

Buwayhids: A Brief Assessment

During the reign of caliph al-Mutawwakil, the integrity and sovereignty of the empire was at stake. During his reign the Turks had the upper hand in the administration, which continued in the reigns of his successors, and these caliphs were mere puppets in the hands of the Turks. Another valid point which needs to be mentioned is that the power of the Buwayhids on the other hand increased considerably.

Caliph Abu al-Qasim under the title of al-Mustakfi ascended the throne in 944 C.E. He formulated the strategy in a way where he can be able to cut down the increasing power of the Turks on one side and at the same time to win the favor of the Buwayhids on the other, who were pressing on the Iraq and compelling caliph al-Mustakfi to receive Buwayhids in Baghdad. Al-Mustakfi conferred on the victorious Ahmad ibn Buwayh the title of *Mu'izz al-Dawlah* (he who renders the state mighty). His two brothers Ali and Hasan received the title of *Imad al-Dawlah* (prop of the state) and *Rukn al-Dawlah* (pillar of the state) respectively. Their father namely Abu Shuja Buwayh claimed to be the one who had lineage with the Sassanid kings. Abu Shuja was the head and the chief of the Daylamites who lived in the mountainous region on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea and for a very considerable period devoted themselves in the service of the Samanids.

Ahmad ibn Buwayh, along with his two brothers gradually made efforts and succeeded in occupying Isbahan, and then Shiraz in 934 C.E. and in the next two years, the provinces of al-Ahwaz and Karman. The new dynasty made Shiraz as their capital. In 945 C.E. Ahmad ibn Buwayh made his advance toward the capital Baghdad where the Turkish guard fled. In this way Turkish supremacy was replaced by the Buwayhids who were Shi'ites. It was very unfortunate for the caliph al-Mustakfi that he supported Buwayhid to improve his lot, but had no effect at all. Though Mu'izz al-Dawlah was officially holding the position of *Amir al-Umara*, but virtually he became the ruler of Baghdad and Iraq. He compelled that his name should be mentioned in the *Khutbah* along with the caliph and also the coins struck should bear his name. Amir Ali in his book – *A Short History of the Saracens* defines the position of Mu'izz al-Dawlah in these words: "His position was like that of Charles Martel under the Merovingian kings of France, for he was the virtual sovereign, whilst the caliph was merely his dependent, receiving a daily allowance of 5000 dinars from the public treasury."

To add to the miseries of the caliph al-Mustakfi, Mu'izz al-Dawlah blinded him and thus deposed him 946 C.E. and installed the new caliph Abu al-Qasim al-Fazl (946-974 C.E.) under the title of al-Muti'. Shi'ite festivals were celebrated especially the tenth of Muharram as a national day of mourning in commemoration of al-Husayn's sacrifice. As the time advanced the caliphate witnessed the highest degree of humiliation with the caliphs' position not more than a puppet in the hands of this newly erected dynasty. These Buwayhids satisfied themselves with the titles and appellations like *Amir* or the honorific surnames like Mu'izz al-Dawlah etc. It was only after them that the fashion of giving appellations or pompous surnames continued. Although the title *Amir al-Umara* had become only an honorific fiction, yet many of the Buwayhid successors held it.

After the death of Mu'izz al-Dawlah, his position in the office was taken by his son Bakhtiyar, under the title of Izz al-Dawlah. Very shortly, Adud al-Dawlah, son of Rukn al-Dawlah deposed him. Adud al-Dawlah forced the impotent caliph to wear him with the insignia of office, and allow him other honors like beating of the drums at the gate of his palace. The power of the Buwayhids reached the climax and meridian under Adud al-Dawlah. He in 977 C.E. united different petty kingdoms that had emerged in Persia and Iraq under Buwayhid rulers and thus forming a state reaching the size of an empire. Adud al-Dawlah now became the ruler and master of the empire whose dominions extended from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf and from Isbahan to the borders of the Syria. The caliph gave Adud al-Dawlah the title of *Sultan* or *Taj al-Millat*. He married the daughter of the caliph al-Ta'i' and in turn the caliph married his daughter, with an intention to have his descendant who can assume the institution of caliphate.

Adud al-Dawlah was the first among the Buwayhids to assume the title of *Shahanshah*. He had his court in Shiraz but still he increased the charm of Baghdad by repairing the canals, constructing *Masajid* in other cities, hospitals and other buildings for the public utility as is reported by the famous historian – Miskaway (Adud's treasurer). He has erected buildings like the shrine (*mashhad*) on the presumed tomb of Hadhrat 'Ali. But the most famous from the whole lot was the hospital in Baghdad – *al-Bimaristan al-Adudi*; completed in 978-979 C.E. The hospital had a staff of twenty four physicians who also functioned as a medical faculty. It was established to cater the needs of the society via treating the patients as well as the center for study and research. Poets, authors and others dedicated their works to Adud al-Dawlah like the

grammarians like Abu al-Farisi, who wrote for him the book entitled *Kitab al-Idah* (Book of Explanation). Adud al-Dawlah also provided patronage to the scientific and literary activities and the persons involved therein like astronomers and scientists for example Ibn al-Salam, Abu al-Wafa. Adud al-Dawlah was just, benevolent and enlightened. After his death, the patronage to the scientific and other literary activities was continued by his successors. His son Sharf al-Dawlah (983-989 C.E.) who succeeded him a year before his death erected a famous observatory. His other son Sharf al-Dawlah (989-1012 C.E.) had an able wazir named Sabur ibn Ardashir, who constructed at Baghdad an academy and a library containing 10,000 books.

On the other side, the state gained downward motion with the emergence of internal quarrels which greatly reduced the empire. The final touch to the Buwayhid rule was given by Tughril Beg in 1055 C.E. who ousted Malik Rahim – the last from the dynasty holding the authority. The fight between the three sons of Adud al-Dawlah namely Sharf al-Dawlah, Baha al-Dawlah and Samsan al-Dawlah and their Shi'ite proclivities, which was deeply resented by the *Sunnis* played significant role in bringing their downfall.

Buwayhids ruled for about a century (945-1055 C.E.) and throughout their rule they posed and deposed caliphs at will. They governed Iraq as a province from their capital Shiraz. In Baghdad they had in their custody many beautiful palaces under the collective title of *Dar al-Mamlakah* (Abode of the Kingdom). The dynasty gained international pre-eminence by having relations with Ghaznah, Cairo, Cordova and other regions.