **Moreover**, there was no regular check on the work and expenses of the governors. Some of the caliphs were themselves self-centred and the governors would do the same. **Again**, there were so many critics concerning the morality of both the Umayyad caliphs and the state of the Islamic society. They were not applying the Shari'ah and people were disgusted with the situation.

### Abbasid Dynasty (750 - 1258)

**Write short notes on the main characters and activities of the main Abbasid rulers:**

The Abbasid Dynasties came just after the Umayyad Dynasties and lasted from 750 to 1258. There were achievements and twists during that period. The most Important Caliphs were Abu al-'Abbas al-Saffah, Abu Ja'far al Mansur, al-Mahdi, Harun al-Rashid, al-Ma'mun and al-Mutawakkil.

The **first** most important one was Abu al-'Abbas al-Saffah (750 – 754). He magnified the virtues and claims of the descendants of the Prophet (ﷺ) and Hazrat Abbas (رضي الله عنه). He denounced the usurpation (seizure of power and property by force) and crimes of the Umayyad and their Syrian followers and praised the Kufans for their fidelity to his family. He declared openly: "I am the Great Avenger, and my name is As-Saffah, the Shedder of Blood." His first care was to sweep from the face of the earth the entire Umayyad race. In Palestine, an amnesty was offered to the Umayyad family. They (90) were invited for a feast and were killed. The bodies of Umayyad caliphs (except Mu'awiyah and Umar II) were unearthed, hung and burned (throughout Syria, Khurasan and Ethiopia). He used to stand looking at himself in a mirror and exclaimed, "I do not say, as Sulaiman, Behold the kingly youth; but I say, Lord give me long life, and health to enjoy it." As he spoke, a slave said to his fellow, "The term between us is two months and five days." He took it as an evil augury (prophesy); and so he sickened, and death (smallpox) overtook him as the term expired. Towers were constructed for protection of the pilgrims at convenient distances all the way from Al-Kufa to Mecca. He had small respect for human life. He intensified his cruelty and guilt by treachery in the face of solemn oaths, and also by ingratitude. He began his rule at Kufa. He had to face revolts from the partisans of Umayyad, Shi'a and the Khawarij. He had two great men and soldiers with him – Abu Salama and Abu Muslim. They played a leading role to the downfall of the Umayyad. There was jealousy between them. Men of Abu Muslim killed Abu Salama.

The **second** caliph to be studied is Abu Ja'far al Mansur (754 – 775). He was the brother of As Saffah and when he returned from pilgrimage, he assumed khilafat. He led the prayer and made his announcements of caliph. He assumed the name of Al-Mansur, the Victorious. Al Mansur feared the attitudes of his uncle Abdullah. Abu Muslim assured him that he would take charge of him. When the enemy and burden Abdullah was calmed down, al Mansur killed Abu Muslim. The reason he gave was – "It was a lesson to be laid to heart; the man began well, but ended ill, and now by pride and rebellion has forfeited his life." Abu Muslim was at the head of the army. He was powerful and a threat to al Mansur. There was complete loyalty of the army towards al Mansur. Peace restored in Persia and Ethiopia (Mesopotamia). Abdullah was imprisoned. There was the rise of the Rawandiyah – a Persian sect. Al

Mansur already had 200 of their leaders imprisoned. They didn't consider al Mansur as divine though he came personally talking to them. They were then extirpated (destroyed). There was rebellion at Khurasan and as such its leader's hands, feet and head were cut off after cruelty. Al Mansur, to his enemies he was cruel but to his friends he was liberal. He invested in statecraft (control and diplomacy) and was very strict in maintaining accounts. He left the treasury to his successor. He maintained religious discipline in his court and didn't allow repugnant practice outside Islam.

