

The phenomenon of court-servant's control in Abbasid power and its repercussion on caliphate status during the reign of caliph al-Muqtadir Bi-Allah (907 - 932 AD/ 295–320 AH)

Ali Khudair Al- Hadrawi
Kufa University / Faculty of Arts
alikh.alhadrawi@uokufa.edu.iq

Abstract

This research aims to study the phenomenon of court-servants' control in Abbasid power during the reign of the caliph (successor) Abu'l-Faḍl Ja'far ibn Ahmad al-Mu'taḍid (282 -320 AH / 895 –932 AD), better known by his regnal name Al-Muqtadir bi-Allah. Furthermore, this study represents as an academic attempt aimed mainly at studying the political situation and reviewing one of the manifestations of the political and administrative corruption, deterioration, and decline inflicting the caliphate institution. This issue had not stopped when the Turkish officials intervened and controlled the Abbasid state, in every possible way, but it reached to different types of intervention represented by employing all human means such as courtiers, chamberlains and eunuchs, court-servants and gate-keepers. More importantly, Al-Muqtadir bi-Allah became a tool or puppet in their hands directing him as they please.

The research also attempts to study the underlying reasons of control as well as court servants' growing influence, and to examine the controlling factors of male and female - court servants and harem stewardesses (*qahramāns*), (*harem as a term can be applied to those parts of the household to which access is forbidden. The texts refer to the caliph's harem, his women, and to those under his control. Thus, the reference is to a group of people rather than a particular building or physical location*) and courtiers in Islamic authority and the caliph himself, his vizier (*vizier is a high-ranking political advisor or minister*) and senior officials. It also reviews the historical evidence supporting this control which eventually led to the killing of the Caliph Al-Maqtar Bi-Allah at their hands. Finally, it ends up with a set of conclusions.

Keywords: Caliph Al-Maqtar bi-Allah, court-servants, courtiers, eunuchs, (*qahramāna*) harem stewardesses, Abbasid Era, Abbasid caliphate.

Introduction

This research addresses the court-servants' control issue in the Abbasid power during the reign of the Caliph Al-Muqtadir Bi-Allah (907 - 932 AD/ 295–320 AH), the 18th Abbasid caliph, and one of Second Abbasid era. In this era, Turkish officials blatantly interfered in the Abbasid power, leading to the decline of Abbasid caliphate, which is due to the struggle between Abbasid caliphs and the Turkish leadership over assuming the defacto power. Later, the Abbasid Caliph, Abū Ishāq Muḥammad ibn Hārūn al-Rashīd, known by his regnal name al-Mu'taḍim Bi-Allāh aided the Turkish officials to assume the defacto power and had the upper hand in Abbasid state. Turkish intervention reached to extent designating, deposing, or killing the Abbasid Caliphs, therefore, the Abbasids sometimes called them “king-makers” and “king-murderers”.

These deteriorating political situations had had negative repercussions over the entire Abbasid state, opening the door wide to all those who wanted to control, intervene and exert some political interventions. Among those court-servants, Abū'l-Ḥasan Mu'nīs (845- 933), also commonly known by the surnames *Mu'nīs al-Muẓaffar*, or *Mu'nīs Khadim* (the Eunuch) the servant who had a highly influential role paralleling kings'. Besides, (*qahramāna*) harem stewardess' influence extremely increased to extent that *Shaghab*, the mother of the eighteenth Abbasid, al-Muqtadir, had a extensive influence over state affairs during her son's reign. The lady's position changed overnight, starting from a concubine of Caliph al-Mu'tadid, the father of caliph al-Muqtadir, to the first Lady and the most influential and controlling figure at Abbasid

court, surrounding herself with a group of chamberlains and harem stewardesses that were exerting influential power reaching to judges'. Moreover, Shaghab secured the succession of her son to the throne; she de facto seized power and appointed a parallel bureaucracy to handle state affairs.

During the entire Abbasid era, these issues, in fact, occurred but not resembling the extent they appeared during the reign Al-Muqtadir. This phenomenon became one of the most prominent features of his reign, control extent tremendously increased to overpower the caliph himself, his senior officials and viziers. This makes the subject more important to determine the influence of those who manipulated and controlled Abbasid caliphate's political decisions, economic resources, and administration institutions. Consequently, it complicated any the caliph's attempts to restore the Islamic caliphate's prestige, resulting to become a puppet in their hands. All that clearly explains why he was deposed and reinstated twice, since he was guided in line with his entourage's interests. The study attempts to follow the historical approaches to treat the historical narratives objectively and fairly, in order to reach unbiased facts. It also attempts to clarify the controlling power of court-servants, eunuchs and chamberlains during the reign of the caliph Al-Muqtadir Bi-Allah. Furthermore, it also attempts to reveal the real extent of the influence they imposed over Abbasid caliphates, in all aspects, through investigating, reviewing and examining the history-based evidence and facts.

The Caliph Al-Muqtadir and the underlying reasons for court servants' control

Abu'l-Faql Ja'far ibn Ahmad al-Mu'taqid ascended the throne in (907 - 932 AD / 295- 320 A.H) succeeding his brother, the caliph Abū Muḥammad Ali ibn Aḥmad, known by his regnal name al-Muktafi bi-Allah⁽¹⁾. The Caliph Al-Muqtadir was thirteen years old and twenty-one days old to be the eighteenth caliph of the Abbasids, his mother's name is *Shaghab*, the underage boy became the caliph when treasury (*Bayt al-mal*) stacked of coins estimated 1,000,000 dinars⁽²⁾

Al-Muqtadir's ascension to throne at this age had not set the stabilizing foundations to political and economic status, the historian, al-Khatib al-Baghdadi mentioned "none has assumed this position younger than him"⁽³⁾. Unquestionably, the boy was inexperienced and had no political capacity to take reign and provide stability foundation to maintain power over a large, sprawling Abbasid empire. Simply when examining the whole facts relevant to al-Muqtadir's ascension to the throne, it will give clear-crystal indication to the influential entourage surrounded the new king and would definitely have frim grim of him. There was a narrative reported that when al-Muktafi was dying, the vizier al-'Abbās bin al-Hassan, senior vizier of the Abbasid caliphate, began to consider whom he should appoint as caliph, with the senior officials. One of the influential figures, called Abu Al -Hassan Bin Mohammed Bin Al Furat pointed out that "the fittest man to succeed the current caliph is Ja'far ibn al-Mu'taqid". The vizier shockingly shouted "he is still a child", but Abu Al -Hassan Al Furat said:

"Why should you appoint a man who will govern, who knows our resources, who will administer affairs himself and regard himself as independent? Why do you not entrust this matter to someone who will leave you to manage it?"⁽⁴⁾.

