
THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF THE ABBASID PRINCES

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Abstract

This study explores the living standards of princes descending from the Abbasid Caliphal lineage across various phases of the Abbasid Caliphate. It highlights how these princes generally maintained a lifestyle that reflected their noble heritage and the prestige of their family name. Despite fluctuations due to changing social, economic, and political conditions, Abbasid princes typically enjoyed privileged material conditions marked by wealth, land ownership, and personal luxuries. The study further investigates how such affluence occasionally led to moral lapses, prompting caliphs to intervene in matters of discipline and conduct. It also examines how the princes' relationships with the caliphal court influenced their material wellbeing, ranging from periods of unity to instances of division and alienation. Ultimately, the research emphasizes the caliphs' dedication to ensuring the dignity, financial stability, and continued status of their sons, even beyond their lifetimes—motivated by both political strategy and paternal concern.

Keywords: Abbasid Caliphate, Abbasid princes, Royal conduct, Islamic history.

INTRODUCTION

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Peace and blessings be upon the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers, our Master Muhammad (PBUH).

This study, titled *'The Standard of Living of the Princes from the Abbasid Caliphs' Lineage,'* explores a topic of considerable historical significance by shedding light on the lifestyle and living conditions of Abbasid princes who, despite their noble lineage, never ascended to the caliphate or held political power.

This research examines several key aspects that contribute to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the general living conditions within the Abbasid household, with a particular focus on the sons of the Abbasid caliphs. In doing so, it also illuminates the social dynamics within the Abbasid family, the strength of their familial ties, and how these relationships helped elevate the status of its members. This is especially significant given that the Abbasid caliphs, as part of the societal elite, enjoyed unparalleled wealth and luxury.

This study faced several challenges, primarily due to the limited attention historical texts and general sources devote to the daily lives and living standards of the princes who were sons of Abbasid caliphs but never assumed power. In contrast, these sources tend to provide extensive detail about the lives of those who held the caliphate. Our research seeks to explore the consequences of this disparity, examining how it affected the non-ruling male descendants and shaped their social standing, personal experiences, and overall way of life.

This study is structured into two main sections. The first examines the material well-being and financial resources of the sons of the Abbasid caliphs, offering insight into the nature of their daily lives. The second section explores their personal property and possessions, providing an objective evaluation of their overall standard of living.

In conducting this study, I relied on a range of sources that were either contemporary with or closely aligned in time to the events under investigation. The most prominent among these sources include:

- ***The History of Prophets and Kings (Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk)* by al-Ṭabarī, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr (d. 310 AH / 922 CE):** Widely regarded as one of the foundational works of Islamic historiography, this source offers numerous accounts that are either contemporary with or closely related to the events relevant to this study—particularly those involving the sons of Abbasid caliphs. Many of these narratives have proven especially valuable in illuminating various dimensions of their lives.
- ***Experiences of Nations and the Succession of Ambitions (Tajārib al-Umam wa Ta‘āqub al-Himam)* by Ibn Miskawayh, Abū ‘Alī ibn Miskawayh al-Rāzī (d. 421 AH / 1030 CE),** which provided important references to historical events, including clear indications of the lives of princes from the Abbasid dynasty and descriptions of certain social occasions that illustrated their living conditions.
- ***The Complete History (Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh)* by Ibn al-Athīr, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Abī al-Karam Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn ‘Abd al-Wāḥid (d. 630 AH / 1232 CE),** which helped identify key historical texts that discussed the standard of living of the Abbasid caliphs and their sons, particularly those who held princely status, across various periods of the Abbasid Caliphate.
- Literary works also played an important role in this study, especially *The Singing Slave Girls (Al-Imā’ al-Shawā‘ir)* by Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Haytham al-Marwānī al-Umawī al-Qurashī (d. 356 AH / 967 CE), which contains clear references to the lives of Abbasid princes and their enjoyment of concubines who lived in their households.
- Additionally, books of geography were of great importance to this research, particularly *The Dictionary of Countries (Mu‘jam al-Buldān)* by Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Shihāb al-Dīn Yāqūt ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Rūmī (d. 626 AH / 1228 CE), which assisted in identifying certain properties and estates owned by the princes from the Abbasid caliphs' families, as well as their geographical locations.

First: The Living Standards of the Sons of the Abbasid Caliphs

The standard of living among the sons of the Abbasid caliphs varied significantly due to several influencing factors, including the political and economic conditions of the caliphate, the nature of their relationship with the reigning caliph, and the official roles or positions they held within the state. As a result, their living conditions were far from uniform—an issue this section seeks to examine and clarify.

For some of the Abbasid caliphs' sons, luxury was a defining aspect of their lifestyle. Their lives were marked by extravagance, often expressed through the purchase of slave girls (*jawārī*), with competition arising among them to acquire the most beautiful and talented. A notable example is Prince Sulaymān ibn al-Manṣūr, who purchased a concubine named Da‘īfa for 5,000 dinars. When Caliph al-Mahdī learned of this, he offered to buy her from his brother for 10,000 dinars. Sulaymān agreed to the sale, although sources suggest he was deeply attached to her. Later, he requested her return, but al-Mahdī refused.

This emotional loss moved Sulaymān to compose verses of poetry in which he expressed the depth of his love and yearning. Through these verses, he lamented the separation and conveyed the profound emotional impact she had left on him.