The **third** Caliph was al-Mahdi (775 – 785). He succeeded his father, al-Mansur. Al-Mahdi, whose name means "Rightly-guided" or "Redeemer," was proclaimed caliph when his father was on his deathbed. He was mild and generous in contrast to his father. He tried to win the hearts of people by kind and benevolent policies. He adopted a conciliatory attitude towards his opponents. He made a rapprochement with the Shi'a Muslims in the Caliphate and Islamization of the administration. He tried in reaching out to Shi'a and he appointed them to senior posts. The city attracted immigrants from all of Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Persia, and lands as far away as India and Spain. He also engaged in dialogue with the leader of the Nestorian Church (emphasizes the disunion between the human and divine natures of Jesus.), an early episode in Christian-Muslim relations. It was the period of prosperity, scholarly excellence and religious freedom although there were persecutions. He expanded the Abbasid administration, creating new divans, or departments, for the army, the chancery (like an embassy / paper work) and taxation. Qazi or judges were appointed, and laws against non-Arabs put into place by the Umayyad were dropped. Shari'ah began to develop, neglected under the Umayyad as part of an Islamization process. The Abbasids had swept the Umayyad from power promising to restore Islam to the centre of the what, effectively, was an imperial royal polity. The Umayyad had privileged Arabs over non-Arabs. Al-Mahdi had two important religious policies: the persecution of the *zanadiqa* (atheists), and the declaration of orthodoxy. The *zanadiqa* ridiculed the Qur'an, but admired Muhammad as a human law-maker. The *zanadiqa* were almost certainly followers of Mani, or Manichaeans (one of the Iranian Gnostic religion). Al-Mahdi singled out the persecution of the *zanadiqa* in order to improve his standing among the Shi'i, whom he also presented with gifts and appointed to posts, including the Viziership (position of a minister or councillor) as well as releasing political prisoners. He was able to use the considerable financial legacy left by his father. Scholarship flourished, including the translation of Greek philosophical works into Arabic. Al-Mahdi "enlarged and beautified the Mosques of the Holy Cities, and of the capital towns elsewhere. Al-Mahdi also began the practice of withdrawing into isolation to emphasize the sanctity of the office of caliph. He therefore depended heavily on his Vizier. Ultimately, this led to a weakening of the temporal power of the caliphate, although it may have enhanced the caliph's spiritual status. Al-Mahdi continued the war with the Byzantine Empire throughout his reign, extending the caliphate as far as Ankara (capital of Turkey). It was a prosperous period marked by internal stability and peace although territorial expansion continued. Al-Mahdi dealt severely with what he saw as heresy (unorthodox and deviant). He tried to build bridges with Shi'a Muslims and was tolerant and even magnanimous in his dealings with the "people of the book".

The **fourth** caliph was Harun Ar-Rashid (786 – 809). He was the brother of Musa (surnamed as Hade) being the son of al Mahdi. His time was marked by scientific, cultural and religious prosperity. Art and music also flourished significantly during his reign. He established the library Bait al-Hikma ("House of Wisdom"). Islamic literature (the work of ibn Kathir, for example) has raised him to the level of an ideal figure, a great military and intellectual leader, even a paragon (model) for future rulers to emulate. His best-known portrayal in the West, in the stories of the Thousand and One Nights, has little basis in historical fact, but does show the mythic (fabulous) stature he has attained over time. He was strongly influenced by the will of his mother, Khaizuran in the governance of the empire. Baghdad flourished into

the most splendid city of its period. Tribute was paid by many rulers to the caliph, and these funds were used on architecture, the arts and a luxurious life at court. Agriculture was flourishing to support the new Imperial centre. He tried to bring to heel the princes and chieftains of the region, and to re-impose the full authority of the central government on them. This new policy met with fierce resistance and provoked numerous uprisings in the region. He imposed heavy taxes on farmers, traders and artisans. He maintained slave-girls and concubines to entertain him. Al-Rashid virtually dismembered the empire by apportioning it between his two sons, al-Amin and al-Ma'mun. Very soon it became clear that by dividing the empire, Rashid had actually helped to set the opposing parties against one another, and had provided them with sufficient resources to become independent of each other. After the death of Harun al-Rashid civil war broke out in the empire between his two sons, al-Amin and al-Ma'mun. Harun made the pilgrimage to Mecca several times. Harun is widely considered the greatest of the Abbasid caliphs, presiding over the Arab Empire at its political and cultural peak. He died in Tus, Iran.