It is obvious that the senior officials tended to designate Ja'far ibn al-Mu'taqid as a new successor due to his immaturity, thinking about their own interests in order to have limitless and never-ending influence and power. Obviously, this applies to other influential parties in Abbasid state aspiring to have greater influence with the presence of an underage caliph having no capacity, knowledge, and understanding to all matters relevant to politics. Therefore, the understudied court-servants are among those whose influence not only expanded when Caliph Al-Muqtadir Bi-Allah assumed the power, but also became the most powerful and influential players and had significant political roles.

Obviously, our views can be consonant with views of the historian and biographer, Abu al-Hassan Ali ibn Muhammad, known as Ali Izz al-Din Ibn al-Atheer, as he argued "Al-Muqtadir Bi-Allah extensively neglected the caliphate affairs and in which the state was run by women, courtiers and eunuchs, and those squandered huge wealth and dismissed his own viziers....."⁽⁵⁾. Similarly, the Iraqi historian, Ibn al-Tiqtaqa, Jalal-ad-Din Abu Jafar stated: "I know that Al-Muqtadir's state is very chaotic due his young age and being totally controlled by his mother and qahramāns and chamberlains, also, the state affairs was directed by those persons..."⁽⁶⁾.

In my opinion, this is an acceptable argument, to whatever extent, concerning court-servants' control, the moment he ascended the throne..

However, it is unjustifiable if we know that he ruled for twenty-five years, a long time with which he should have had political maturity and experience to run his state affairs. Instead, he had not followed the right course, and the control and interference matter continued without lifting a finger in response to this disastrous acts. Not all these issues can be within reasonable limits, leading us to believe that the state itself and the process of running the state affairs were not included in the caliph's priorities. But even worse, he remained satisfying his own pleasures, holding dance and drinking parties, leaving the whole state affairs under disposal of the Turkish officials and court -servants ⁽⁷⁾. Consequently , the caliph became more powerless and deposed twice, in (908 A.D /296 A.H) and in (929 A.D /317 A.H) ⁽⁸⁾. His main weakness point , he frequented concubines , chamberlains and eunuchs , qahramāns , adopted their views and judgments without second thought and relied entirely on them in the administration of the Abbasid state. Some poets depicted this phenomenon in their satirical poems, ⁽⁹⁾ ,

Al-Muqtadir was an alcoholic and lustful, neither he nor his viziers hardly prioritized state's affairs . While Abu Tahir Sulayman al-Qarmati was mobilizing an army and expanding his control over Iraq, Arabian Peninsula and Syria, and excreting the most notorious attacks , the caliph's viziers were competing for the pheasant hunt and granting incredible rewards to hunters. More importantly, the caliph's mother used to prevent and block such details and news under various pretexts including, “such news would hurt my heart ”⁽¹⁰⁾.

Obviously, the main cause of the widespread control and intervention in Abbasid state seems to be that the caliph was still young when he inherited the throne, and he was addicted to leisure, dancing, drinking and music parties and concubines. The fruits of all these reckless behaviors had contributed significantly to creating a fertile environment prone to unrest, intervention, control and the spread of all kinds of corruption. By the time of al-Muqtadir, the caliphal residence had expanded into a vast complex of palaces, public reception and banqueting halls, residential quarters, prayer halls and mosques, baths, pavilions, sports grounds, pleasure and vegetable gardens, orchards and the like . However, some may imagine that al-Muqtadir's long rule was an exceptional and prosperous period of political, economic and social stability, and may exaggerate its perception of it as one of the golden ages .This perception rapidly fades away when diving down the caliph's biography and his ascension to the throne and obtaining a crystal-clear picture about the characters of his entourage, consisting of royal princes, secretaries, scientists, poets, musicians, servants and, of course, the women of the caliphal harem. This luxury child squandered more than 1,000 dinars of Abbasid state treasury , jewelry, diamonds, and rubies, piled up by the caliph Harun al-Rasheed, to his concubines and female singers at dance and drinking parties.

It is not surprising that we find those who controlled the state affair, first and foremost, his mother , Shaghab, and his Turkish court-servant , Abū'l-Ḥasan Mu'nis, who had repeatedly threatened the caliph's life . Moreover, qahramanas, chamberlains, also, intervened in Abbasid state's affairs including, Fatima, harem stewardess (*qahramāna*) of the queen mother "Shaghab" , and Umm Musa was known as one of the most powerful of the women in the office of qahramana which was the most powerful office of a women in the Abbasid harem. In 910. Umm Musa was made the personal agent of the mother of Shaghab. Furthermore , another lady called Thumal, first woman appointed in 918 A.H as a judge, Zaydan was known as one of the most powerful of the qahramana. She was assigned to be the guardian of the state jewels the stewardess, and acted as the jail keeper of high status prisoners. This enabled her to form a net of contacts among influential officials, and act as an intermediary between them and the Caliph .More importantly, bribery among those was widely common. The Caliph's mother used to sell official posts, and viziers were often designated depending upon who would pay more. All these negative phenomena were widely common, under the reign of Al-Muqtadir, which will be discussed later in this study ⁽¹¹⁾.

Elements of Control

The Abbasid caliphate maintained its power and glory powerfully until it became unable to curb the attempts of intervention and domination in its sovereignty. A century later, it had become powerless due to conflicts and seditions and unrest leading to decline the caliphate system itself as well as the subsequent dwindling of administrative and military institutions and the overall economic turmoil

throughout the state. More importantly, the resounding blow, which contributed considerably in deteriorating and declining the Abbasid caliphate's prestige, can be attributed to using Turkish soldiers by caliph Al-Muqtadir in police and army and other fields, creating negative repercussions on the entire Abbasid empire⁽¹²⁾. We will discuss in detail the controlling aspects of the court-servants, whether they were chamberlains, qahramanas, courtiers, and concubines since these parties had a large share of the influence and power enabling them to dominate and control the caliph and his administrative and military institutions as they pleased.