**O Lord, to You alone I raise my complaint,
Of what I've suffered from the Caliph's hand.
His justice embraces all of creation,**

**Yet denies me mercy over Ḍa'īfa's strand.
My heart clings to her memory still,
Like ink that clings to a parchment's quill.¹**

This demonstrates the high regard in which the Abbasid caliphs and princes held concubines, and it also reflects the luxurious lifestyle they enjoyed.

The same applies to Prince Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, who surrounded himself with concubines, especially those renowned for their singing—something that aligned with his interests. Among them was his concubine (*Shāriyah*)⁽²⁾, who was famous for her talent in music, and thus was brought close to him ⁽³⁾.

The signs of luxury and nobility were evident in the appearance of Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī (158–169 AH / 775–785 CE), who wore elegant garments and precious jewels that drew the attention of those around him. This is confirmed by a historical report attributed to *al-Jāhiz*⁽⁴⁾, who said:

¹ Al-Ṣūlī, Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ibn 'Abd Allāh (d. 336 AH / 889 CE), *Poetry of the Caliphs' Sons (Ash'ār Awlād al-Khulafā')*, Cairo: Al-Ṣāwī Press, 1355 AH / 1936 CE, p. 11.

² She was a concubine of Turkish origin, one of the slave women of Prince Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, known for her singing and poetry. She also served in the palace of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim Billāh and later in the palace of Caliph al-Wāthiq Billāh. However, historical accounts provide limited information about her. See:

- Al-Ṭabarī, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr (d. 310 AH / 922 CE), *History of the Prophets and Kings (Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk)*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 2nd ed., Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1378 AH / 1976 CE, vol. 9, p. 152.
- Al-'Umarī, Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Faḍl Allāh al-Qurashī al-'Adawī (d. 749 AH / 1348 CE), *Masālik al-Abṣār fī Mamālik al-Amṣār*, Abu Dhabi: Cultural Foundation, 1423 AH / 2002 CE, vol. 10, p. 215.

³ See:

- Al-Jāhiz, Abū 'Uthmān 'Umar ibn Maḥbūb al-Kinānī (d. 255 AH / 868 CE), *Al-Bighāl (The Mules)*, 2nd ed., Beirut: Dār wa Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1418 AH / 1997 CE, p. 66.
- Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Haytham al-Marwānī al-Umawī al-Qurashī (d. 356 AH / 967 CE), *Al-Imā' al-Shawā'ir (The Singing Slave Women)*, ed. Jalīl al-'Aṭīyyah, Beirut: Dār al-Niḍāl li-l-Ṭibā'ah wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī', 1404 AH / 1984 CE, p. 15.

⁴ *Al-Tāj fī Akhlāq al-Mulūk (The Crown on the Morals of Kings)*, ed. Aḥmad Zakī Pasha, Cairo: Al-Maṭba'ah al-Amīriyyah, 1323 AH / 1914 CE, vol. 5, p. 46.

"Just yesterday, Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī came to visit (*Aḥmad ibn Abī Duwād ibn ‘Alī*)⁽¹⁾, wearing a richly colored lined robe made of the finest fabric on earth. On his head was a (*Raṣāfiyyah*)⁽²⁾ under a black silk turban with two trailing ends—one in front and one behind. He wore yellow shoes, held an ebony cane inlaid with gold, and on his finger was a ruby ring that lit up his hand. When I looked at his appearance, my heart was overwhelmed. He was a man of imposing presence. Aḥmad said to him: ‘O Ibrāhīm, you have come to me dressed and adorned in a manner befitting none but the very best of mankind.’” Some Abbasid princes were notorious for their extravagant lifestyles—so much so that even the caliphs occasionally rebuked them for their excess. Their wastefulness was most apparent in the opulent banquets they hosted, particularly when entertaining the caliphs themselves. A notable example involves Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, who once invited his brother, Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, to a meal. Upon seeing the food, the caliph was taken aback: Ibrāhīm’s cooks had prepared not just one dish of fish, but a platter containing one hundred fish tongues. The caliph then summoned Ibrāhīm’s (*qahramān*)⁽³⁾ (steward or overseer) and asked how much the fish had cost. The qahramān replied that it had cost them one thousand dirhams. This greatly angered al-Rashīd, who refused to touch the food until the qahramān brought forth a thousand dinars and was ordered to discard them—demonstrating his disdain for such senseless extravagance. Al-Rashīd explained to Ibrāhīm that this sum was to be given as charity—an atonement for the extravagant spending on a single dish of fish.

¹ He is Abū ‘Abd Allāh Aḥmad ibn Duwād ibn Jarīr al-Qādī al-Ayādī. Born in 160 AH / 776 CE, he held the position of Chief Judge (Qādī al-Quḍāt) during the caliphates of al-Mu‘taṣim Billāh and later al-Wāthiq Billāh. Abū ‘Abd Allāh was known for his generosity, kindness, and noble character. He was also a prominent proponent of the doctrine of the *createdness of the Qur’an* during the era of Caliph al-Ma‘mūn. He died in 240 AH / 854 CE. See:

- Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī (d. 463 AH / 1071 CE), *Tārīkh Baghdād (History of Baghdad)*, ed. Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1417 AH / 1997 CE, vol. 4, p. 365.
- Ibn ‘Asākir, Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Hibat Allāh (d. 571 AH / 1176 CE), *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq (History of the City of Damascus)*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū Sa‘īd ‘Umar ibn Gharāmah al-‘Umrawī, Damascus: Dār al-Fikr li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī‘, 1415 AH / 1995 CE, vol. 17, p. 109.