The **fifth** caliph is Al Ma'mun (813 – 833). On the death of Al Amin, al Ma'mun took over. There were many disturbances in Iraq during the first several years of al-Ma'mun's reign. Lawlessness in Baghdad led to the formation of neighbourhood watches. Most of Persia was sympathetic to the Hashimites. Al-Ma'mun's opponents in Baghdad gave allegiance to Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi (one of the Alids). Imam Ali Raza informed al-Ma'mun of happenings in Baghdad and sided with the Alids. When Ali Raza fell sick and died at Tus, Al-Ma'mun wept and mourned for him and tried to show himself innocent of the supposed crime. While Baghdad became peaceful, there were disturbances elsewhere. There was uprising in Qum sparked by complaints about taxes. After it was quashed (crushed), the tax assessment was set significantly higher. Egypt continued to be unquiet. Sind was rebellious. There was also struggle against the Byzantines. In 830, al-Ma'mun led a victorious force across the border. He captured several fortresses, sparing the surrendering Byzantines. Al-Ma'mun's relations with the Byzantine Greeks were marked by his efforts in the translation of Greek philosophy and science. Al-Ma'mun gathered scholars of many religions at Baghdad, whom he treated magnificently and with tolerance. He sent an emissary to the Byzantine Empire to collect the most famous manuscripts there, and had them translated into Arabic. It is said that, had he been victorious over the Byzantine Emperor, Al-Ma'mun would have made a condition of peace be that the emperor hand over of a copy of the "Almagest" (influential scientific text written in Greek). He made efforts toward the centralization of power and the certainty of succession. The Bayt al-Hikma, or House of Wisdom, was developed during his reign. The ulama emerged as a real force in Islamic politics during al-Ma'mun's reign for opposing the Mihna (it is a move to impose his theoretical views upon people), which was initiated in 833, only four months before he died. People who were subject to the mihna were traditionalist scholars whose social influence and intellectual quality was uncommonly high. Al-Ma'mun introduced the mihna with the intention to centralize religious power in the caliphate institution and test the loyalty of his subjects. The mihna had to be undergone by elites, scholars, judges and other government officials, and in consisted of a series of questions relating to theology and faith. The central question was about the createdness of the Qur'an, if the interrogate stated he believed the Qur'an to be created he was free to leave and continue his profession. During his reign Alchemy greatly developed and the pioneers of the science were Jabir Ibn Hayyan and his student Yusuf Lukwa was patronized by Al-Ma'mun, although he was unsuccessful in his attempts regarding the transmutation (transformation) of gold, his methods greatly led to the patronization of Pharmaceuticals (medicines) compounds. Although the mihna persisted through the reigns of two more caliphs, al-Mutawakkil abandoned it in 848. The ulama and the major Islamic law schools became truly defined in the period of al-Ma'mun and Sunnism, as a religion of legalism, became defined in parallel. Doctrinal differences between Sunni and Shi'a Islam began to become more pronounced.

The **sixth** caliph is Al Mutawakkil (847 – 861). Upon the death of al Ma'mun, he appointed his brother Musta'sim, then the latter's son Wasiq then the latter's brother Jaafar known as Mutawakkil. The latter was not in good term with Wasiq. During Wasiq's reign, Mutawakkil was ill-treated. Mutawakkil on assuming caliphate reversed the policies of the regime and avenged himself. He restored fundamentalism (strict adherence to specific theological doctrines) and banned rationalism (use of reason as a source of knowledge). He stated that the Qur'an was not created. The rationalists were expelled from public offices and all discussions on science and philosophy were banned. All fundamentalist Imams like Imam Ahmad bin Hambal (رضي الله عنه) were set free and the Mu'tazilah were imprisoned and their properties confiscated. He was hostile to the Shi'a and continued anti-Shi'a policies. He destroyed Mausoleum of Imam Husain (رضي الله عنه) and banned pilgrimage of Najaf (according to the Shi'a Hazrat Ali (رضي الله عنه) said that this valley is part of paradise) and Karbala (martyrs of Karbala). He ordered the Jews and the Christians to wear distinctive dress. They were forbidden to ride on animals other than donkeys and mules. No new church and synagogue was built. There were revolts in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Hims. All of them were crushed. In Egypt the Sufi Dhun Nun proclaimed communication with God. The fundamentalist wanted punitive measures. But when he was questioned by al Mutawakkil, he found nothing wrong in his belief and let him free to return to Egypt. During his reign, a great part of his dominion suffered from earthquakes and other natural calamities. Special measures and prayers were made. Mutawakkil wanted his son Muntasir to succeed him but through the influence of his wife Qabiha he changed his idea and wanted Mu'taaz (the son of Qabiha) to be the successor. Muntasir refused and that created bitterness between them. Muntasir and his army conspired and killed the caliph. He was the first caliph to be killed by his own army.