1- Servants' class and their growing influence.

Servants are an important part of providing important services in the Abbasid court in line with their professions and duties, there are two main classes of court servants in caliph's residence. First, private court-servants whose tasks are to meet caliphs' requirements, needs and desires, and maintain contact with him. They were usually, slave-soldiers *ghilman* and or court ladies, concubines, in other word, the group of favourites selected by caliph⁽¹³⁾. Second, domestic servants whose tasks are to provide cleaning, laundering, palace maintenance and cooking⁽¹⁴⁾. However, the presence of servants is common to all kings and *sultans* (rulers). Therefore, there must be servants who serve and meet needs, but it sometimes exceeds the norms when the number is exaggerated, and their duties shift from providing service to exert influential political roles.

Unfortunately, this happened during the reign of caliph Al-Muqtadir when he used huge numbers of servants in caliphal palace, *dar al-Khilafa*. The historian, al-Khatib al-Baghdadi said:

‘It is generally believed that in the days of al-Muqtadir bi-Allah. The residence contained 11,000 eunuchs (Khadim)—7,000 blacks and 4,000 white Slavs—4,000 free and slave girls and thousands of chamber servants (15)’.

More importantly, Al-Muqtadir was fascinated by the acquisition of concubines and *gullman* (slave-soldiers) considering it a manifestation of luxury and pride, which in turn had a reverse repercussions, in all aspects, on the Abbasid caliphate.

As a result, the role and power of those increased with the growing influence of the Turkish power, where their army used to restraint Abbasid princes in their palaces to make them more vulnerable. Their success has to be explained with reference to their distinctive gender (eunuchs) and to the fact that they were cut off from their original environment with no family or tribe, a situation that made them safer, dependent and loyal. In addition to, they had no interest, ambition and no offspring to take over the caliphate. Therefore, they were brought closer to Abbasid kings, and granted money and gifts, power and influence, and many of them held senior positions, such as military commander and governor⁽¹⁶⁾.

Servants and eunuchs' increased influence and control, coupled with their firm grip, laid the foundation to become prominent in the era of Al-Muqtadir. This was only because they had played an important and decisive role, having unlimited support in aiding the caliph to ascend to the throne. However, Safi al-Harami, reportedly, had an effective part concerning Al-Muqtadir's ascension to the Abbasid throne⁽¹⁷⁾. We will explain how the court-servants, in all positions and ranks, controlled and manipulated the Abbasid power and devoted and imposed their whims on al-Muqtadir himself.

The role of court-servants had not stopped to only control and interfere in Al-Muqtadir's power himself but it extended to his senior officials and viziers, as they had the upper hand concerning who would retain his post and who would not. Obviously, official posts became as a puppet under their hands, who would pay more golden coins to take up these posts.

The number of viziers under Al-Muqtadir's reign was eleven, none of whom were protected or shielded from this type of control or extortion, and the most controlling court-servants was widely known as Abū'l-Ḥasan Mu'nīs, he often overpowered the caliph himself⁽¹⁸⁾. During the reign of the caliph Al-Muqtadir, this man had risen to the position of chief of police (*sahib al-shurta*)⁽¹⁹⁾. He earned the gratitude and support of Al-Muqtadir and his influential mother and become the tutor of the caliph's son, Abul-Abbas Ahmad (Muhammad), the twentieth Caliph⁽²⁰⁾. Moreover, Abū'l-Ḥasan Mu'nīs held other positions such as treasurer⁽²¹⁾, the governor of al-Haramain province (912 A.D- 300 A.H)⁽²²⁾, and al-Mosul province governor (932 A.D- 320 A.H)⁽²³⁾. Later, he became commander-in-chief of the caliphal army for sixty years and titled with the grand servant⁽²⁴⁾.

The first indications of Abū'l-Ḥasan Mu'nīs's political intervention can be portrayed at the event of the caliph Mu'tadid bi-Allah's death. When senior officials and figures began to consult with al-Abbas bin al-Hassan, senior vizier of the Abbasid Caliphate concerning who would succeed, Abū'l-Ḥasan Mu'nīs' was among them⁽²⁵⁾. This represents an indisputable fact regarding his role, superiority, and status in political decision-making, later, his influence, prestige, in political affairs, greatly maximized. It is reported that the caliph, Al-Muqtadir, was inclined to his views and decisions when he wanted to reinstate Abu Al-Hassan Bin Al Furat to his post after dismissing al-Khakani, Mu'nīs strongly opposed this decision and dissuade the caliph and designated Ali ibn Isa al-Jarrah instead⁽²⁶⁾. Furthermore, one of the court-servants who played an important role in political decision-making was the black eunuch, Mufleh al-Tawashi, whose role represents more clearly the wide range of power and influence that eunuchs had attained at the court of al-Muqtadir. He also contributed in bringing Abu Al-Hassan Bin Al Furat back to world of power in 923 D.C / 311 A.H. Mufleh al-Tawashi had severe animosity with the vizier Hammed bin Al-Abbas because Hammed once told him:

'I have an idea of buying a hundred black slaves, naming them all Mufleh and presenting them to my retainers.

Al-Muqtadir, upon the recommendation of Mufleh, ordered Nassir al-Qashuari, The most prominent chamberlain at the time of al-Muqtadir, who held the office uninterruptedly from 295/908 to 316/929, to dispatch Hamid to Ibn al-Furat⁽²⁷⁾. Obviously, it indicates the wide-range power that this man had which, unarguably, out powered the status of the vizier himself. In another hand, Abū'l-Ḥasan Mu'nīs loathed Abu Al-Hassan Bin Mohammed bin Al Furat, and this hatred pushed him to dismiss him, through his cooperation with the chamberlain *Nassir* and the stewardess, Thumal. In 312 A.H - 924 A.D, he, in deed, was terminated and Ali ibn al-Furat, Abul-Qasim al-Khakani occupied this post⁽²⁸⁾. Although Al-Muqtadir loathed him, in person, but he was obliged to take such a decision, in line with the wish of certain dominant court-servants and qahramāns.⁽²⁹⁾