² This refers to the *qalansuwa* (a long cap) or *‘imama* (turban), which is a head covering. See: Ibn Qutaybah al-Dinawari, Abu Muhammad ‘Abd Allah ibn Muslim (d. 276 AH / 889 CE), *Al-Jarathim*, ed. Muhammad Jasim al-Humaidi, Damascus: Ministry of Culture, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 298.

³ It denotes someone who has authority over subordinates—*al-hafiz*, meaning the one responsible for his master’s affairs. The term *fahrmān* refers to royal envoys or trusted stewards of the king, as in "the king’s fahrmān." See: Al-Sahib ibn ‘Abbad, Al-Sahib Isma‘il ibn ‘Abbad (d. 385 AH / 995 CE), *Al-Muḥīṭ fī al-Lughah*, ed. Muhammad Hasan al-Yasin, Beirut: ‘Alam al-Kutub, 1414 AH / 1994 CE, Vol. 2, p. 103; Ibn Manzur, Muhammad ibn Mukarram ibn ‘Ali (d. 711 AH / 1321 CE), *Lisan al-‘Arab*, 3rd ed., Beirut: Dar Sader, 1414 AH / 1993 CE, Vol. 12, p. 496.

But the caliph didn't stop there: he took the dish in his own hands and gave it to one of the servants, ordering him to leave Ibrāhīm's residence and give it to the first beggar he encountered on the street (¹).

This illustrates that the extravagance and wastefulness of the caliphs' sons were not condoned by those in power—particularly the caliphs themselves—who actively sought to curb such behavior. It suggests that these princes were subject to the scrutiny of the Abbasid leadership, which made deliberate efforts to guide and reform their conduct.

Kinship and blood ties between Abbasid princes and their caliphal brothers did not always guarantee favor or leniency. On the contrary, caliphs occasionally withheld financial support from their princely relatives, which had a direct impact on their standard of living. A notable example is the strained relationship between Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī and his brother, Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (170–193 AH / 786–809 CE). One historical account refers to the discord and estrangement that marked the relationship between Prince Ibrahim and his brother, Caliph al-Rashid. Regrettably, the reasons behind this conflict remain unknown. However, what the historical narrative does emphasize in its details is the deteriorating standard of living experienced by the Abbasid prince as a result of the strained relationship with his brother, the Caliph.

Ibrāhīm himself recounted this episode, highlighting the role of their father, Caliph al-Mahdī. According to the narrative, both he and Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd saw their father in a dream on the same night. By divine will, this shared vision became a turning point, leading to a reconciliation and an improvement in their circumstances. The Caliph took the initiative to mend their relationship by addressing Ibrāhīm's financial hardships and appointing him to the prestigious position he had sought—the governorship of Damascus (²).

Moreover, certain political events also impacted the living standards of the caliphs' descendants. For instance, following the political turmoil resulting from Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi's usurpation of the caliphate from al-Ma'mun (198–218 AH / 813–833 CE), tensions arose within the Abbasid household and among the people of Baghdad due to al-Ma'mun's appointment of 'Alī ibn Musa al-Ridha as his successor (³). In this context, Prince Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi borrowed money from merchants. However, when his attempt at claiming the caliphate failed, the son of one of the merchants demanded repayment of his father's money and composed verses of poetry addressing Caliph al-Ma'mun. He presented the poem to Prince Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi, who asked him to keep it confidential and repaid his father's debt — but not the debts owed to the other merchants (⁴).

It appears that Prince Ibrāhīm's worsening financial situation stirred the sympathy of his nephew, Caliph al-Ma'mūn. In response, the Caliph ordered the restoration of Ibrāhīm's wealth—a gesture that deeply pleased the prince. In gratitude, Ibrāhīm composed verses of praise honoring the Caliph, expressing his appreciation through poetry, saying:

¹ See: Al-Nahrawani, Abu al-Faraj ibn Yahya al-Ma'afi ibn Zakariya (d. 390 AH / 999 CE), *Al-Jalīs al-Sāni' al-Kāfi wa al-Nīs al-Nāṣiḥ al-Shāfi*, ed. 'Abd al-Karim Sami al-Jundi, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1462 AH / 2005 CE, p. 437; Ibn 'Asakir, *Tarikh Dimashq*, Vol. 7, p. 177.

² Al-Tanukhi, Abu Ali al-Muhsin ibn Abi al-Qasim (d. 384 AH / 944 CE), *Al-Faraj Ba'd al-Shiddah* (Relief After Distress), Beirut: Dar Sader, 1398 AH / 1978 CE, Vol. 2, p. 321.

³ See: Al-Mas'udi, Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Ali (d. 346 AH / 957 CE), *Al-Tanbih wa al-Ashraf*, ed. Abdullah ibn Ismail al-Sawi, Cairo: Dar al-Sawi, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 303; Al-Maqdisi, Al-Mutahhar ibn Tahir (d. 355 AH / 965 CE), *Al-Bad' wa al-Tarikh* (The Beginning and the History), ed. Clément Huart, Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1341 AH / 1919 CE, Vol. 6, p. 101.