### What were the main traits of the Abbasid Dynasty?

There were many achievements during the time of the Abbasid dynasty. **Firstly**, it was in the field of Agriculture & Economy. The Golden age of the Abbasids was between the 3rd and 4th / 9th and 10th centuries. During that time the Middle East and North Africa witnessed a major shift from a largely agricultural economy to one driven by trade. There were imports and exports leading to economic development. **Moreover**, there was emphasis on education. The seeking of formal knowledge was encouraged by the state. Many schools were established in Baghdad and the provinces. The art of book translation thrived and led to the preservation of many key Greek, Persian and Indian works which were translated into Arabic. Significant contributions were made in the fields of science, mathematics, medicine and philosophy. **Furthermore**, there was development in medical field. The Abbasids supported and patronised medical research and medical practitioners. Great developments in medicine were achieved. There were many books on a variety of medical subjects which were written and translated. Medical experiments were conducted and documented and a number of medical instruments were designed to deal with a variety of procedures. **In addition**, there was the development of town infrastructures. With an expanding population and an awareness of how valuable was good urban planning, the Abbasids built a number of towns and cities where special attention was given to communications and transport routes. Everything was available in these new towns and cities.

**Fifthly**, there were experts in the fabrication of Islamic ceramic. It was not until the Abbasid period that a distinct type and style of ceramic was emerged and that can be distinguished technically as 'Islamic'. They were mainly used for decorations of mosques, administrative blocks, palaces, libraries and museums. **More to the point**, there was the manufacture of Lustre wares for shining and brilliance as part of

decoration. During the early Abbasid period, the refined and luxury-loving ruler and imperial court got directly involved in sponsoring new innovations in the ceramics industry, especially in the development and manufacture of lustre wares. They were meant for inland and foreign business. **Last but not least**, there were innovative architectural designs. As the Abbasid Empire expanded from Afghanistan to Algeria, regional ceramics industries were influenced by techniques, designs and motifs from other parts of the empire, adding to the variety of designs, decorations and styles available locally.

### **What were the reasons for the downfall of the Abbasid Dynasty?**

There were many reasons why the Abbasid dynasty came to an end. **Firstly**, most of the later caliphs of this dynasty led pompous and luxurious life and cared little for the state. They were concentrated in amassing wealth for their own use. **Secondly**, instead of making any attempt to uplift the condition of the subjects and to improve the government, they devoted their valuable time to wine, women and music. They were engaged in illicit activities. **Moreover**, the supremacy of the Turks in the later period was one of the causes of the fall of the empire. After the death of Mutawakkil the power of the Turks began to increase rapidly and the successors of Mutawakkil could not resist it. **Fourthly**, the Arabs and the Persians became disgusted with their high handed policy. They were not loved and appreciated by the public. **Furthermore**, the negligence of the military department under the later caliph greatly contributed to the downfall of the Abbasids. They were interested in obtaining money and booty of war from the dynasty and they were not loyal soldiers and commanders.

**Added to the above**, the relation between the province and the central government was not cordial. There was no cooperation and unity among the different parties of their administration. They were interested in money and not the public welfare. **Besides**, many provinces declared their independence. That situation was due to the fact that they were disgusted with the promises made by the caliphs. But in fact when they were in power nothing was done for their provinces. **As well**, the struggle between the Arabs and non-Arabs between the Muslims and non-Muslim was going on in full swing during this period. The caliphs were not able to contain that situation. **Ninthly**, the Iranians who were favoured by the Abbasids despaired (saw no hope in) the Arabs and the Arabs despaired the Iranians and other. There was no cooperation between the allies. **Tenthly**, the imposition of taxes for the interest of the ruling class discouraged farming and industry and the constant bloody strip (someone with ranks in the army) left many a piece of cultivated land desolate and hopeless.

**Another reason** was the flood in Mesopotamia made the people hopeless and homeless. Besides this famine and epidemic decimated the population in many provinces. **As such**, to these causes of decay must be added the invasion of Halaqu, a grandson of Changez Khan (founder of Mongol empire from different tribes from Mongolia and china) who divested the city of Baghdad on such a scale that for three years the streets ran with blood and the water of the Tigris was dyed red for miles along the course. He killed the last caliph of this dynasty and massacred his family so much so that for the first time in its history the Muslim world was left without a caliph whose name could be cited in the Friday prayers. **Among others**, the Khawarij who were always pestering the lives of the Muslims since the creation of the Islamic state were continuing their plots to destabilise the society. **Added to** that the Shi'a party was constantly demanding their rights and as such they were dividing the Ummah and creating confusion and rebellions. **Above all**, the people were disgusted with a society based on blood and iron policy of the Abbasids. There was no peace and harmony and as such no stability and security.