Clearly, Mu'nīs played the role of intercessor to designate al-Khakani as a vizier, supported him to stay in office in 316 Ah / 928 AD, had an argument with a Nassir, who was seeking to change al-Khakani and replace him by Abu Ali Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Muqlah. However, in the same year, Nassir succeeded in convincing al Muqtadir in his endeavor and obtaining his approval to replace him by ibn Muqlah Mu'nīs was extremely furious and convinced al Muqtadir to dismiss ibn Muqlah and appointed the vizier, Suleiman Bin Mukhalid in 317 A.H/ 928 A.D⁽³⁰⁾

The power and influence of court-servants maximized to greater extent reaching to dethrone the caliph himself, in 317 A.H / 928 A.D, Mu'nīs al-Muzaffar, Abu al-Hayja'a and Nazuk launched a coup and deposed al-Muqtadir and took al-Muqtadir, his mother and some senior officials to Mu'nīs's residence installing his half-brother al-Qahir in his place. The caliphal army responded rapidly and killed the servant, Nazuk and raided Mu'nīs's house, brought the caliph and his family back, Abu al-Hayja'a and Nazuk were killed⁽³¹⁾. It is reported that Nazuk was a senior servant under the reign of al-Mu'tadid, he was the chief police due to his valor and courage until 317 A.H.⁽³²⁾

The chamberlain, Sawsan, was one of the court-servants who played great political roles, as in the events of 296 A.H when the senior officials, army leaders and judges in Baghdad deposed the al-Muqtadir and paid allegiance to Abdullah bin Al-Mutazz, who succeeded in ruling for a single day and a single night. Sawsan did not join them, but instead he supported al-Muqtadir. Furthermore, he fought with slave-servants (*Gilman*) against Hussein bin Hamdan in defense of the al-Muqtadir, defeated him and his forces, raided to the palace where ibn al-Mutazz and his supporters were in, ibn al-Mutazz fled into hiding, found, and then strangled to death⁽³³⁾. As a result of these events, Sawsan's power and influence, tyranny overflowed to the greatest extent, generating fears of al Muqtadir, which prompted the caliph to plot to kill him in cooperation with Bin Al Furat and some servants, including Safi al-Harami, then he was arrested and imprisoned until his death.

Thus, the influence of court-servants during the reign of Al-Muqtada increased to an exorbitant degree, this seems to be similar to al-Khatib al-Baghdadi's narrative, who mentioned that Byzantine visitor when entered Nasser Qashuari's office passing through courtyards and corridors in the palace which were filled with guards, servants and eunuchs. he was astonished believing that he was the caliph himself until he was told that he was just a chamberlain⁽³⁴⁾.

Jawārī influential role in political aspect

Courtmaids, *Jawārī*, (singular form is *jāriyah*), are female slaves who were, 'defined as women who had been taken as war booty and sold in the slave market, or were born of parents who were both slaves' (35). The word *qahramāna* is derived from a Persian word which means "housekeeping and maintain man's needs" (36). However, *qahramāna* had superior position than regular *Jawārī*, was the only *jāriyah* amongst the ladies of the household entitled to walk outside the palace without prior permission. They often were assigned to matters related to financial aspects and monthly palace expenditures (37). Al-Muqtadir was obsessed in acquiring al-Jawari, therefore, caliphal palace was full of them.

As it aforementioned, when he ascended to power, State treasury (Bayt al-mal) was stacked of coins allowing him to buy massive numbers of Jawari, concubines, entertainers (38). The number of al-Jawari in the palaces of Al-Muqtadir was unbelievably huge, it is mentioned that the number of women reached about 4,000 (slave women to free women) (39). They often had influential political roles, in particular, when caliphate institution become powerless and weak. More importantly, the highly complex subdivision of spaces which consist of increasingly secluded courts in which caliph was inaccessible, it became extremely difficult to reach the man who was, supposedly, the caliph of the people, to handle their problems and needs. Definitely, this barrier contributed in strengthening and empowering *qahramāna* and *Jawari* inside and outside the caliphal palace (40).

It was thoroughly applicable to what happened during the reign of Al-Muqtadir when Shaghab, the mother of al-Muqtadir, and notable harem stewardesses such as such Fatima, Umm Musa l-Hashimiyya, Thumal, and Zaydan took absolute control over the caliph and his entire court (41). This lady definitely played the shadow government or defacto caliph of the Abbasid state and had an important political impact. Moreover, the mother queen, Shaghab, had her own administrative agent, Qasim al-Jawahiri, whose task was to manage her properties and collect taxes and money. The slave-woman, Shaghab, of Greek origin from the Byzantine Empire (42), granted the title of, *Al-Sayyidah*, the lady of the Abbasid court (43). The caliph al-Mu'tadid bought her from a daughter of Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Tahir, She entered the harem of Caliph al-Mu'tadid (892- 901 AD/ 279-289 AH), and became his concubine (44). He loved her passionately for her beauty, after giving birth to Ja'far, the future al-Muqtadir, in 895 AD/ 282 AH, she was set free (umm walad) and given the name Shaghab, this enabled her to practice a political role and stand out as a controlling figure in Abbasid power (45).

Shaghab became the First Lady, had the absolute power over all with no exceptions (46), her first intervention in political affairs was to reward Bin Al Furat, who recommended her son to the vizier al-Abbas bin al-Hassan to be selected as the new caliph. She ordered her entourage to let Bin Al Furat in her residence, telling her underage son, the new caliph, to go out and kiss his head and hand and then to sit in his lab. at Shaghab's request, he even took the young caliph on his lap while speaking for him during meetings, Meanwhile The Lady told Bin Al Furat:

"Abu Al-Hassan, this is your son and you have nominated him to be the new caliph", then he told her, *"My lady, this is my lord, caliph, the son of my lord and caliph"* (47).