⁴ See: Al-Suli, *Ash'ar Awlad al-Khulafa'* (Poetry of the Caliphs' Sons), p. 28.

**You returned my wealth without reproach or condescension,
And even before restoring my wealth, you spared my life.**

**So where do you stand, you who have showered me with blessings,
That gave me life after near-death and nothingness?**

**I would have offered my blood to gain your favor,
And my wealth until it soaked the straps of my sandals...” (1)**

From these verses, one can sense Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī's profound joy and relief at his nephew the Caliph's, magnanimous gesture. Al-Ma'mūn not only forgave him but also spared him the humiliation of investigation and impoverishment by restoring his wealth. This act moved Ibrāhīm to express deep gratitude, as it preserved his dignity from the indignity of a pardon tainted by deprivation and granted him a life of renewed honor and comfort, despite his earlier offenses against the Caliph.

The signs of material contentment among the sons of Caliph Musa al-Hadi (r. 169–171 AH / 785–786 CE) quickly became apparent. One such example is Prince Ja'far, who owned numerous slave girls and was known for his generosity in gifting them to others. One such girl was *Badhl*², whom he gifted to his cousin, Caliph al-Amin (r. 193–198 AH / 809–813 CE). His brother, Prince 'Ali, on the other hand, indulged in even greater extravagance, to the point where he would wear a garment only once and never wear it again, instead passing it on to someone else³. This reflects the level of wastefulness and luxury in which the prince lived—possibly influenced by his father, Caliph al-Hadi, who, as we know, was renowned for the splendor of his attire and ceremonial procession.⁴

It appears that the financial conditions of the Abbasid princes were influenced by shifting political events that struck from time to time, prompting some of them to pawn their valuable possessions to overcome financial crises they faced. An example of this is Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi, who experienced severe financial hardship due to the political turmoil during the reign of al-Ma'mun, particularly after he fell out of al-Ma'mun's control as a result of his bid for the caliphate

¹ See: Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, Abu 'Umar Shihab al-Din Ahmad ibn Muhammad (d. 328 AH / 940 CE), *Al-'Iqd al-Farid* (The Unique Necklace), Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1404 AH / 1981 CE, Vol. 4, p. 317; Al-Zamakhshari, Abu al-Qasim Mahmud ibn 'Umar (d. 538 AH / 1143 CE), *Rabi' al-Abrar wa Nusus al-Akhyar*, Beirut: Al-'Alami Foundation, 1412 AH / 1990 CE, Vol. 5, p. 320.

² She was a *mawla* (freedwoman) originally from Medina and was raised in Basra. She was among the most prominent slave women known for their vast repertoire of transmitted songs. She authored a book on songs titled *Mansub al-Aswat*, which reportedly contained twelve thousand songs. See: Al-Nuwayri, Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Da'im al-Qurashi al-Taymi al-Bakri (d. 733 AH / 1333 CE), *Nihayat al-Arab fi Funun al-Adab*, Cairo: Dar al-Kutub wa al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiyyah, 1422 AH / 2001 CE, Vol. 5, p. 88.

³ See: Al-Jahiz, *Al-Rasa'il* (The Epistles), ed. 'Abd al-Salam Muhammad Harun, Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji, 1384 AH / 1964 CE, p. 460.

⁴ See: Al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr (d. 911 AH / 1505 CE), *Tarikh al-Khulafa'* (The History of the Caliphs), ed. Hamdi al-Damardash, Cairo: Maktabat al-Baz al-Halabi, 1425 AH / 2004 CE, p. 207.

in place of his nephew. In response, he pawned a valuable ring of his, and was only able to redeem it after his nephew, al-Mu'tasim bi'llah (218–227 AH / 833–842 CE), assumed power and the caliphate (¹).

The sons of al-Muqtadir bi'llah (295–320 AH / 908–932 CE) benefited financially from the celebrations and occasions observed by the caliphate, such as the festivals of Nowruz and Mihrajan, during which gifts and sums of money were distributed to al-Muqtadir's sons and wives. This occurred in 315 AH / 928 CE (²), serving as an example of a material resource from which the sons of the Abbasid caliphs profited.

In addition, some state officials, keen to gain favor with the caliphs, sought to do so by gifting estates to their sons. This is exemplified by Abu Nasr al-Hajib (³), who purchased a property along the Diyala River and in the Nahrawan region, known as *Qarhatiyya*, which he gifted to 'Abd Allah ibn al-Muqtadir bi'llah (⁴).

Meanwhile, the Hashemite households suffered from financial hardship and a declining standard of living due to the instability of the caliphate, the growing dominance of the Turkish element, and the mounting challenges faced by the caliphate in distant provinces. These circumstances led some princes, sons of caliphs, to directly address the caliph and disclose the severity of their living conditions, in the hope that their financial distress might be alleviated. The caliph, in turn, did not delay in addressing their concerns.