Ibn al-Furat orchestrated the caliphate with Shaghab. He seemed to have treated the young caliph as son. This act had a negative effect on the new caliph's personality, because her mother instilled in him the spirit of submission and acceptance of being controlled. The lady, Shaghab, had an important political attitude when Abu Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Jafar, known by his regnal title al-Mutazz Bi-Allah, tried to dethrone her son forcibly in 296 A.H / 908 A.D (48). Lady Shaghab was able to defend her son's and her own interests through the intervention of her brother, whom she most probably had nominated to this post herself. Within a few days, al-Muqtadir's defenders were able to end the coup (49). Since the little caliph has no experience in running the Abbasid state, the caliph's mother became the shadow and the undeniable controller who could reward, punish, designate, and expel whomever she wanted. Furthermore, she had the upper hand in appointing Abu Al-Hassan Bin Al Furat a vizier as special appreciation and gratitude to his effort toward her son, al-Muqtadir. Therefore, her political influence increased day by day reaching to the extent that the viziers submitted their resignation or relief requests to her instead of the caliph. That explained what happened when vizier Ali Bin Issa presented directly to the caliph 'mother a relief petition of his post instead of expelling humiliatingly, after being reported to the mother-queen. He said:

“*In the name of God , Most Gracious, Most Merciful, May God prolong her age , grant her His grace , care and support , protect and guard her , agents , encourage and bestow and increase His blessing and charity on her . I do pray to Allah to grant this great lady , perpetual Help, greatest confidence , guidance and support , I truly pray to Allah that the master of believers , the caliph al-Muqtadir informed her about our greatest our fullest respect and appreciation.....*”.

This overpraising message of the lady rather God and his Messenger, is only obvious proof of the woman's greatness , prestige and the firm grip over the caliphate , which made the first lady respond to his petition and relived him officially, instead of terminating him⁽⁵⁰⁾. The caliph's mother had the upper hand in designating and determining government officials and viziers whenever she wanted to, and she often made hundreds of thousands of gold dinars as a result of extortion ⁽⁵¹⁾. Definitely, it was not restricted to her, but also her own close qahramāns or courtiers orbiting around her, who played political roles as effective and controlling as the queen mother.

Several instances , but not be limited , support qahramāns' controlling and supremacy, when one of the caliph's viziers was dismissed by Shaghab's *qahramānas*, Umm Musa . One amusing story is the way in which Umm Musa burst into a top priority meeting on the defense of the state borders attended by some of the highest officials (the vizier Ali bin Isa, commander-in-chief, Mu'nis, and the chamberlain Nassir, demanding trivial domestic necessities and small pay rises on behalf of her staff. That her requests had to be taken seriously is made explicit. In another story recounting how she succeeded in having Ali bin Isa dismissed from the vizierate after he had offended her. One day, she had visited the vizier to discuss the extra allowances for the harem women and the court attendants on the Feast of the Immolation, *Eid al-Adha* . The vizier was not receiving visitors at that hour and his chamberlain politely sent Umm Musa away. When Ali bin Isa later heard of her visit, he immediately sent a messenger to make his apologies. Unfortunately for him, it was already too late. Umm Musa was furious and she lodged her complaints with the caliph and his mother. A few days later Ali bin Isa was discharged. Consequently, the vizier was terminated only because he did not meet Umm Musa's needs and not because any shortcomings in his duties as vizier ⁽⁵²⁾, he was imprisoned at Zaydan's prison ⁽⁵³⁾ . the harem stewardess , Zaydan functioned as the guard to top political prisoners and kept locked up in her private quarters. Moreover, Umm Musa interfered in high-stake political affairs of the caliph and “acquired enough power to stand up against viziers . When she quarreled with them, she managed at times to have them dismissed, imprisoned, tortured and their property confiscated.

This type of influence created an unspoken respect for the women within the harem from the men of the court.

In 304 Ah / 916 AD, Abu Al -Hassan Ibn-al Furat had to negotiate with Umm Musa al-Hashimiyya for his return to his previous post again and both agreed upon the amount of his reimbursement sum , a thousand and five hundred dinars as a reimbursement sum payable to the Caliph and his mother , and Umm Musa received the third of this sum ⁽⁵⁴⁾. In 312 AH / 924 AD , he was discharged , Umm Musa al-Hashimiyya used her unlimited power against him because he once told one of his closest innercircle “I am not afraid of this woman” , referring to Umm Musa , this lady seized this opportunity better by convincing Shaghab that Ibn-al Furat was conspiring against al-Muqtadir , therefore , he was arrested , and an caliphal order was issued to confiscate his fortune ,then killed him at the aged of 71 ⁽⁵⁵⁾ .

This chaos and political irrationality by The Lady Shaghab and her innercircle led to some competent figures not to take over the vizierate posts because they knew that they would not be the defacto viziers , all affairs of state would be run by the Lady and her closest entourage. After Ibn-al-Furat's dismissal for the third time ,there was a meeting held between The Lady ,Shaghab , al- Muqtadir and Thumal . Thumal campaigned in favour of one of clients, private secretary, Ahmad al-Khasibi, to resume the vizierate. Al-Muqtadir agreed upon this figure without second thinking . He resumed the vizierate (314 Ah - 316 Ah / 926 - 928 AD) , unlike many of his predecessors in the vizierate, al-Khasibi lacked experience in the bureaus of the central administration. Before his employment by Shaghab, he had also worked as secretary to one of the *qahramanas*, Thumal. The unlimited support provided by Shaghab and Thumal, he overexerted power with the people and extort them, resulting to widespread outrage and resentment which led Thumal to nominate Abdul Rahman bin Mohammed bin Suhail instead of him⁽⁵⁶⁾. Through this overview , it is clear that the caliph Al-Muqtadir had designated many viziers and this process was taking

place hastily and subject to the whims of his mother and her own closest stewardesses. The quick shake-up in his cabinet produced administrative confusion and weakness in his cabinet and it seems that what occurred in his cabinet was occurring in other fields such as police, army and various sensitive senior posts. This is totally consistent to Ibn Kathir's narrative. He recounted that Caliph al-Muqtada appointed nineteen grievance arbitrators looking into his subjects' grievances and complaints in Kufa city in return they had to pay him bribes, consequently, it contributed to creating a state of instability throughout the Abbasid state⁽⁵⁷⁾

Furthermore, qahramanas had great influence and power over Abbasid state and the caliph himself since he was brought up among them, for instance Faraj al-Nasraniya, a friend of Umm Musa al-Hashimiyya, had al-Muqtadir's seal ring, used it unlimitedly, especially, in regard to appointing and dismissing viziers⁽⁵⁸⁾. In 310 AH/922 AD, Umm Musa was accused of leaking state secrets to outsiders. This was a serious slur. She was accused of sending secret messages to al-Muqtadir's relatives asking them to prepare a replacement to take over the caliphate as a result of the latter's illness. Consequently, Muqtadir no longer trusted Umm Musa and she was arrested as were her brother and sister. The last thing we hear of her is that her possessions were confiscated⁽⁵⁹⁾