A historical account refers to an incident during the reign of Caliph al-Qahir bi'llah (320–322 AH / 932–934 CE), stating: "In the year 320 AH / 932 CE, on Monday, two nights into Dhu al-Qa'dah, al-Qahir summoned the sons of al-Mutawakkil 'ala Allah and others among the sons and grandsons of caliphs. He brought them before him, ordered them to sit, and took their pledges of allegiance. Among them was Harun ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn al-Mu'tamad, after reconciling with him and offering a prayer on his behalf, who said: 'O Commander of the Faithful, your household has suffered estrangement and hardship, and their condition has deteriorated. They are not asking for land grants, only that their estates be restored and their affairs improved by the disbursement of their stipends.' The caliph replied: 'I hereby order their stipends to be resumed, and I will not withhold them from you. I have been deeply saddened by

¹ See: Ibn Khallikan, Abu al-'Abbas Shams al-Din Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Abi Bakr (d. 681 AH / 1282 CE), *Wafayat al-A'yan wa Anba' Abna' al-Zaman*, ed. Ihsan 'Abbas, Beirut: Dar Sader, 1415 AH / 1994 CE, Vol. 1, p. 41.

² See: Ibn Miskawayh, Abu 'Ali ibn Miskawayh al-Razi (d. 421 AH / 1030 CE), *Tajarib al-Umam wa Ta'aqub al-Himam* (Experiences of Nations and Succession of Aspirations), ed. Abu al-Qasim Imami, 2nd ed., Tehran: Dar Soroush, 1423 AH / 2002 CE, Vol. 5, p. 225.

³ He was the chamberlain (*hajib*) of Caliph al-Muqtadir bi'llah, known for his high status and esteemed position with the caliph. He was described as devout and wise. He also played a significant role in military affairs, as he was tasked with confronting the threat of the Qarmatians. It is said that he spent from his personal wealth as well as from the caliph's treasury to equip the army. However, he soon fell ill and died in the same year—316 AH / 929 CE. See: Ibn al-Jawzi, Jamal al-Din Abu al-Faraj ibn Muhammad (d. 597 AH / 1200 CE), *Al-Muntazam fi Tarikh al-Umam wa al-Muluk*, ed. Muhammad 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata and Mustafa 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1412 AH / 1992 CE, Vol. 13, p. 278; Al-Dhahabi, Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn 'Uthman ibn Qammaz (d. 748 AH / 1347 CE), *Tarikh al-Islam wa Wafayat al-Mashahir wa al-A'lam*, ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salam Tadmuri, 2nd ed., Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1413 AH / 1993 CE, Vol. 23, p. 365.

⁴ See: Al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* (The History of Prophets and Kings), Vol. 11, p. 133.

what I have heard regarding your situation.’ I thanked him, and then Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad ibn al-Muntasir bi’llah spoke, and I called them all together.”⁽¹⁾.

It appears that the political instability of the caliphate and the financial crises faced by the Abbasid state during the period of the *Amir al-Umara’* (Commander of Commanders)⁽²⁾ (324–334 AH / 936–945 CE) did not prevent the caliphs from spending lavishly on the marriages of their sons. Among them was Prince Ishaq, son of Caliph al-Muttaqi li’llah. Historical accounts refer to his marriage to the daughter of Nasir al-Dawla al-Hamdani, Abu Muhammad ibn Hamdan, with a dowry of one hundred thousand dinars⁽³⁾.

It seems that the extravagant lifestyle clearly evident in the appearance of the Abbasid caliphs’ sons attracted the attention of opportunists who coveted their personal possessions. One such case is that of Prince Abu al-Hasan, son of Caliph al-Mustazhir bi’llah (487–512 AH / 1094–1118 CE). Following the death of his father and the ascension of his brother, Caliph al-Mustarshid bi’llah (512–529 AH / 1118–1135 CE), Abu al-Hasan fled in fear of his brother and sought refuge in al-Hilla with its ruler, Dubays ibn Sadaqa, in 512 AH / 1118 CE.

At the time, the prince was wearing an outfit adorned with pearls. Apparently, Dubays was tempted by its value and took it from him. However, the caliph later succeeded in recovering his brother’s outfit after arresting Dubays and his vizier, Abu al-Qasim Sharaf al-Din⁽⁴⁾.

Second: Private Properties

The Abbasid era abounded with references to various sites and structures, ranging from houses and palaces to land grants and other holdings, whose revenues were allocated to the sons of the Abbasid caliphs. These properties were granted to them through various means and for different reasons and motives. This reflects the financial capabilities and luxurious lifestyle they enjoyed under the patronage of the Abbasid caliphs. For instance, Caliph Abu Ja’far al-

¹ Al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk*, Vol. 11, p. 183.

² was a political position and status newly introduced during the Abbasid era, specifically under the caliphate of al-Radi bi-Allah (322–329 AH / 934–940 CE). The holder of the title *Amir al-Umara’* (Commander of Commanders) assumed control over numerous civil and military affairs, including command of the army and the caliph’s expenditures. The first to occupy this position was Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ra’iq. As a result of this appointment, the traditional bureaus (*dawawin*) and the vizierate were effectively abolished. (See: Ibn al-Athir, Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Abi al-Karam Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karim ibn ‘Abd al-Wahid [d. 630 AH / 1232 CE], *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, ed. ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salam Tadmuri, [Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-‘Arabi, 1417 AH / 1997 CE], vol. 7, p. 72; Ibn Kathir, Abu ‘Abd Allah ‘Imad al-Din Isma’il ibn ‘Umar [d. 774 AH / 1373 CE], *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*, ed. ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abd al-Muhsin al-Turki, [Cairo: Dar Hijr, 1418 AH / 1997 CE], vol. 12, p. 121).