As we indicated earlier, the vizier Ali bin Isa was dismissed for nothing except that he outraged Shaghab's qahramana Umm Musa al-Hashimiyya when she went to his office demanding trivial domestic necessities and small pay rises on behalf of her staff and to discuss the extra allowances for the harem women and the court attendants. Unfortunately, she was not received by the Minister because he was busy receiving dignitaries on the Feast of the Immolation, although he apologized strongly but did not accept his apology and insisted on his dismissal⁽⁶⁰⁾. Besides, the vizier Hamid ibn al-Abbas, was the other victim of the mood of this qahramana, it was said that she demanded some financial allowances, he said: "pick up the coins but do not miscount", she felt extremely embarrassed⁽⁶¹⁾, consequently he was dismissed in (311-312 Ah / 923 - 924 AD)⁽⁶²⁾. Amongst the qahramanas, the harem stewardess, Zaydan. She functioned as the guard to top political prisoners and kept locked up in her private quarters – sometimes for several years. At the same time, she had easy access to the caliph which gave her an influential position as mediator. Moreover, according to one of the contemporary observers, Ibn-al-Furat used to address her in his letters as "my sister"⁽⁶³⁾

The murder of al-Muqtadir and chamberlains, eunuchs and slave-soldiers

The most important result of the court-servants, eunuchs and slave-soldiers' control over the Abbasid state affairs was the killing of the caliph, al-Muqtadir at their hand. He was killed by a soldier of his own army, one of Mu'nis' slave-soldiers in (320 Ah / 932 AD)⁽⁶⁴⁾. Al-Muqtadir met an ignominious end. After a long reign of almost twenty-five years. His mother, Lady Shaghab, was arrested and mercilessly tortured by order of al-Muqtadir's half-brother and successor Caliph al-Qahir. Her possessions were confiscated and she died destitute the next year. Mu'nis planned to place on the throne his son Abu al-Abbas, saying: "he is my nursling; and he is a wise, generous and loyal man, once he becomes caliph, his grandmother his brothers and his father's retainers will be willing to spend money.

However, when it was observed that to promote this prince would, in fact, perpetuate the existing regime. But Ishāq Nubakhti strongly opposed Mu'nis and said: "After a long suffering and effort we have been relieved of those who have huge numbers of servants and chamberlains and eunuchs and now, you would like to return to this situation, I swear to God that we will not only accept but a wise and experienced man who can govern this country himself". Mu'nis' candidacy of al-Muqtadir's son Ahmad was rejected in favour of Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Mu'tadid al-Qahir, known simply by his regnal title Al-Qahir billāh⁽⁶⁵⁾. The new caliph planned to get rid of and Mu'nis his supporters, and in return, Mu'nis also planned to depose him, but this time, Mu'nis's plan was thwarted, arrested and executed in 322 Ah / 933 AD, at the age of ninety.⁽⁶⁶⁾ tarikh

Conclusion

The research has reached a set of conclusions, the most important of which are:

[1] Court-servants' control and manipulation in Abbasid state's affairs, under the reign of the caliph Al-Muqtadir bi-Allah, resulted in frequent changing of viziers in line with of court-servants' whims, mood and desires or taking bribery from them to hold such posts. All that provided the fertile environment in

dwindling viziers' power creating tremendous decline in Abbasid caliphate's institutions since the experienced and honest individuals were excluded from assuming higher positions and allowing all opportunists and vulnerable persons to hold senior positions. Consequently, corrupt individuals toughly blocked all success foundations, experience, qualifications necessary to run vizierates .

[2] Under the reign of the caliph Al-Muqtadir bi-Allah, the mother-queen , *Shaghab* , definitely represents the shadow government or defacto caliph of the Abbasid state. Undoubtedly, she had absolute freedom and the upper hand to exert power and control over the state's affairs as she pleased . She is the real founder of the phenomenon of qahramāns' intervention and control , as she is the one who granted them political roles and limitless power derived from her own power.

[3] court-servants, eunuchs , qahramāns and chamberlains went beyond their own regular functions, to exert political functions, interfered in politics, designated and terminated officials, which obviously had revers repercussions on Al-Muqtadir and made him a puppet in their hands.

[4] Court-servants' power and political roles became a prominent feature of the caliph Al-Muqtadir bi-Allah's long reign , especially those of Turkish origin, and their influence seemed to have been derived from the influence of the Turkish leaders who unleashed them by controlling the state and the entire members .

[5] One of the most important consequences of the court servants' control in the Abbasid caliphate was that the caliph lost his life on their hands.

List of footnotes, and reference & sources

¹) Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, Abu Bakir Ahmed Bin Ali (died in 463 Ah/ 1070 AD), Tarikh Baghdad Aw Medina Al Salam, edited by (Mustafa Abdul Qadir Atta), 1 edition , Dar al Kotob al ilmiyah (Beirut-1417 Ah / 1997), volume 7,p. 222.

²) Al-Tabari, Abi Jaafar Mohammed bin Greer (died 310 Ah / 922 AD), Tarikh al-Tabari, commonly known by Tarikh al-Umam wa al-Muluk, reviewed and edited by group of scholars, AlAlami Foundation., (Beirut), volume 8, p. 250.

³) Tarikh Baghdad, volume 7 p.,250

⁴) Ibn Khaldun, Abd ar-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Khaldūn al-Ḥaḍramī (died: 808 Ah / 1405 AD), Kitāb al-‘Ibar wa-Dīwān al-Mubtada’ wa-l-Khabar fī Ta’rīkh al-‘Arab wa-l-Barbar wa-Man ‘Āṣarahum min Dhawī ash-Sha’n al-Akbār, Al-Alami Foundation, (Beirut- 1391 Ah/ 1971 AD), volume 3, p. 358-359.

⁵) Ibn al-Atheer, 'Izz al-Din Ibn Abi al-Hassan Ali (died:630 Ah /1232 AD), "Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh, Dar Sader, (Beirut - 1386 Ah / 1966), volume 8, p. 243.

⁶) Fakhri fi al-adab al-sultaniyah wa-al-duwal al-Islamiyah (Dar Sader (Beirut , p. 262.