³ See: Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajarib al-Umam*, vol. 5, p. 484; Ibn al-Jawzi, *Al-Muntazam*, vol. 14, p. 26.

⁴ See: Ibn al-Jawzi, *Al-Muntazam*, vol. 17, p. 272; Sibte Ibn al-Jawzi, Shams al-Din Abu al-Muzaffar Yusuf ibn Qirawghli ibn ‘Abd Allah [d. 654 AH / 1256 CE], *Mir’at al-Zaman fi Tawarikh al-A’yan*, ed. Muhammad Barakat et al., [Damascus: Dar al-Risala, 1434 AH / 2013 CE], vol. 2, p. 241.

Mansur (136–158 AH / 754–775 CE) granted land allotments (*qata'i'*) to all his sons (¹), with references made to several such grants, including the *Qati'at Ja'far ibn Abu Ja'far al-Mansur* (²). He also sought to secure the rights of his son Šāliḥ, known as *Šāliḥ al-Miskīn* (Šāliḥ the Poor), by granting him an estate near al-Ahwāz, similar to the grants given to his other sons. Caliph Abū Ja'far al-Manšūr is reported to have said: “This is my poor son; he has nothing. He is called Šāliḥ al-Miskīn.” Then Abū Ayyūb (³) said to him: “O Commander of the Faithful, I have found an estate near al-Ahwāz, watered by the Tigris and overflowing with abundance. It is a vast land whose landmarks have faded and whose canals have dried up. If you grant it to him and allocate three thousand dirhams for its restoration, it will not be long before it yields a substantial return.” So al-Manšūr granted the estate to Šāliḥ and ordered that he be given funds. Abū Ayyūb took charge and spent from his provisions. In the following year, he brought twenty thousand dirhams to Ibn Ja'far, saying: “This is the revenue from the estate.” Al-Manšūr was pleased by this and ordered a treasury (*bayt māl*) to be established for Šāliḥ (⁴). In addition, Prince Sulaymān ibn Abī Ja'far al-Manšūr was granted a *qaṭī'a* adjacent to that of Prince Šāliḥ, extending toward the house of Najīḥ, the client (*mawlā*) of al-Manšūr (⁵). That *qaṭī'a* became known as *Darb Sulaymān* (⁶). Prince Sulaymān also owned a palace overlooking the Tigris River (⁷).

¹ See: al-Ya'qubi, Ahmad ibn Ishaq ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Ja'far ibn Wahb ibn Wadih [d. 292 AH / 904 CE], *Al-Buldan*, [Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1422 AH / 2001 CE], p. 36; Yaqut al-Hamawi, Abu 'Abd Allah Shihab al-Din Yaqut ibn 'Abd Allah al-Rumi [d. 626 AH / 1228 CE], *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, 2nd ed., [Beirut: Dar Sader, 1416 AH / 1995 CE], vol. 1, p. 42.

² was one of the *qaṭī'as* (land allotments) belonging to Prince Ja'far ibn Abī Ja'far al-Manšūr. It was located on the eastern side of the Tigris River and contained the residence of Prince 'Īsā ibn Ja'far ibn Abī Ja'far al-Manšūr. (See: Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, vol. 1, p. 43).

³ This refers to Abū Ayyūb Sulaymān ibn Abī Sulaymān Mukhlad—or according to some, Dāwūd—who was among the shrewd men of knowledge. He served as vizier to the second Abbasid caliph, Abū Ja'far al-Manšūr, succeeding Khālīd al-Barmakī in this role. However, Abū Ayyūb al-Mūrayānī's ambitions grew during his tenure, eventually leading to his downfall, imprisonment, and confiscation of his wealth. He died in the year 154 AH / 770 CE. (See: al-Sam'ānī, Abū Sa'd 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Manšūr al-Tamīmī, *Al-Ansāb*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Yaḥyā al-Mu'allimī et al., [Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, 1382 AH / 1962 CE], vol. 12, p. 477).

⁴ See: al-Jahshiyārī, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn 'Abdūs [d. 333 AH / 942 CE], *Al-Wuzarā' wa al-Kuttāb*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā et al., (Cairo: Maṭba'at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1375 AH / 1938 CE), p. 118.

⁵ See: Ibn al-Faqīh, Abū 'Abd Allāh Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ishāq [d. 365 AH / 975 CE], *Al-Buldān*, ed. Yūsuf al-Hādī, (Beirut: Dār 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1416 AH / 1996 CE), p. 297; Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥaqq, 'Abd al-Mu'min ibn 'Abd al-Ḥaqq ibn Shamā'il al-Qaṭī'ī al-Baghdādī [d. 763 AH / 1338 CE], *Marāšid al-Iṭṭilā' 'alā Asmā' al-Amkina wa al-Biqā'*, (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1412 AH / 1991 CE), p. 521.

⁶ This was one of the lanes (*durūb*) of Baghdad located opposite the bridge. It continued to exist during the caliphates of al-Mahdī, al-Hādī, and al-Rashīd. The name *Darb Sulaymān* is attributed to Prince Sulaymān ibn Abī Ja'far al-Manšūr, as his residence was near this lane. (See: Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, vol. 2, p. 448).