⁷) Al-Ghaffar, Abdul Rasul, Al-Klini and Al-Kafi , 1st edition , Islamic Publishing Corporation, (Qom-1416 Ah), p. 243-245.

⁸) Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad Aw Medina Al Salam, , volume 7,p. 223.

⁹) Al- Ḥā’irī, Muhammad Mahdī (died 1369 Ah/ 1949), Shajarat Ṭūbā, 5th edition , Manshūrāt al-maktabah al-Ḥaydarīyah, (Najaf -1385 Ah), volume 1, p. 155-156.

¹⁰) al-Zirikli, Khayr al-Din (died: 1410 Ah / 1989 AD), Al-A'alam , 5th edition , Dar al-Alam for Millions, (Beirut- 1980), volume 2, p. 121

¹¹) Al-Ghaffar, Abdul Rasul, Al-Klini and Al-Kafi ,p. 243-248.

¹²) Al-Thamri, Ihsan Zannoon Abdullatif , The Abbasid Caliphate in the Weakness Era between the Sovereignty Loss and Recovery Attempts, Journal of Taibah of Literature and Humanities,(Year 7-1441 Ah), Issue 20, p. 427

¹³) Al-Khatib, Mustafa Abdul Karim, Mu'jam al Mustalahat wa al alqab tarikhiah, 1edition , Al-Resala Foundation, (Beirut- 1416 Ah / 1996 D.A), p. 157.

¹⁴) Al-Dosari, Norah Ibrahim Saleh, The Servants of the Caliphate's House and their Political and Cultural Role during the Second Abbasid Era 232-656-AH/943-1258 AD). Unpublished Thesis, Qassim University, Faculty of Education, (1429-1430 Ah/2008-2009), p. 127.

¹⁵) Tarikh Baghdad , volume 1. p. 127.

- 16) Zidan, jerji, History of Islamic Urbanization, edited by (Hussein Mu'nis), Dar Al Hilal, (Cairo), volume 4, p. 182
- 17) Al-Ghaffar, Abdul Rasul, Al-Klini and Al-Kafi ,p. 250.
- 18) Al-Ghaffar, Abdul Rasul, Al-Klini and Al-Kafi ,p. 250.
- 19) Al-Dhahabi, Shams ad-dine Mohammed bin Ahmed bin Othman (died: 748 Ah / 1374 AD), Siyar A'lam al-Nubala, edited by (Ibrahim Al-Zaybak), 9th edition , Al Resala Foundation, (Beirut - 1413 Ah / 1993), volume 15, p. 56..
- 20) Tabari, al-Tarikh , volume 8, p. 202.
- 21) Al-Suli, Abu Bakir Mohammed bin Yahya (died: 334 Ah / 946 AD), Akhbār al-Rādī billāh wa-al-Muttaqī lillāh, aw, tāriḫ al-dawlah al-‘Abbāsīyah (322 Ah / 333 AD), taken from kitab al awraq , published by J. Heworth..., Al-Sawi printing house printing, (Cairo- 1935), p. 5.
- 22) Ibn al-Atheer, al-Kamil , volume 6, p. 258.
- 23) (ibid) volume 6, p. 342.367.
- 24) Al-Ghaffar, Abdul Rasul, Al-Klini and Al-Kafi ,p. 250.
- 25) Ibn al-Jawzi, Abu al-Faraj Abdul Rahman bin Ali bin Mohammed (died: 597 Ah / 1201 AD), al-Muntazam fī tāriḫ al-mulūk wa-al-umam, study and investigation (Mohammed Abdul Qadir Atta, Mustafa Abd-el-Kader Atta), Dar al Kotob al ilmiyah publishing house , (Beirut) ,volume 13, p. 122
- 26) Ibn al-Jawzi, Abu al-Faraj Abdul Rahman bin Ali bin Mohammed (died: 597 Ah / 1201 AD), al-Muntazam fī tāriḫ al-mulūk wa-al-umam, study and investigation (Mohammed Abdul Qadir Atta, Mustafa Abd-el-Kader Atta), Dar al Kotob al ilmiyah publishing house , (Beirut) ,volume 13, p. 122
- 27) Ibn al-Atheer, Al-Kamel, volume 8, p. 140-141; al-Kubaisi, Hamdan Abdul Majid, The era of Caliph al-Muqtadir bi' Allāh 295-320 Ah / 907 - 932 AD: A study in the internal conditions of Iraq,(Najaf 1394 Ah/1974 AD), p. 190-1911.
- 28) Ibn al-Atheer, Al-Kamel, volume 6, p. 312-; Al-Yuzbaki, Tawfiq Sultan, Viziers /Employees Islamic Empire -- Officials and employees Islamic Empire , 2nd edition , Dar al-Kuttab Foundation, (Mosul 1396 Ah- 1976), p. 195
- 29) Al-Dhahabi , Siyar A'lam al-Nubala , volume 14 ,p.474.
- 30) Al-Yuzbaki, Tawfiq Sultan Siyar, Viziers /Employees Islamic Empire -- Officials and employees Islamic Empire 14 ,p.196
- 31) Al-Dhahabi , Siyar A'lam al-Nubala , volume 15 ,p.52-53
- 32) Rahmoni, Mohammed Al-Sharif, Nidham al-shurta fī al-Islam ala awakhir al-qurin al-rabie al-Hujri , Al-dar al-earabiat lil kitab, (Tripoli-1403 A.h/ 1983), p. 689.
- 33) Al- Qurtubi, Areeb Bin Sa'ad (died: 320 Ah / 932 AD), silat tāriḫ al -Tabari, Al-Alami Foundation, (Beirut-), p. 20-22
- 34) Tarikh Bagdad , volume 1 ,p.116
- 35) Attia Allah, Ahmed, al –Kamus al- Islami , 1st edition , Dar al –Nahda al-Massriya , (Cairo- 1963), p. 555
- 36) Ibn Mandhur, Jamal al-Din Mohammed bin Makrim bin Ali bin Ahmed Ansari (died in : 711 Ah / 1311 AD), Lisan Al-Arab, Dar –al Sader, (Beirut- 1956), volume 12, p. 496
- 37) Al-Isfahani, Abu al-Faraj Ali bin Al-Hussein bin Mohammed al-Qurashi al-Amway (died : 356 Ah / 966 AD), Al-Aghani , edited by (Ahmed Al-Shankiti), Investigated by (Abdul Sattar Ahmed Faraj), Dar Al-Thaqafa Printing Press, (Beirut- 1955), volume 12, p. 79.

- ³⁸⁾ al-Balādhurī i, Ahmed bin Yahya bin Jaber (died: 279 Ah / 892 AD), Futuh al-Buldan, Dar al-Ashrak printing Press, (Cairo), p. 64.
- ³⁹⁾ Bar Ebroyo, Gregorius Abū'l-Faraj bin Harun, (died : 685 Ah /1286 AD), Tarikh mukhtasar al-duwal, 2nd edition , Catholic Printing Press, (Beirut- 1958), p. 78.
- ⁴⁰⁾ Abu'l- Fidā' Ismā'īl Ibn 'Imād Al-Dīn (died : 732 Ah / 1138 AD), Al Mukhtasar Fi Akhbar Al Bashar, Husseini printing Press, (Cairo- 1966), volume 2, p. 187
- ⁴¹⁾ Ibn al-Sa'ei, Tajeddine Ali bin Al-Mahb, known as Babi al-Sa'i al-Khazen al-Baghdadi (died : 874 Ah / 1275 AD), Nisa' Al-Khalifa' Jihat Al'ayimat Alkhalifa' Min Alharayir Wal'iima'. edited by (Mustafa Jawad), Dar al-Maarif, (Cairo) p. 23.
- ⁴²⁾ Al-Dawihari, Rusum dar al Khilafa fi al-asr al Abbasi al-awal, p. 368.
- ⁴³⁾ Al-Sabi , Al –Wazara'a ,p.30
- ⁴⁴⁾ Ibn Al-Jawzi , Al-montadim , volume 7 ,p.381
- ⁴⁵⁾ Al-Omari, Yasin bin Khairuddin (died :232 Ah / 846 AD), Rawdah al-fayha' fi tawarikh al-nisa'., edited by (Raja and Mohammed al-Samarrai), Dar al-Jumhuriya printing Press,(Baghdad- 1966), p. 226.
- ⁴⁶⁾ Kahhala, Umar Rida , Alam al-nisa' fi a-lama Al-arabi wal aslami, 2nd edition , Al-Hashymia printing Press, (Damascus- 1959), volume 5, p. 67.
- ⁴⁷⁾ Al-Sabi , Al –Wazara'a ,p.130-131
- ⁴⁸⁾ Al-Kazroni, Dahir al-Din Ali bin Mohammed al-Bagdadadi (died : 697 Ah / 1297 AD), Mukhtasar al-tarikh min awl al-zaman wa ela muntahaa dawlat bani al Abaas, edited by Mustafa Jawad , The World Press and Printing Foundation, (Baghdad - 1390 Ah / 1970 AD), p. 172.
- ⁴⁹⁾ Ibn al-Amrani, Mohammed bin Ali bin Mohammed (died : 580 Ah/ 1184 AD), al-anba;a fi tarikh al-Khulafa'a, edited by Qassim al-Samarrai , 1st edition , Dar al-Afaq al-Arabiya , (Cairo- 1421 Ah/ 2001), p. 156.
- ⁵⁰⁾ Al-Sabi , Al –Wazara'a ,p. 309
- ⁵¹⁾ Al-Jahshiri, Abu Obeida bin Abdus (died : 331 Ah / 942 AD), al- Wizara'a wa al –kitab , Bulaq printing Press, (Cairo - 1357 Ah / 1938 AD), p. 149
- ⁵²⁾ Ibin al-Atheer , al-Kamel , volume 8 ,p.99
- ⁵³⁾ Anonymous, al- Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'iq fi akhbār al-ḥaqā'iq , edited by (Omar Saidi), French Institute, (Damascus- 1972), volume 4, p. 182.
- ⁵⁴⁾ Al-Dhahabi, Shamseddine Mohammed bin Ahmed bin Othman (died 748 Ah/ 1374 AD), Tarikh al-Islam , edited by (Omar Abul Salam Tadmuri), 1st edition , Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi , (Beirut- 1407 Ah / 1987), volume 7, p. 13
- ⁵⁵⁾ Hassan, Sulaf Faizallah, Dour al-Jawari and Qahramanat fi al-Khilafa Abbasia , 1st edition , Dar wa maktabat Adnan , (Baghdad - 2013 AD), p. 119.
- ⁵⁶⁾ Al-Tabari ,al- Tarikh , volume 11 ,p.109-111
- ⁵⁷⁾ Abi al-Fida Ismail Bin Kathir (died : 774 Ah / 1372 AD), Al-hidayah wa al-Nihaia , edited by Ali Sherry 1st edition , Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, (Beirut - 1408 Ah / 1988), volume 11, p. 192.
- ⁵⁸⁾ Al-Tanukhi, Abu Ali al-Mohsen bin Abu al-Qasim (died : 384 Ah / 994 AD), Nishwar al-Muhadharat wa Akhbar al-Mudhakara, edited by (Abboud Al-Shalji), 2nd edition , Dar Sader, (Beirut- 1995), volume 6, p. 328.
- ⁵⁹⁾ Al-Qurtubi ,Silat Tarikh al-Tabari ,p.75
- ⁶⁰⁾ Ibin Al-Atheer , Al-Kamel , volume 8 ,p.
- ⁶¹⁾ Al-Dhahabi, Tarikh al-Islam , volume 23, p. 348.
- ⁶²⁾ Al-Sabi , Al –Wazara'a , volume 1 , p. 172
- ⁶³⁾ Shadi, Tayseer Mohammed, Women During the Reign of Caliphate Al-Muqtadir Bi-Allah Al-Abbasi: The lady shagab as a Model , (295-320 Ah / 908-932 AD), Arts college magazine , (Egypt - 2017), Issue 47, p. 228-229.
- ⁶⁴⁾ Ibin al-Atheer , al-bidaia wa al-Nihaia , volume 11 ,p.181
- ⁶⁵⁾ Ibin al-Atheer , al-Kamel , volume 8 ,p.244
- ⁶⁶⁾ Bar Ebroyo, Tarikh mukhtasar al-duwal, p. 162