⁷ See: Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fi al-Tārīkh*, vol. 5, p. 273.

The sons of Caliph al-Mahdī also possessed various land allotments and palaces, including the *Palace of Prince ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Mahdī* (¹). Likewise, Prince ‘Alī ibn al-Mahdī was granted an estate near *Sūq Yaḥyā* (²), which extended to the right of the market toward *Bāb al-Shamāsiyyah* (³). He was the first to be granted land in that area. Additionally, Prince ‘Alī ibn al-Mahdī owned a garden in the city of his brother ‘Īsā in *Bādhdh*, where he passed away. He was thirty-three years old at the time of his death, which occurred in the year 180 AH / 796 CE (⁴).

Among the locations mentioned as venues for the gatherings of the Abbasid Caliph Muḥammad al-Mahdī was ‘Īsā Bādhdh, a district located east of Baghdad, which housed *Qaṣr al-Salām* (the Palace of Peace), belonging to Caliph al-Mahdī (⁵).

The sons of Caliph al-Rashīd (170–193 AH / 780–809 CE) also acquired *qaṭā’i* (land allotments) that were attributed to them. Among these is what al-Ya‘qūbī mentioned (⁶), stating: “The second street is known as the street of Abū Aḥmad, who is Abū Aḥmad ibn al-Rashīd.” Ṣāliḥ ibn al-Rashīd also had a residence known as *Dār Ṣāliḥ*. Unfortunately, the sources we have reviewed do not specify the location of that residence. In this context, one historical account refers to *Qaṣr al-Amīr Ṣāliḥ* (the Palace of Prince Ṣāliḥ) located on the Tigris River. The splendor and beauty of the palace were described by the poet Sālim ibn ‘Amr (⁷), who said:

¹ This was a palace belonging to Prince ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Mahdī, located on the eastern side of Baghdad, near *Tāq Asmā’*, the residence of Asmā’, daughter of Caliph Abū Ja‘far al-Manṣūr. (See: Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, vol. 4, p. 5; Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, *Marāṣid al-Iṭṭilā’*, vol. 1, p. 245).

² This refers to one of Baghdad’s markets, located on the eastern side of the city between *al-Ruṣāfa* and the *Dār al-Mamlaka*, which was situated between the two gardens of al-Zāhid along the bank of the Tigris River. It extended to the area of Yaḥyā ibn Khālid al-Barmakī, who was granted this land during the reign of al-Rashīd. Later, it passed to Umm Ja‘far, and then to Tāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn after the civil strife between al-Amīn and al-Ma‘mūn. It was eventually ruined during the Seljuk period. (See: Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, vol. 3, p. 484).

³ This was a well-known location in Baghdad during the Abbasid era, due to numerous military events that occurred nearby—especially during the caliphate of al-Musta‘īn bi-Allah (248–252 AH / 862–866 CE), in connection with the conflict between Arabs and Turks near *Bāb al-Shamāsiyyah*, where the monastery *Dair Dār Mālis* was located. (See: Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-Umam*, vol. 2, p. 384; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, vol. 2, p. 509).

⁴ See: Ibn al-Faqīh, *Al-Buldān*, p. 309.

⁵ See: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 1, p. 113; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, vol. 23, p. 347; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, vol. 4, p. 172.

⁶ *Al-Buldān*, p. 62.

⁷ Abū ‘Umar Sālim ibn ‘Amr ibn Ḥammād ibn ‘Aṭā’ ibn Yāsir was one of the poets of the Abbasid era. He was known as *al-Khāsir* (The Loser), as it is said he sold a Qur’ān and used the money to buy a lute. He traveled to Baghdad and praised the caliphs, especially al-Mahdī and al-Hādī. He died during the caliphate of Hārūn al-Rashīd, though the exact date of his death is unknown. (See: Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-Udabā’*, vol. 3, p. 1382; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A‘yān*, vol. 2, p. 350).

**O Ṣāliḥ of generosity, whose giving
Has spoiled the generosity of others by his own.**

**You built a lofty and noble palace,
With birds of fortune and good omen soaring above.**

**As if the one raising its structure
Were the jinn of Sulaymān, son of Dāwūd." (1)**

Historical accounts also refer to the estates belonging to Prince ‘Abd Allāh, son of Caliph Muḥammad al-Amīn (193–198 AH / 809–814 CE) (2). These estates were located in the region of *al-Jazīrah*, near *Dayr Ḥanzalah* (3).

Prince al-Muwaffaq Talha, son of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil ‘ala Allah (232–247 AH / 847–861 CE), owned a house in Mecca known as (al-Suwayqah) (4), which he acquired during his tenure as governor of the Hijaz and as crown prince during the caliphate of his brother al-Mu‘tamid ‘ala Allah (256–279 AH / 870–892 CE) (5). Among the structures attributed to the sons of the Abbasid caliphs is the city of al-Muwaffaqiyyah, named after Prince al-Muwaffaq Talha, son of Caliph al-Mutawakkil ‘ala Allah, who undertook its construction as a military camp during the campaign against the Zanj rebels in the region of al-Harrah in the year (267 AH / 881 CE). The city was named

¹ Al-Safadi, *Al-Wafi bil-Wafayat*, Vol. 16, p. 152.

² Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Al-Diyarat*, edited by Jalil al-‘Attiyah (Cyprus: Riyad al-Rayyis Books and Publishing, n.d.), p. 76.

³ This is a monastery located near the eastern bank of the Euphrates, between al-Daliyyah and al-Bahsanah, below Rahbat Malik ibn Tawk. It is considered part of the Jazirah region and attributed to Hanzalah ibn Abi Ghufr ibn al-Nu‘man ibn Hayyah ibn Sa‘nah ibn al-Harith ibn al-Huwayrith ibn Rabi‘ah ibn Malik. It was also known as one of the most verdant locations with abundant trees. (See: Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu‘jam al-Buldan*, Vol. 2, p. 506.)

⁴ This name was given to several locations, most notably the *Dar al-Suwayqah*, a site near Medina that was inhabited by the descendants of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (v). Muhammad ibn Abi Salih ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn Musa ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib rebelled against Caliph al-Mutawakkil ‘ala Allah, who then dispatched his army and captured him along with a number of his family members. Some of them were killed, and al-Suwayqah was destroyed. Later, it became the property of Prince Abu al-‘Abbas al-Muwaffaq Talha ibn al-Mutawakkil during his governorship of the Hijaz under the caliphate of al-Mu‘tamid ‘ala Allah. (See: Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu‘jam al-Buldan*, Vol. 3, p. 286.)

⁵ See: Al-Fakihi, Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn al-‘Abbas (d. 275 AH / 888 CE), *Akhbar Makkah fi Qadim al-Dahr wa Hadithih*, edited by ‘Abd al-Malik ibn ‘Abd Allah Duhaysh, 4th ed. (Mecca: Maktabat al-Asadi, 1424 AH / 2003 CE), Vol. 2, p. 205.

after him and called al-Muwaffaqiyyah. It was located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, opposite the city of the Zanj leader, near the city of Wasit (¹).

This gesture by the Caliph reflects his generosity and foresight, as he took the initiative to show kindness to his family and Abbasid princes, preserving their dignity, sparing them from need and public dependence, and ensuring a standard of living befitting their status and noble lineage.

It is also mentioned that the Caliph al-Nasir li-Din Allah (575–622 AH / 1180–1225 CE) granted a land allotment to his son, Prince Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali, who was known by the name (Hadithah) (²), and also bestowed upon him the title of al-Malik al-Mu‘azzam (³).

CONCLUSION

Through our review of the topic (*The Living Standards of Princes from the Abbasid Caliphal Lineage*), the following points have been established:

It is well known that Abbasid princes, throughout the various periods of the Abbasid Caliphate, maintained a standard of living befitting the nobility of their status and the honor of their lineage. Some sons of the caliphs were influenced by the luxury and affluence they experienced, which was often reflected in their outward appearance and extravagance.

Naturally, the living standards of the caliphs' sons were affected by the social, economic, and political circumstances that the Abbasid Caliphate underwent. Nonetheless, in most eras of the Caliphate, the caliphs' sons enjoyed a high degree of prestige, dignity, and elevated status, which in turn ensured for them a respectable economic life that preserved their honor and protected them from need. The Abbasid caliphs were keen to uphold the dignity of the Abbasid princes, regarding it as an extension of their honor and elevated standing.

Perhaps the material luxury and elevated standard of living contributed to the behavioral deviation of some sons of the Abbasid caliphs. Therefore, the caliph needed to intervene in such matters, as he served as the direct overseer of his sons' conduct and behavior.

The living standards of some princes were influenced by the nature of their relationship with the caliphal court, ranging from periods of strong bonds, cohesion, and unity among members of the Abbasid household to times marked by estrangement and fragmentation.

¹ See: Al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* (History of Prophets and Kings), Vol. 9, p. 585; Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajarib al-Umam* (Experiences of Nations), Vol. 2, p. 384; Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah* (The Beginning and the End), Vol. 14, p. 576.

² The name *Hadithah* refers to more than one location. There is Hadithat al-Mawsil, a town on the eastern bank of the Tigris River near the Upper Zab, where the grave of Caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab (ϣ) is located. There is also Hadithat al-Furat, known as Hadithat al-Nurah, situated above the city of Hit. It has a fortified citadel in the middle of the Euphrates River, where the Abbasid Caliph al-Qa’im bi-Amr Allah resided for a period. (See: Ibn ‘Abd al-Haqq, *Marasid al-Ittila’*, Vol. 1, p. 386.)

³ See: Ibn al-Kazrawi, Zahir al-Din ‘Ali ibn Ahmad al-Baghdadi (d. 697 AH / 1297 CE), *Mukhtasar al-Tarikh min Awwal al-Zaman ila Nihayat Dawlat Bani al-‘Abbas*, edited by Mustafa Jawad and Salim al-Alusi (Baghdad: General Institution, Government Press, 1390 AH / 1970 CE), p. 248.

The aspects of material comfort enjoyed by the caliphs' sons took various forms, including private possessions and designated land grants. These were a fundamental objective pursued by the Abbasid caliphs to ensure the livelihood of their princely sons even after their passing. Such actions stemmed from a deep-seated paternal instinct and human compassion clearly evident in the Abbasid caliphs.

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